

Environment and Communications Reference Committee Inquiry into feral deer, pigs and goats

Please find below further information, in addition to our 2018 submission to the committee's inquiry.

There are two additional consequences from having uncontrolled populations of feral deer present in the landscape in an ongoing way, that have **recently** become more apparent.

Firstly, Biosecurity

The biosecurity risks to domestic agricultural livestock are rising in importance as research identifies more common disease and contamination risks of domestic livestock by invasive feral deer as they graze improved pastures on farms. Recent research has shown some parasites of sheep and cattle, for example liver fluke, are co-hosted by feral deer which re-contaminate improved pastures after control by farmers. There are at least 15 diseases common to feral deer and domestic livestock including Johanne's and Foot and Mouth disease.

The continued presence of feral deer amongst domestic herd animals also increases the difficulties in maintaining herd and business 'bio secure status'. Bio secure status declarations are required by marketing authorities, processors and supply chains for meat and fibre products. Meat and fibre market value chain stakeholders are increasingly mandating 'bio secure' supply chains where quality of product and disease/contaminate standards have to be **proven** to be maintained at a high level. As a farmer we need to make statutory declarations that biosecurity plans have been developed and implemented and this is becoming increasingly difficult as the presence of feral deer becomes more entrenched in the landscape.

Our deer group has invested major resources in attempting to control feral deer populations across our landscape. Feral deer species however, have a unique characteristic among vertebrate pest animals in their ability to learn, after one or two exposures, avoidance behaviour to the particular control technique employed. They also adapt behaviour readily and convey the survival behaviours across generations. Deer escalate their ability to resist control rapidly and this makes meeting biosecurity standards very difficult and expensive.

Secondly, Carbon Sequestration

Our attempts to **establish areas of grasslands, woodlands or forest areas** now are problematic as the areas need protection from grazing and browsing feral deer for **at least 12 years**. Either a combination of 2 metre high substantial posts and 2.2 metre high mesh fences are needed around each tree or area or a feral deer proof fence needs to be erected around the area. This increases costs greatly and effectively means we now do not invest in revegetation.

More importantly our attempts to build partnerships with carbon sequestration companies and potentially earn income from carbon sequestration on our farm have been abandoned as the presence of feral deer renders carbon sequestration tree or grassland planting very difficult. The greatest concern is that our attempts to protect and enhance existing areas of woodland, grassland and forest that would sequester carbon on our land is made impossible with the presence of feral deer in substantial numbers.

These two issues have become increasingly important in our agricultural business and vertebrate animal pest control planning. Our feral deer control group rates biosecurity and carbon sequestration issues as priority issues for future sustainability of our businesses.