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Australian Bowhunters Association Inc. submission to the Legislative Council inquiry into the wild Fallow Deer population in Tasmania.

Dear Ms Mannering,

The Australian Bowhunters Association Inc. (ABA) wishes to present a submission to the Inquiry into Wild Fallow Deer in Tasmania.

ABA is the peak body for bowhunting and field archery in Australia and currently has approximately 8000 members throughout Australia, including Tasmania. ABA has a long history of working with State Governments to enhance both Hunting and Archery opportunities on behalf of members. ABA has been represented on both the Victorian Hunters Advisory Committee and the Game Council of NSW. Both State government advisory boards.

Although the hunting of Deer with a bow is currently illegal in Tasmania the association still feels that its members can play a part in the management of the Tasmanian fallow deer herd and would welcome the opportunity to work with the Tasmanian Government to this end.

Fallow deer have been present in Tasmania since the 1830's and therefore the species has a long history in that State and the likelihood of control programs causing the elimination of the Tasmanian fallow herd is unlikely. In the absence of the ability to eliminate the population, management is the only option.

The management of what many people define as a pest or feral species is often a contentious issue. The general public and particularly urbanised populations with little practical knowledge of wildlife management believe that introduced species should be exterminated. To these groups the concept of management of a wild population is akin to acceptance of the species permanent place in the Australian environment. The other concern with many groups is that if the species is conferred some type of legal protection under state legislation this is seen as encouraging the further spread of the species and the chances of the species being eliminated less likely.

ABA feels that as fallow deer have been present in Tasmania for almost 200 years, and that elimination is practically impossible, they should be properly managed. The fact that they are an introduced species should have no bearing. Management should not be confined to native species but should include a non- native criteria.

In 2005 the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries and Water published a book '*Management of Wild Deer in Australia with particular reference to fallow deer and red deer*' (Hall and Gill, 2005). ABA feels that this book provides the basis and a suitable direction for the ongoing management of the Tasmanian fallow herd. This book along with the Quality Deer Management program initiated in the early 1990's with the secondment of

Brian Murphy, an experienced US Wildlife manager to Tasmania for three years provides a strong background for the future management of the fallow herd.

Deer can mean many things to many people, a survey of Qld farmers in deer regions when asked if given the opportunity would they vote for declaring deer as a pest species, 57 % said no, 22 % stated they enjoyed having deer on their properties and a similar percentage thought that deer should be maintained for future generations to enjoy (Finch and Baxter, 2007). Interestingly this same group of farmers rated deer in 12th place as an agricultural or environmental pest with only kangaroos and wallabies rating lower (Finch and Baxter, 2007).

The results of the study undertaken by Finch and Baxter imply that a significant proportion of Queensland landholders would resist legislation aimed at managing deer as a pest in areas with long established wild deer populations.

They concluded that: 'If new legislation regarding wild deer is to be effective as a basis for the management of deer in Queensland it is important to have landowner support. The attitudes revealed in this survey suggest that landholders would take actions, either conscious or unconscious, designed to assist the persistence of wild deer populations in Queensland.'

The results of this survey suggest that, within areas of Queensland with long established deer populations, the first step to effectively managing the animals is in addressing the human dimension.' (Finch and Baxter, 2007).

The preferences of many private-sector stakeholders responsible for deer management are at odds with those of private landowners currently experiencing economic and conservation damage from deer, and with the aims of government and non-government bodies seeking to reduce grazing and browsing damage through lower deer densities (Austin 2010).

A survey conducted by the University of Queensland showed the Australian recreational hunting community is large, active and willing to spend large amounts of money on hunting.

Finch and Baxter (2007) found that the number of recreational hunters in Australia is most likely between 200 000 and 350 000 people or 1.5% of the population. This figure is consistent with figures from North America and Europe regarding hunting populations.

Average direct expenditure (hunting equipment, licence fees etc.) on hunting was \$1835 per person per annum, whereas indirect expenditure (travel costs, food, accommodation etc.) was \$2168 (Finch and Baxter, 2007). If this yearly expenditure was applied to the Tasmanian situation of 4151 hunters (2010 licence figures, Tasmanian Wildlife Management Branch 2011) this would equate to about 16.6 million dollars each year.

The role of hunters needs to be understood and engaged by wildlife managers so as to obtain the best outcomes for wildlife management in Australia.

Recreational hunting is the most effective tool wildlife managers have for managing deer populations over large areas. Natural resource agencies manipulate harvest from recreational hunting by regulating factors that influence harvest, such as days of hunting opportunity, daily or seasonal harvest limits, hunting equipment or methods (e.g., sporting arms, bait), characteristics of quarry (e.g., sex restrictions), and by managing hunter numbers via licenses or permits. However, factors limiting hunter efficiency, such as access to land, are often beyond the control of management agencies. Declining hunter participation and increasing age of hunters are long-term trends. Continued reluctance by some hunters to

harvest antlerless deer and reluctance to harvest as many deer as legally possibly, also hinder effectiveness (Stedman et al, 2004).

Bengson and Sparkes in a 2016 review of the role of hunters in pest mammal control found that there is insufficient evidence to support or disprove arguments that contemporary recreational hunting programs are effective at controlling introduced mammal populations on public lands. Moreover, current hunting management programs offered little potential for clarifying the situation or optimising the value of recreational hunting as a pest animal control tool.

They proposed that the establishment of local reference groups comprising hunters and other stakeholders is critical to exchange information between hunters and managers, and for setting agreed management objectives. An adaptive management approach in which research objectives are integrated into management operations should satisfy these requirements. Consideration of potential positive roles of recreational hunting as a pest control tool is undeniably important in formulating management policy and practice. (Bengsen and Sparkes 2016)

The use of hunters to control animal populations worldwide has a proven track record, however many studies show that this needs to be further developed to allow better exchange of information between land managers, hunters and the wider community and to undertake effective management of animals. The further development of the Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee and the use of property based game management programs are essential to the future management of the Tasmanian fallow herd.

Hunters in North America are successful utilitarian conservationists, but often lack an understanding of the impacts of the overproduction of game population (Holsman, 2000).

The ABA feels that by the better integration of hunters and wildlife managers together into established programs such as QDM (Tasmania) or Ecological Deer Management (NSW) that management and control of deer would become more efficient.

There is no doubt that deer can cause damage to crops and compete with live stock for feed. Fallow deer have been rated as between 1.5 and 2.2 dry sheep equivalents or DSE's. Therefore each deer depending on its age and reproductive status is equivalent to 1.5 to 2.2 sheep in terms of carrying capacity.

This would mean that high numbers of fallow on pasture could reduce the carrying capacity of the land and therefore result in lower stocking rates of livestock to maintain adequate pasture. This is likely to cause angst with landholders and may result in overgrazing or environmental impacts in areas with large populations of fallow deer.

Therefore in the absence of being able to eradicate the deer the deer herd requires management to reduce the impacts of the herd to agricultural land. There are many options but the most effective is culling either through specific shooting or hunting. Options like poison are not effective and have secondary off target consequences. The much publicised option of fertility control while quite achievable in closed herds or in a research setting has limited applications in the wild and can result in secondary impacts due to changing the breeding behaviour of the deer. In the USA where fertility has been trialled in Whitetail Deer the breeding season or rut has been shown to extend from a 4-6 week period to over three months extending the rut from November into winter.

Male deer commonly lose up to 20 % of their body weight during a normal rut and are more mobile. An extended rut has been shown to result in a larger winter death rate in mature bucks due to this weight loss and higher vehicle collisions from mobile bucks seeking out females. A similar pattern of an increase in deer-vehicle accidents is observed in the Illawarra region of NSW during the Rusa Deer rut in July each year.

The Tasmanian fallow herd requires effective management, not to just reduce deer numbers or to reduce impacts to agriculture and the environment but to ensure the herd is healthy. A healthy balanced herd is less likely to have impacts than a herd that have a sex/age structure imbalance or regions of high deer numbers.

The Tasmanian Fallow herd is an economic resource to the state and is a source of income from interstate hunters. ABA would be interested in further discussions on expanding this in opening up bowhunting of fallow deer in Tasmania. In the Mid 1980's ABA established a hunter education program for members and members who have completed this course are covered by the association's public liability insurance while hunting. The course called the Bowhunter Proficiency Certificate was also recognised as meeting the requirements to obtain a NSW Restricted Hunting Licence by the Game Council of NSW.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Burrows.

References:

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Allison Waddington

From: Mark and Ellen Burrows <markandellen@bigpond.com>
Sent: Monday, 27 June 2016 11:46 PM
To: DEER
Subject: legislative council wild fallow deer submission
Attachments: Australian Bowhunters Association submission into the wild Fallow Deer population in Tasmania.docx

Ms Jenny Mannering,
Inquiry Secretary,
Legislative council.

Dear Ms Mannering,
Please accept the attached submission for the Legislative Council Inquiry Into The Wild Fallow Deer Population In Tasmania
on behalf of the Australian Bowhunters Association.

Sincerely,
Mark Burrows
Vice President, Bowhunting.
Australian Bowhunters Association.