



Sporting Shooters Association of Australia
Glenorchy Incorporated



Ms Jenny Mannering
Inquiry Secretary
Legislative Council
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

28th June 2016

Dear Ms Mannering,

SUBJECT: SSAA T03 FALLOW DEER INQUIRY SUBMISSION

Please accept the attached submission from the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia
Glenorchy Inc.

Yours Sincerely,

S. Bowden
President
SSAA Glenorchy Inc.

Dear committee

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on Legislative Council inquiry into the wild fallow deer population in Tasmania on behalf of SSAA T03 Glenorchy.

SSAA T03 Glenorchy is a rifle and handgun club with over 600 members. One of our club's stated aims and purpose is to advocate and undertake game management conservation and legal recognition of game animals (both indigenous and introduced).

Below are our thoughts and position on the Tasmanian wild fallow deer.

Environmental impacts on public and private land

It has been documented that deer were introduced in Australia in the 19th century. In today's society there are six species of deer roaming wild in parts of mainland Australia, though in Tasmania this is limited to one species, the fallow deer (*dama dama*). First introduced around the 1830s, the number and location has spread, raising issues for landowners, and other interested and impacted stakeholders.

Wild deer are known to cause damage from trampling, ring-barking, antler-rubbing, weed dispersal, creation of trails and damage to wetlands and streams, though not to the same extent of livestock.

Whilst there are some environment impacts, it is questionable if the damage is significantly greater than that imposed by domestic livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats and horses; particularly on private land. There the greater impact is damage to fences and competition for food for livestock and destruction of crops.

However where there can be an issue is if fallow deer become established in areas of high sensitivity, and or wilderness areas not accessed by domestic livestock. In some quarters people have reported sightings in some wilderness/heritage areas, which are not traditional deer range areas.

Any impact on commercial activities on private land

It has been reported in The Mercury newspaper, 10th November 2014, The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association is calling for commercialisation of wild deer harvesting in the face of increased numbers.

Most landowners already receive a financial return from allowing hunters onto the land to hunt wild fallow deer. Having hunters on private land also provides the landowner free access to teams of volunteers for other pest grazing animal control. This mobile volunteer base can be accessed via various programs such as the recently launched *SSAA Farmer Assist*¹ program and game management plans. It has been stated some land owners charge \$100 a day/per hunter during deer season, others upwards to \$1,500 a year, with some properties reportedly having 60 or so hunters on their books for the ability to hunt deer on their private lands.

A big consideration before allowing the commercialisation of wild Tasmanian fallow deer would be the negative financial impact to small and local deer farmers, who currently supply a small but emerging market. There may also be issues with consistency of quality and supply, which would also have a negative impact to the free range farmed deer industry.

Changing the rules would have dire consequences to these farmers, who have employees and comply with costly legislative requirements.

¹ The SSAA Farmer Assist program has been developed to enable farmers with wildlife management issues to seek the assistance of SSAA members. The specially designed program is run via a website, allowing a farmer to choose who they invite onto their properties from the group of members replying to their post.

If, and we say it's a big if, other non-deer farmers are struggling with deer numbers, then they are perhaps not utilising the deer permits effectively or maybe not utilising the volunteer deer hunters resources as effectively as they could.

Perhaps the deer hunting season is too short, perhaps the recreational deer season should be expanded further to allow hunters more time to help control deer numbers, particularly for the does and young male deer. The current proclaimed deer hunting season is considered by many to be too short to have any significant impact on deer numbers. Expanding the season out to October of each year would see more deer taken which would have added benefits to farmers and local economies alike.

However, there are no true surveys in the actual numbers of deer, and as Tasmania has been experiencing drought conditions for some time, this will have had an impact on deer numbers and pulled herds together in search of food and water.

The partly protected status of fallow deer under the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010

The Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association are calling for commercialisation of deer harvesting in the face of increased numbers.

The numbers of deer are not necessarily wide spread, as many of the permits issues each year for hunting and crop protection are not fully taken up, which suggests there is a mismatch.

It does not seem unreasonable that the landowner/farmer will be able to manage wild deer as they see fit on their own land. For example reducing them as much as possible, maintaining them as a resource, tolerating them or choosing to adhere to target levels set with the relevant government agency.

However changing the status of wild deer is not supported, due to impact to the economy in lost revenue from recreational hunters and also the financial risk it would expose the local deer farmers to and potential loss of jobs in the local economies. If the deer were classified as pests then this would lead to the risk of landowners using poisons, which are considered cruel, increasing the risks of contamination to the environment, risks to other non-target animals and a waste of government resources to administer.

Commercial opportunities for the use of wild population stocks

It has been said that venison from wild fallow deer is currently imported from the mainland to supply our restaurant trade. However like the current debate about what constitute free range eggs, further clarification is needed about the import of wild harvested fallow deer meat, it has been suggested that this imported "wild venison" is most likely from fenced in areas, not strictly "wild".

What this does suggest is there is a market for good quality deer meat in Tasmania, though with several deer farms throughout Tasmania, it would not be logical to allow the commercialisation of wild Tasmanian fallow deer, as this would have a negative direct impact to the local deer industry, their employees and all this at a time when the state needs to protect and increase employment opportunities.

Wild harvesting deer meat and recreational hunting are mutually exclusive.

Hunters pour millions of dollars into local communities, for example the Central Highlands Bushfest², licence and permit fees, fuel, equipment and food, often purchased in areas off the typical tourist routes, helping these small remote towns and rural regions.

² Bushfest is an annual event held at Bothwell in November which features out pursuits of the region, fishing, hunting, camping and other recreational and adventure activities. There will also be available sites for catering stalls and sites for showcasing produce, arts and crafts

Deer submission - Wildlife and Conservation SSAA T03 Glenorchy

The risk that the commercial harvest of wild shot local deer has a massive risk of displacing the local farmed deer trade, and place at risk jobs in remote communities, where employment opportunities are limited. It should also be noted, restaurants and other consumers want consistent quality and all year around supply of deer meat, something which wild harvested deer meat does not provide.

Any matters incidental thereto.

In a recent CSIRO publication, *Predicting the future range and abundance of fallow deer*, the modeling estimate of growth rate suggests that the population could increase by 40% in 10 years (2014–2023) and exceed one million by mid-century. However this is not realistic as wild deer are not left unfettered to increase in population. Importantly if Tasmania wants to know the extent of the wild fallow deer are in Tasmania, then a survey needs to be conducted to establish the numbers and range.

There is one major issue which underpins the arguments, lack of data. There is no reliable and systematic survey of deer population in Tasmania.

What impacts occur as a result of wild fires, does this open up areas easier to deer, what mitigating controls are in place to prevent this.

If deer have moved into wildness areas, then perhaps allow, under permit or ballot conditions, similar to that coordinated by DPIWPE in the Central Highlands conservation areas, access to accredited³ hunters to access these areas, which also provides the potential for a large volunteer base to conduct surveys and undertake basic studies.

Kind regards

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Conservation and wildlife representative
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³ For example SSAA Farmer Assist hunters pass an accreditation shot and abide by a code of conduct