

Allison Waddington

From: John Kelly <john@lenah.com.au>
Sent: Monday, 16 May 2016 1:16 PM
To: DEER
Subject: Wild Deer Inquiry submission
Attachments: feral deer Deer Management Briefing Paper Leg C Inq.pdf; Feral deer submission.pdf; Feral deer petition Lton.pdf

Please find attached a submission from Lenah Game Meats along with supportive papers to the Inquiry into the Wild Fallow Deer Population in Tasmania.

I'd be more than happy to provide further evidence and to host a visit of the committee to our processing premise if desired.

Regards

John Kelly

www.lenah.com.au

Lenah Game Meats

TASMANIA TASTES OF THE WILD

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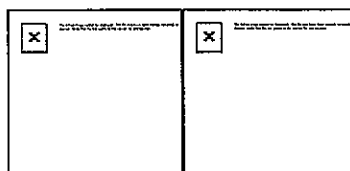
Hobart Fine Food Awards Gold & Silver Medals 2014

Delicious Magazine Produce Awards Finalist 2010 & 2011

Overall Winner Websters Tasmanian Growth Awards 2003/04

"recognising innovation and best practice in Tasmanian Agriculture and Food Industries"

Tasmanian Agribusiness Exporter of the Year 2001



TASMANIAN TASTES OF THE WILD

Lenah Game Meats

Producers of Fine Game



Submission to Legislative Council Inquiry into the Wild Fallow Deer Population in Tasmania.

Submitted by: Lenah Game Meats
Address: PO Box 294
Mowbray, 7248

Background:

Lenah is the largest human consumption game meat processor in Tasmania. To a large extent it pioneered the wild game meat industry in Tasmania, being the first to market wallaby to restaurants in the early 1990's. It supplies all major supermarkets with wallaby on over a hundred menus/year here and interstate.

Venison has been an important line for Lenah since its start. Its principal, John Kelly, specialised in deer production as an Agricultural Scientist, was the States Specialist Deer Farming Advisor with the DPI and has done important meat science research work into venison eating quality.

Lenah initially sourced venison from Tasmanian deer farms. These farms however saw a generational decline during the first decade of this century. Most of the larger deer farms were established by farmers who retired during this period. The deer enterprise was only a small part of their over-all farm and in many cases their children didn't share their passion for it. Hence many were shut down and the supply of Tasmanian farmed venison has become almost non-existent.

It must be considered here that producing quality venison, year round, from fallow deer is one of the toughest gigs there is in agriculture. Deer are strictly seasonal breeders, this makes year round production (demanded by the restaurant trade) difficult. Their breeding season does not align with the peak pasture production period in Tasmanian, making feed management difficult. Finally they are an extremely flighty animal, demanding extraordinarily skills in stockman-ship, excellent handling facilities and extreme care to deliver a high quality product. Any level of stress at slaughter produces highly adverse results in meat, it makes it tough and dry with reduced shelf life. Fallow deer are more subject to such outcomes than any other Australian meat animal. Thus sourcing quality farmed venison is very difficult.

In more recent times Lenah has sourced venison from wild harvested populations on the Mainland. This proved successful for some time and at peak demand Lenah was importing 1t/month for sale in Tasmania alone. However limitations in available cut range, product quality and supply reliability frustrated market development. As a result this trade has now declined to only about half a tonne per month.

In addition, in the past three years Lenah has imported 5*20 foot sea containers of venison (approx. 75 t) from New Zealand to supply Mainland buyers.

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*Overall Winner Websters Tasmanian Growth Awards 2003/04
"recognising innovation and best practice in Tasmanian
agriculture and food industries"*

*TASMANIAN AGRIBUSINESS EXPORTER OF THE YEAR 2001
Delicious Magazine Tasmanian Produce Awards Finalist 2010*

Potential demand

Lenah is a specialist marketer of niche meats. It single-handedly developed the market for wallaby meat. This market now consumes the product from 25,000 wallaby per year processed by Lenah plus an estimated 20,000 by various other processors. In addition Lenah is currently processing 30,000 possum per year for meat product. When it comes to marketing game meat, Lenah has the experience, skill, scientific expertise and commercial acumen to be confident to state we know what we are talking about.

The product supply limitations discussed above have led to the situation now where Lenah no longer actively markets venison. However, access to wild harvested Tasmanian fallow venison would change this instantly. Tasmanian regulation needs to change to respond to an impending crisis in the exponential increase in female deer not taken by recreational and crop protection harvest shooters.

Tasmanian wild-harvested venison product will have several tremendous marketing advantages when processed through a proven and accredited meat processing facility like Lenah:

- A wild harvested product avoids all the inherent quality problems of domestic slaughtered venison so product quality will be superb.
- Direct harvest and production management would enable good quality control.
- It will capitalise on the Tasmanian brand, being Tasmanian meat brings with it real market advantages
- Finally, well processed fallow venison is widely acknowledge as being of superior quality to all other venison types available in Australia, yet almost none is produced.

Professionally processed and marketed wild harvested Tasmanian fallow venison will quickly gain a reputation as yet another superior quality Tasmanian food product.

Chef enthusiasm for this product is demonstrated by the petition attached signed by over 20 Tasmanian restaurants.

Based on past sales history, supplemented by a very modest promo campaign, Lenah believes it can readily sell 1.5 t/month of wild harvested boneless venison within Tasmania and a further 3 t/month in interstate markets. This equates to the meat from 5400 deer and would generate 18 full time jobs. A more aggressive marketing campaign could easily increase this.

The available resource

The attached review indicates that currently over 15,000 crop protection tags are issued per year, of these typically only 50% are used. As the report also notes, the cull of females has been static for over a decade and populations appear to be rising substantially. It is also well known that large numbers of deer are culled illegally each year by farmers desperate to protect their livelihood.

A UTas report released last year predicts that if deer management is not changed populations will exceed 1 million animals by 2050 and represent a serious threat to agriculture, public safety (via road collisions) and World Heritage ecosystems .

<http://www.nerplandscapes.edu.au/system/files/userfiles/S%20334%20Deer%20habitat%20modelling%20Summary.pdf>

Finally, the attached report suggests that expanding deer numbers are leading to poorer quality trophy heads and a decline in the recreational value of the deer resource.

It seems apparent the deer cull needs to increase.

A commercial harvest of 10,000 deer/year taken under crop protection permits per year would go a long way to mitigating the threat outlined by the UTas report. It would also improve the recreational value of the resource by contributing to an improvement in average trophy head quality as a result of better nutrition for the herd over-all. It would deliver more effective crop protection and public safety by reducing the likelihood of road collisions with deer.

With a little promotional effort this resource could successfully be marketed as a premium product generating something like 33 full time jobs and making a significant contribution towards protecting World Heritage values, public safety and agricultural productivity in coming decades.

What needs to change?

Enabling commercial use of feral deer is as simply as placing a licence condition on crop protection permits similar to that on commercial wallaby permits.

No changes or additional licensing or changes to meat hygiene regulations are required. The existing Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Game Meat for Human Consumption controls all forms of wild game meat production and specifically covers deer processing. Existing game meat harvesters and processing premises are licensed to process all forms of wild game. In Lenah's case our approved QA manual includes a venison processing section and our processing facilities are capable of handling deer bodies.

Crop protection permit issue could remain exactly the same, tags issue and control would remain the same as current. All that needs change is a simple permit clause allowing use.

In conclusion:

- Fallow deer are now prevalent throughout the State and no longer confined to the initial release areas of the Midlands and Central Highlands.
- Deer numbers are growing exponentially, causing significant economic loss and environmental damage and increased public safety risk via road collision.
- The current crop protection tag and recreational shooting regime are no longer controlling this invasive, introduced browsing animal.
- Facilities and protocols for the processing of game meat exist in this state which have been proven to be safe, compliant and have substantial marketing capacity.
- A commercial deer harvest could create 33 full time positions, a sustainable new industry and expand and enhance the Tasmania brand as well as deliver improved agricultural and environmental damage mitigation and improved public safety.

If the Committee would like to receive further direct evidence I would be happy to oblige and our business would also be pleased to host a visit should this be helpful to your deliberations .

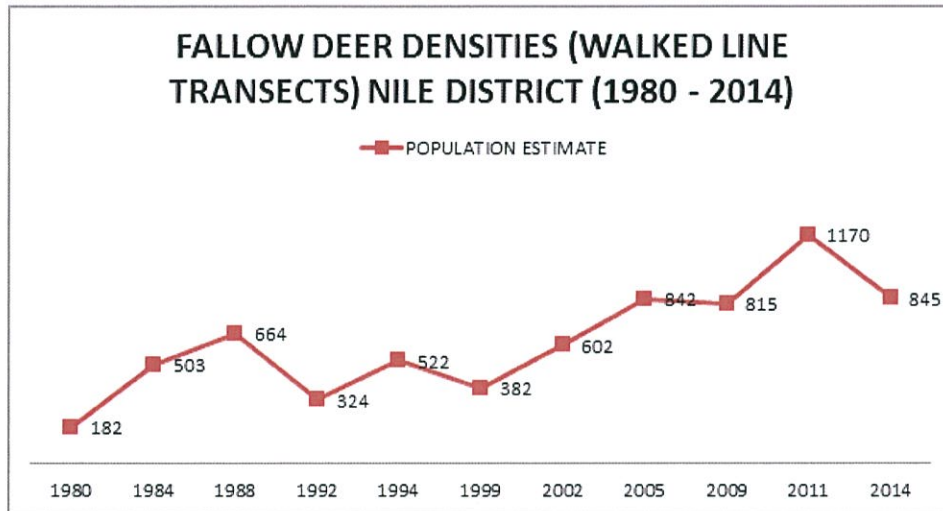


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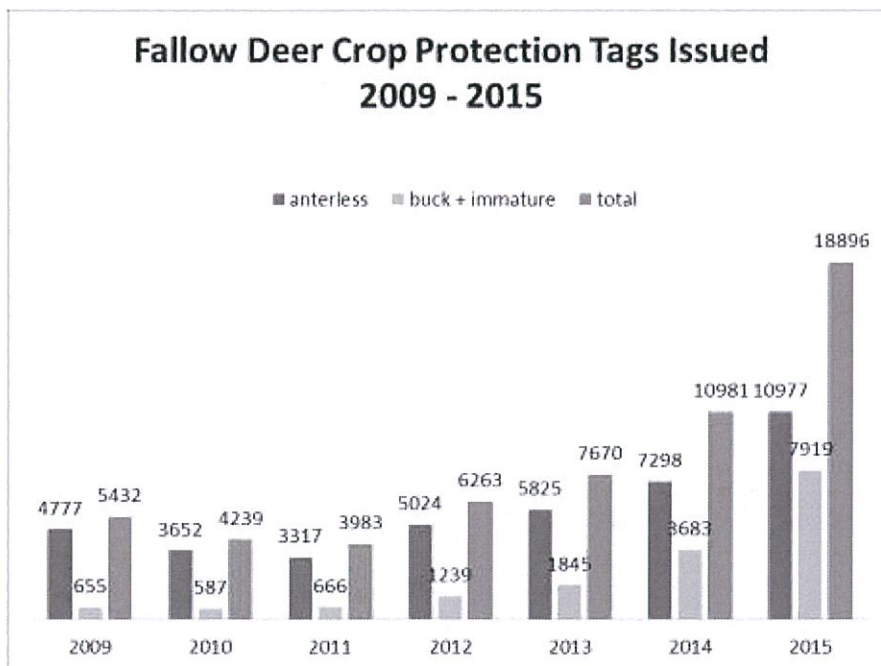
Deer Management Briefing Paper

What's happening with deer numbers?

The Department formally monitors deer densities at three sites in the state once every 3-4 years. The most intensively and most recently monitored is at Nile with data for it portrayed in the graph below. Between 1999 and 2014 densities at this site have increased by over 100%. Suggesting the deer population doubled in that period.



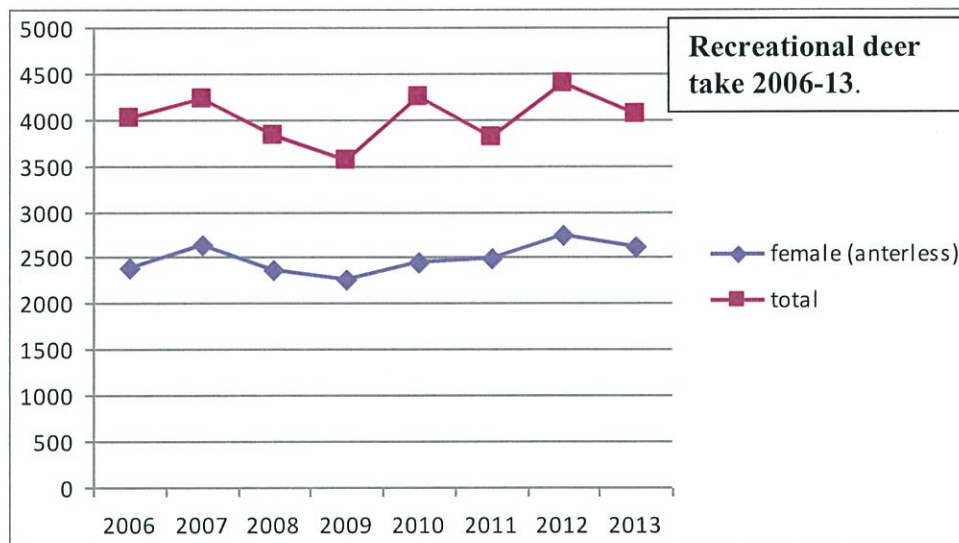
This is supported by the issue of crop protection permits. The numbers of crop protection permits issued in 2015 was 475% high than 2010, also suggesting high population growth. In 2015 a total of near 19000 crop protection permits were issued.



But how many deer are taken?

In 2015 the recreational take of deer under ‘game licences’ was only 34% of the tags issued.

The recreational take, especially of females, has been static for a decade. The female recreational take in 2015 has increased by only 500 animals per year since 2010. This is not sufficient to control population increase.



The take of deer under crop protection permits historically averages only about 50-60% of all tags issued. In 2015 in spite of a record crop protection take it was still only 54% of the total number of tags issued. Again insufficient to control populations.

The level of the recreational and crop protection takes (especially of females) have been insufficient to control numbers and resulted in the States deer herd increasing substantially, perhaps four fold since 2002.

Is the current system achieving the stated aims?

Government policy claims to be managing deer populations with the objective of

“allow(ing) the benefits of wild deer, such as hunting, to be realised while limiting their negative impacts on crops and natural values.”

Yet clearly deer populations are dramatically increasing, and causing greater *negative impacts on crops and natural values*.

An example is a 70 ha crop of wheat planted on a Fingal Valley property.

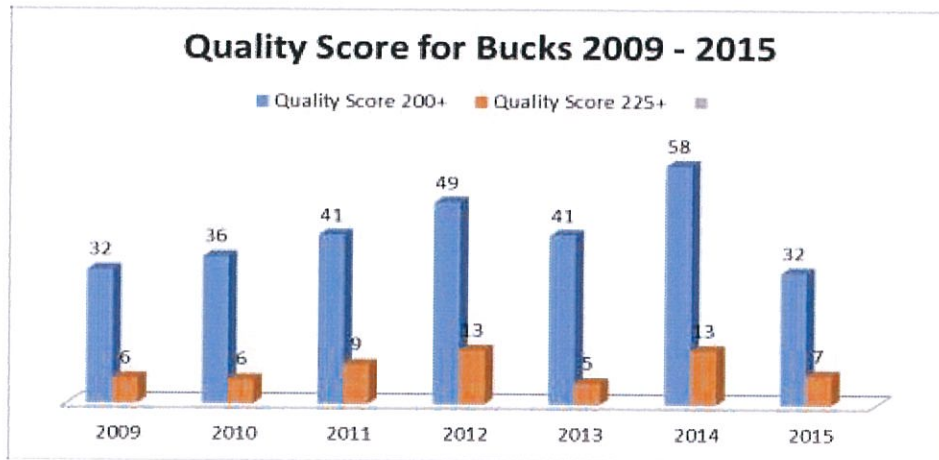
Wallaby and possum on this property are kept under control by commercial harvesters. The property has a Game Management Plan and allows access for 35 recreational shooters. It had 100 deer crop protection tags, but recreational shooters used only 30. The result was zero winter grazing from the crop and an expected 40% reduction in grain yield. Estimated loss was \$40,000. The pictures below demonstrate why, the exclusion cages show the growth the crop should have yielded had it not been eaten into the ground by deer.



The property owner would be delighted to host a visit from the Inquiry to demonstrate the issue directly.

This scenario is played out on properties throughout the deer range, and increasingly, outside it. It's not unreasonable to estimate that failure to take crop protection tags over the past decade is now costing Tasmanian farmers in excess of \$10M/year.

In addition the recreational quality of the resource is being impacted on. In 2015 the average quality of heads taken in Tasmania, as measured by Departmental data, plummeted to the lowest level ever seen. A simple cause seems apparent, too many deer means inadequate nutrition and poor antler growth.



The low level of harvest in the past decade and rapid herd growth is also putting at risk the quality of the deer recreational hunting experience in Tasmania.

The aim of Quality Deer Management (QDM) is to promote a healthy deer population in balance with the habitat in which the deer reside. This usually equates to deer herds being kept at lower densities than under traditional management practices, thus reducing any potential damage caused by deer and improving overall herd health and trophy quality. A common misconception under QDM is that fewer deer will be harvested, in-fact the opposite is true.

So the current system is neither protecting the hunting experience nor crops. The question needs to be asked, 'is it heading toward a catastrophic failure?'

A catastrophic failure? A recently released study put together by six by scientists from the University of Tasmania and the Natural Environment Research Program has noted that deer populations increased from 7,000 in the early 1970's to 20-30,000 in the early 2000's and predicted that if the current management regime remains unchanged, then by 2050 they will exceed 1 million animals. They note:
The current rate of killing of Fallow Deer by licensed hunters and landholders will make almost no difference to the likely size of the population 20 or 30 years from now.
 This will pose threats to World Heritage wilderness, agricultural viability and road safety.

<http://www.nerplandscapes.edu.au/system/files/userfiles/S%2334%20Deer%20habitat%20modelling%20Summary.pdf>

The answer?

A crop protection take of deer which only utilises recreational shooters is flawed. “There is only so much venison you can give away”, is a typical response of recreational shooter to being asked to shoot more deer under crop protection. Recreational shooters simply do not have enough of an incentive to deliver effective State wide deer control.

Taking the full crop complement of crop protection tags, and thereby exercising adequate control over the population, is only likely to happen when there is an adequate incentive to do so. Allowing the commercial use of deer taken under crop protection will create such an incentive. Once deer have a value, a commercial sector WILL put in the effort required to fully utilise crop protection tags.

Doing so yields benefits for farmers, trophy hunters, the environment and the economy.
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Prepared by

John Kelly
Lenah Game Meats

Using DPIPWE data available from Game Tracks and on request from DPIPWE.

Minister Groom
Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage
Parliament House
Hobart

Petition re commercial use of feral deer


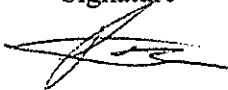


Dear Minister

The undersigned Tasmanian Chefs and Restaurateurs wish to appeal to you to remove a restrictive piece of red tape and allow the commercial utilisation of feral deer.

We understand that deer are a feral pest to Tasmanian farmers, yet government regulation prevent them being processed for their meat. This is a great pity since being able to include 'wild harvested Tasmanian venison' on our restaurant menus would be of significant value to us. This would greatly add to the local flavour of our menus and increase their appeal to interstate and international visitors.

We ask that the government simply remove from deer cull permits the licence restriction preventing their commercial use. Nothing more, a simple step, which can be done without any changes in legislation or regulations, but which would open to us an exciting addition to the Tasmanian culinary offer.

Signed

Signature 	name DANISE SAUNDERS	Restaurant CATARACT ON PATERSON	date 12/8.
Signature 	name Pargo Anning	Restaurant Cataract on paterson	date 12/8
Signature 	name Luke Osborn	Restaurant MUD BAR & Restaurant	date 12/8
Signature 	name Jane Bisset	Restaurant The River Edge	date 12/08
Signature	name	Restaurant	date

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Minister for Environment, Parks and Heritage
Parliament House
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
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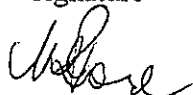
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Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Michael Mackinnon	the sebel launceston	29/7/14

Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Craig Hobbs	Levee food Co.	29/7/14

Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Sara Johnson	Salsa	29-7-14

Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Michele Roud	PhotoShop	29/7/14

Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Rod	RED TEDS	29/7/2014

Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	craig will	Stillwater	29/7/2014

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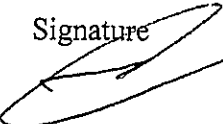
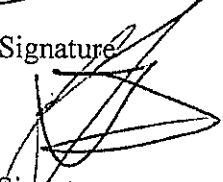

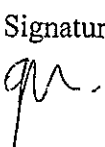
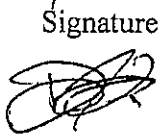

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Signature 	name G. Nicholson	Restaurant CHEFIST CHOCLE	date 22/7/14
Signature 	name JOHN FAHY	Restaurant DEZICAY	date 22/7/14
Signature 	name ROBERT PERRY	Restaurant CASOLINGA	date 22/7/14
Signature 	name Jeremy Macdonald	Restaurant Metc	date 22/7/14
Signature 	name Damon Terrell	Restaurant Hotel Grand Channel Launceston	date 29/7/2014
Signature 	name Ann Sheppard	Restaurant CLARION CITY PARK GRAND	date 29/7/2014

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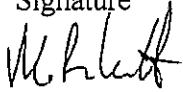
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	MARCO PAOLETTI	STONEISHLAW	22/8/14
Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Damien Webb	The Lauriston club	29/7/14
Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	M. R. Houghton	Beep Open Products	29/7/14
Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	Terry Miller	Brisbane Street RESTO	20/7/14
Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	SAM STEEL	THE NORTHERN CLUB	9/8/14
Signature	name	Restaurant	date
	SEAN KEATING	JOSEPH Vignard	12/8/2014
Signature	name	Restaurant	date