



# Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association

## Wild Fallow Deer

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### TFGA Position:

- Support culling of deer to control numbers and prevent crop decimation;
- Maintain the recreational deer season;
- Support 5-year Crop Protection Permits;
- Support no tags for crop protection purposes for both stags and does outside of the fawning season;
- Economic benefit is available for farmer to utilise ie. hunters pay to come on farm to shoot deer; and
- Support the sale of deer meat for human and/or pet consumption.

### Background:

Historical records show, twelve European fallow deer (*Dama dama*) of mixed genders were first imported into Tasmania in 1836. In recent years this fauna resource originating from the European fallow deer introduced in the 19th Century have been managed as a hunting resource while minimising their negative impacts and significant threats on agricultural crops, forestry, farmed livestock and natural botanical resources.

Regional wild fallow deer populations and stock densities vary throughout Tasmania, but the total population appears to have steadily increased in size and dispersal across the State.

Fallow deer do much of their feeding in open, grassy areas but require tree cover and undergrowth for shelter and winter food. Deciduous or mixed woodlands on gently rolling terrain are best. Food availability appears to determine whether fallow deer in an area are predominantly grazers or browsers.

Fallow deer are a partly protected species under the state regulation Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010. Annual seasons of specified duration are proclaimed, and licence permits issued for a fee of \$71.10 or concessional fee of \$56.88 for the taking of male and antlerless deer.

Outside of the proclaimed annual seasons, fallow deer may be taken under Crop Protection Permits (available by contacting the Game Management Unit and the Wildlife Management Branch) issued to landowners who are suffering browsing damage from deer.

### Discussion:

TFGA understand that some farmers consider wild fallow deer hunting to be part of their normal farming income streams and they manage their properties and farming businesses accordingly. However, not all farmers are of this view and those who do not wish to be involved in hunting activities should not be expected to manage, feed and house feral fallow deer populations that are negatively impacting on their income and potentially increasing the risk of transfer of disease and pests.

Deer are not managed like other feral animals, such as rabbits, which are subject to the Vermin Control Act and therefore the full range of pest management controls. Fallow deer control is subject to a licensing (permit) system for seasonal harvesting of males and does, reporting of number harvested and, differentiating between recreational and crop protection management programs. TFGA believe that Deer should be managed equal to other feral animals.

Fallow deer pose a threat to agriculture, in the following ways: damage and competition for livestock grazing pasture, damage to crops, a potential disease vector for domestic livestock, damage to native vegetation through browsing, and impacts to native animal species through disturbance of breeding sites. Fallow deer tend to have the greatest impacts on improved pastures due to their numbers and preference for grazing improved pasture compared with other deer species.

Through a recent survey undertaken by TFGA the results showed that the majority, being at least 90% or more, of those surveyed are demanding that deer be classified as a feral pest and should not be partly protected. The respondents also very strongly indicated that they support a 5-year crop protection permit, no tags for both stags and does for crop protection purposes and deer meat should be available for human and/or pet consumption.

There are now viable pathways for the consumption of deer meat, being processed in accordance with food safety legislation with an opportunity to export overseas to support the growing market for the many purposes of deer meat.

Tasmania has over 50% of the State under reserves, be it crown land, national parks, World Heritage Areas or private land covenants. Some of this land has had livestock removed from this area because it has been classed highly sensitive and particularly susceptible to livestock movement. On this basis there is a need for the state government to eradicate fallow deer from these areas also.

The TFGA is of the strong view that mechanisms to control and reduce deer numbers must be undertaken and current restrictions need to be reconsidered. This would essentially mean changing regulatory legislation to provide farmers with more control over their farms and give them the choice of eradication to prevent crop decimation and the loss of potentially millions of dollars per year in Agriculture revenue. To put this into perspective, Deer hunting revenue is valued at approximately \$10 million dollars compared to \$66 billion dollars in Agriculture revenue per year including export potential for Tasmania and that there is more at stake for the Tasmanian economy for loss of crops than there is for a decrease in deer head trophies.