



Controlling feral deer

Deer are introduced species in Victoria that cause significant ecological and agricultural damage. Seven species have been introduced into Victoria. Sambar, Red, Hog and Fallow deer are the most likely species to impact habitat. Their impacts include:

- Selective browsing of vegetation
- Wallowing and tree rubbing
- Fence destruction
- Habitat degradation and threats to endangered ecosystems

Deer populations are expanding rapidly, particularly in forested eastern regions, and require coordinated control efforts. Regulations around deer control are complicated – check with relevant authorities for complete information. All deer are also game species. Commercial and recreational hunting is regulated by the Game Management Authority. Always ensure you are following animal welfare and firearms regulations.

Location and habitat

These deer control methods are relevant statewide across a range of habitats.



Above: Sambar Deer are one of seven species of deer introduced to Victoria



General information

- Deer impact can be recognised by rubbing spots on tree trunks, browsing of trees and shrubs, and pugging of soil
- All deer except Hog Deer can be shot on a landholder's property without a permit (other methods, such as trapping, require permits)
- Shooting to control Hog Deer, even on your own property, requires an Authority to Control Wildlife from the Victorian Government
- Deer control must comply with firearms and animal welfare regulations
- Effective control requires skilled shooters, landscape knowledge, and monitoring tools (e.g. motion-sensor cameras)
- Deer exclusion fencing is effective but may impact movement of wildlife
- Carcass disposal is essential to prevent scavenging by introduced predators
- Collaborative landscape-scale control is recommended for best results

Methods

General deer control (excluding Hog Deer)

For most landscapes, shooting deer is the most effective method of control.

- Identify species (ensure it is not Hog Deer)
- Use approved firearms and methods
- Spotlighting is permitted on the landholder's property
- If using contractors, ensure they are aware and comply with all relevant regulations and permits
- Dispose of carcasses responsibly – deer meat can be used for personal consumption only.

- Coordinate with neighbours and community groups for broader impact

Hog Deer control

Hog Deer are the smallest deer species introduced to Victoria. They are found along the Gippsland coast. Hog Deer are a protected game species.

- Follow regulations around seasonal restrictions and shooting limits
- Shot Hog Deer must be tagged and presented to a checking station within 24 hours
Landholders can shoot Hog Deer on their property outside of the prescribed season with an Authority to Control Wildlife from the Victorian Government

Non-lethal Control


Exclusion fencing is the most effective non-lethal method for controlling deer. Other non-lethal methods include removing access to water sources and grazing, deterrents (such as noise), and guards and fences around trees and restored vegetation.




Above: Red Deer

Further information

For further advice and support, please contact Trust for Nature.

 (03) 8631 5838

 trustfornature@tfn.org.au

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Maintenance and monitoring

- Monitor deer activity and presence across the year
- Use motion-sensor cameras to track deer movement
- Maintain fencing and monitor for breaches
- Record control efforts and outcomes
- Engage with Landcare or community networks for shared monitoring
- Report deer sightings to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas

Safety

Always wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when undertaking land management. Follow all label instructions on equipment and local regulations. Be mindful of weather conditions. Do not conduct land management on days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger or total fire ban.

