

Submission

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY
INTO THE WILD FALLOW DEER
POPULATION IN TASMANIA

Views by

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Wild Fallow deer are certainly not new to the Tasmanian environment, having been established for over 170 years. They first arrived approximately in the 1840's and were held in captivity until such time as their numbers increased, to what was believed a sustainable population that would allow recreational hunting for the landed gentry of the day. The first liberation of the deer occurred in the midlands and was followed by several others.

Yes, the population has certainly increased and as the size of the population grows they are spreading into areas previously uninhabited by them since the first release of the deer into the wild.

Some of the more significant reasons may include the illegal release of deer from failed deer farms into the wild.

Changing agricultural practices; what was previously grazing land has now been cleared for intensive cropping with pivot irrigators. This in turn has led to an increase in the amount of available food for the deer.

Large amounts of land have been cleared and dense forestry plantations established, providing an ideal habit for the deer to take cover in.

In some areas both of the above comments about cropping and forestry have occurred within a short distance from each other. Thus an inevitable increase in the population of the deer has occurred.

With regard to the current season dates for stag hunting I make the following suggestions;

The stag season starts as usual, but continues two weeks into April so as to give the trophy shooter a maximum chance of taking an animal. The true trophy hunter may go for many years and never take a deer if a trophy can't be located. This does not help in the reduction or maintaining of the population.

Also, I propose that a second season for all male deer be introduced in late May, after the breeding cycle for a period of approximately 10 weeks to allow for the removal of those male deer whose antlers have no trophy potential this season would include the removal of juvenile males (Spikies) with substandard spikes. The removing of sub-standard animals from the herd is common practice in well managed hunting estates in Britain and Europe, thus allowing for improved trophy potential and at the same time reducing the number of animals on the ground.

Managing the numbers of female deer;

The current system of applying for tags and permits has become very restrictive to the point where a lot of crop damage is occurring because Australia Post will not guarantee delivery times or dates, in some instances the tags and permits have simply vanished. This required the said permits to be re-issued. Only with the support and co-operation from Mr. Matthew Byrne of the Game Management Services Unit were the permits delivered to the property by hand to make up for the week's lost time. A herd of deer are able to do considerable damage to a crop in a week.

The current seasons and dates seem to work for the doe hunting, however, I would like to see a system that did away with the need for tags. Perhaps a permit / license such as that used for wallaby hunting and crop protection.

Another point which makes a hunter think about whether or not to take an animal is its location. A requirement of the existing license states that all parts of the deer must be taken to the hunter's normal place of residence, even if the animal has been broken down the parts have to be labeled. At the time of shooting it is inevitable that some or a large amount of the animal may be damaged and not fit for human consumption. Then there is the matter of carcass disposal, most municipalities have strict regulations as to the disposal of this kind of waste.

While maintaining the need for the head to be tagged, if this regulation were to be relaxed allowing the hunter to retrieve only the usable parts of the animal, the remainder would provide an easy meal for devils, quolls and various bush scavengers. The hunter who hunts in steep, inaccessible country may be more inclined to harvest deer from areas that do not have vehicle access, thus again increasing the opportunities to reduce the number of deer in difficult to access areas.

Something to think about;

From a sporting perspective I feel that the current deer season dates are somewhat irrational. That is the trophy hunter is trying to find and harvest the biggest and best stag he can find.

Why is it, that just prior to that stag being able to mate with the females and pass on his breeding qualities, the deer season starts and runs until the beginning of the rut (mating season)? Thus preventing some of the best stags a chance to pass on their qualities.

Surely if the quality of the deer as a trophy animal is to be considered an opening date at the end of April would be an improvement. Some may argue that due to the males fighting during the rut that some of the stags may have broken antlers and the trophy quality diminished. This is true however, the larger dominant animals, and the trophy stags would most likely remain intact. Those hunters wishing to harvest only meat would have the option to do so in the second season for male deer if it was to be.

Similarly, with the timing of the doe season, as soon as the females get pregnant the shooting season starts and for many there is no chance to reproduce.

Commercial use of wild Fallow deer;

I don't believe that this is viable, with the exception of a few professional shooting enterprises catering for the wealthy sportsman. Looking at the huge number of failed deer farms in the state and that there is only one company processing game meat in Tasmania, (Lenah Game Meats) it appears like so many other ventures into alternative sources of meat such as Emu, Goat, Cape Barren Geese and Wallaby a commercial venture into wild venison sales would financially fail.