

12 December 2018

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Secretary,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into *The impact of feral deer, pigs and goats in Australia*.

My submission is attached.

Yours faithfully

Simon Cameron

Preamble

My submission is limited to addressing the impact of feral deer in Tasmania. It is intended to provide the Committee with feedback from the coal face where the negative impacts of the Tasmanian Government's feral deer policy are experienced and the way that policy is implemented.

I am a Tasmanian wool grower. Hosting feral deer is forced on my enterprise yet I am allowed no say in how the species is managed. The impost reduces my farm output by 10%-15%, a financial loss of about \$50,000 per annum.

My property is high in natural values, described by Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) scientists as possibly being of national significance. I have sought to protect this biodiversity asset with my own resources and Federal support such as the 'Caring For Our Country' programme. Successive Tasmanian governments have demonstrated that their overriding priority is recreational hunting regardless of the outcome. Direct communication with at least five ministers responsible for wildlife control has confirmed this.

It seems that damage to my enterprise and those associated with it is deemed acceptable collateral damage in the appeasement of recreational hunters whether members of that community agree with the government position or not. There are plenty who disagree with it but few if any who are prepared to speak up.

Widespread recreational deer hunting does not have the long history in Tasmania that it is purported to have. In many places it may only go back 30 to 40 years. There are many landowners who can remember when deer were either very rare or non-existent on their land. My own experience extends back more than 50 years. The previous comment is true in my case.

My primary recommendation to the Tasmanian Legislative Council's 'Inquiry into Wild Fallow Deer' was:

That Wild Fallow Deer (Dama dama) be removed from Schedule 4 Part 2 of the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010 and declared vermin under the Vermin Control Act 2000.

It remains my preferred position.

I extend an invitation to the Committee or its representative to visit my farm to gain a first-hand understanding of the issues related to the management of feral deer in Tasmania. The Tasmanian Legislative Council Committee, I believe, found such a visit helpful when it accepted a similar offer.

I am prepared to appear before the Committee if I am able to assist its deliberations.

Summary

- The Tasmanian Government places a higher priority on acceding to the needs of recreation hunters than other groups such as farmers and those who manage land for conservation purposes.
- The Tasmanian Government continues to allow the deer range to increase in an unrestricted manner and the population to increase continuously.
- The procedures for controlling deer are resulting in significant farming and forestry losses, an estimate of in excess of \$50 million per annum was submitted to the Tasmanian Legislative Council's Inquiry into Wild Deer, and necessitating the slaughter of about 20,000 deer a year by farmers attempting to protect their enterprises.

- The biosecurity risks posed by deer are either not recognised or not taken seriously by the Tasmanian Government.
- The presence of deer in conservation areas such as the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area has been recognised as an issue although not yet addressed. Deer in other high value conservation areas such as the Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot are not recognised as an issue needing specific attention.
- The negative impact of feral deer in Tasmania will worsen.

A The current and potential occurrence of feral deer

The Tasmanian feral deer population is not known with certainty. Recently the lack of transparency with which deer are managed and information made available was emphasised via evidence to the Legislative Council's Inquiry into Wild Deer. In its written submission DPIPWE stated:

"The fallow deer population has increased steadily since its introduction in the early 19th Century. In the early 1970s, a conservative estimate was made of 8 000 deer. A limited survey in 1990 indicated a population of 16 000 to 20 000. By the mid-2000s it was estimated that the population had reached 30 000, although it is likely that the herd declined to around 20 000 in the late 2000s as a consequence of prolonged and severe drought, and culling." (p17)

On 6 February 2017 the following disclosure was given in an Inquiry hearing:

*"From that we estimate different types of habitat within those areas we surveyed, certain densities of deer. They vary, say, two per square kilometre up to about 10 or 11 in the most optimum habitat. Based on that we have come up with figures at the lower end of, say, 40 000 - 50 000, up to 80 000. If you apply the highest density estimate it can be over 100 000, currently. They are very rough estimates but they support the statement. **We have to concede deer numbers are considerably above what we, the department, have been saying for some years now - about 30 000. That is not reasonable, it is considerably more than that.**"* (Transcript p14) [author's emphasis]

An analysis by academics from UTAS and others modelled the deer population for Tasmania. Their report, "Predicting the future range and abundance of fallow deer in Tasmania, Australia" by J.N. Potts et al and published in the CSIRO's Wildlife Research, vol 41, suggested that, the way things were going, the state's deer population could exceed one million by the middle of the 21st century. I debated with the researchers what the starting population for their model should be. DPIPWE steadfastly maintained it was about 30,000. By working backwards from reported cull and licenced take numbers I suggested 100,000 was more correct. 40,000 was used as the base for the 1 million projection. (An off the record response by those charged with managing the deer population was that the academics were way out. Their own calculations showed that the population would only reach 400,000. The fact that this would still represent a 10 fold increase in the next 35 years did not seem of concern!)

B The likely and potential biosecurity risks and impacts of feral deer on the environment, agriculture, community safety and other values

Between 23 March and 8 December 2018 over 275 deer were slaughtered on my farm as I sought to limit their impact on my enterprise. The majority of these have been shot on or near the productive heart of my farm, an area of just 300 hectares. For the level of culling to take place it is likely that my land is hosting several times this number. If I translate that into lost production it is the equivalent of 500 - 900 wethers, at current returns about \$50,000 in lost revenue and additional

costs. However it raises a fundamental question. Why am I being forced to host so many deer? There are six recreational hunters who regularly hunt on my farm. The maximum population required to fill their licences (three deer each) is a herd of about 60, one tenth of what I am being forced to carry. When I raised this with a senior DPIPW staff member and the chair of the Tasmanian Game Council there was no response.

Primary producers are the platinum sponsors of recreational hunting in Tasmania and yet few have any say in relation to deer control. None are able to legally manage deer on their land to the extent they may need to. The issue has been recognised for many years but even organisations such as the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) have failed to sway the Tasmanian Government for those on whom the presence of deer is an ever-increasing impost.

i. Risk Assessment Evaluation

In pest risk assessments, using the Bomford methodology, the two main criteria against which to judge wild Fallow deer's impact on primary production are C7, Overseas primary production, and C8, Climate match to susceptible primary production. In the former which considers evidence of the impacts in other countries, both the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAF) and DPIPW scored the species 2 out of a maximum of 3 classifying it as a moderate pest for primary production in any country or region. More importantly for C8 which relates deer to its potential range in Australia, both gave the species maximum points, 5 out of 5.

For criteria C8, climate match to susceptible primary production, (sheep, cattle, timber, cereal grain, oilseed, grain legume, other fruit, vegetable, nut, other livestock, and other horticultural industries) in which a weighted score by commodity value, potential commodity impact and climate match is calculated. The desk top analyses confirm what farmers know and have been forced to deal with for a number of years.

ii. The Lost Primary Production

Biosecurity Queensland's, Feral fallow deer, Pest Animal Fact sheet states:

"Wild deer are opportunistic and highly adaptable feeders that both graze and browse. Their diet is largely determined by what is locally available, but because they require a diet twice as high in protein content than cattle - and with significantly higher quantities of digestible vegetable matter - they will normally feed selectively on the highest quality plants in a pasture. Because of this, deer can impose substantial costs on primary producers.

"Wild deer have been reported to cause damage to a wide variety of agricultural crops, pastures and forestry plantations through competition with cattle and other livestock for pasture."

If the Tasmanian deer population is 125,000, the author's estimate, the food consumption is the equivalent of about 225,000 kilos of grass and other vegetable matter per day (using a 1.8 dry sheep equivalent (DSE) conversion ratio). Perhaps a conversion to large round hay bale equivalents is easier to visualise. It would be in the order of 644 per day or 235,000 per annum. 125,000 deer equate to 225,000 sheep, approximately 15 large sheep enterprises.

As well as consuming crops deer will damage or destroy them by trampling, digging, thrashing or pulling them out of the ground as is the case with recently planted crops or renovated pastures.

Deer travel long distances, browsing in some areas and camping in others spreading weeds as they move about. Rut holes made by stags damage pasture in developed paddocks and promote weed growth when occurring in the bush or on native grasslands.

iii. The cost of livestock welfare

Not enough is known about the threat to Tasmania’s livestock industry from feral deer. More is known elsewhere and knowledge on the subject is building. The following is a quote from a UK publication:

“Diseases carried by deer include internal parasites such as liver flukes, lung worms and bowel worms; bovine tuberculosis, foot-and-mouth disease, bluetongue, red water fever and Johne’s disease. The potential for deer to transmit these diseases to livestock depends on the species of deer and the disease in question. For example, fallow deer pose the greatest risk of disease transmission because they graze in pasture and congregate in feeding sites.” Postnote February 2009 Number 325 page 3.

In “Wild deer as a source of infection for livestock and humans in the UK”, Bohm et al (2007) notes a number of diseases carried by deer including Bovine viral diarrhoea virus (BVDV). The same authors confirm the association of deer with Johne’s disease.

“Many bacterial pathogens of deer, which have the ability to survive for extended periods in the external environment, such as Salmonella spp. (Murray, 1991) and Mycobacterium avium subsp. Paratuberculosis (Map) (Whittington et al., 2004), are transmitted via the faecal oral route. Both intra- and inter-specific transmission of Johne’s disease, caused by Map, occur via the ingestion of contaminated faeces. Young animals, especially neonates, are most susceptible to the disease (Williams, 2001). As a consequence, sheep and beef systems in which animals lamb and calve outdoors are at greatest risk, since the young are exposed to environmental sources of the disease at an early age. Indeed, the presence of deer on a farm was the main factor associated with Johne’s disease in livestock during a questionnaire survey of English dairy farms.”

Jesser (2005) tables the following list of endemic and exotic parasites and diseases carried by deer:

Endemic	Exotic
Cattle tick (<i>Boophilus microplus</i>)	Screw-worm fly (<i>Chrysomya bezziana</i>)
Leptospirosis (<i>Leptospira</i> spp.)	Surra (<i>Trypanosoma evansi</i>)
Johne’s disease (<i>Mycobacterium avium</i> paratuberculosis)	Brucellosis (<i>Brucella abortus</i>)
Ovine Johne’s disease (OJD)	Bovine tuberculosis (<i>Mycobacterium bovis</i>)
Bovine John’s disease (BJD)	Tissue worm (<i>Elaphostrongylus</i>)
Yersina (<i>Yersina pseudotuberculosis</i>)	Louping ill
Malignant catarrhal fever (MCF) (<i>Gamma herpesvirinae</i>)	Rinderpest
	Foot and mouth disease (FMD)
	Bluetonge
	Vesicular stomatitis
	Rabies
	Chronic wasting disease (CWD)

In his view “there is no doubt that wild deer can impose costs on primary producers through the damage they cause and that if deer or other feral animals became involved in an exotic disease outbreak they could greatly extend the time taken to achieve disease-free status”.

Dolman and Wäber (2008) quote several sources supporting the view that introduced deer species may act as reservoirs and vectors for parasites and infection disease.

If deer can carry and spread the disease noted above perhaps they can others as well. As yet there is no definitive evidence that deer spread foot rot. Farmers are being forced to wait until it is proven before action is taken.

There is no Tasmanian research on the impact of the presence of deer in worm management of livestock. There is circumstantial evidence that de-stocked paddocks in which deer remain active are not effectively cleansed during grazing rotation. This is consistent with overseas research. Failure for this taking place leads to livestock health issues slowing weight gain or even causing weight loss. Ewe fertility may be impacted as well as wool and meat production.

I sought permission to lower the deer population on “Kingston” to reduce the risk of OJD, Ovine Johne’s Disease, a wasting disease that impacts sheep. Fallow deer are established carriers of the Bovine variant of the disease but it is not yet established for the ovine one. In Red Deer, yes but Fallow not yet. The advice from Dr Whittington (acknowledged by a peer scientist as a world authority on Johne’s Disease), University of Sydney, was that given the right conditions there is no reason that Fallow deer would not be infected and thus carriers and spreaders of the disease. His opinion was ignored in the response I received to my request.

iv. The Potential Impact of a Biosecurity Failure

Feral deer are a growing biosecurity risk as they move in increasing numbers freely across an ever increasing territory. As noted above the species is a confirmed carrier of a range of diseases that have the potential to impact domestic species such as sheep and cattle.

The March 2014 edition of the TFGA magazine, Voice, included an article on livestock biosecurity. It began:

“An outbreak of foot and mouth in Australia would cost the Australian economy between \$5 billion and \$52 billion depending on how quickly it was detected and contained. Most of these costs would be borne by producers.”

and went on to say

“.....the world is shrinking and the outbreak of a major exotic disease in livestock is now no longer ‘if it occurs’ but ‘when it occurs’.”

The NSW Natural Resources Commission similarly reported on the issue in its 2016 pest management review.

“Australia is free of the world's worst animal diseases, such as foot-and-mouth disease and (classical) swine fever. However, the risk of these diseases remains a threat to the Australian environment, economy and community. The growing rate of global trade, closer proximity of livestock, people and wildlife and other human interventions such as animal translocations for conservation or recreation purposes continue to increase the risk of a serious disease outbreak (Henderson 2008).

“For example, the threat from deer or pigs of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease or the spread of Johnes disease pose direct threats to Australia’s agricultural production. ABARES estimates that national losses from a foot and mouth outbreak could range from \$7.1 billion for a small three-month outbreak, to \$16 billion for a large 12-month outbreak – equal to around 30 percent of the gross value of agricultural production.” (Matthews 2011; Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015).

Whether the cost is \$5 billion, \$7 billion, \$16 billion or \$52 billion, it is a massive amount and avoidable but only if the effort to reduce the risk of disease outbreak and spread is increased.

Livestock farmers have a large investment in livestock genetics. Reliance on being an island is not an acceptable defence strategy against the spread of livestock related diseases as Tasmanian farmers have found out with Ovine Johne's Disease and UK and Japanese farmers experienced with foot and mouth disease. The risk posed by deer to the Tasmanian livestock industry is unacceptable. Action must be taken to lower and more effectively control the population to reduce it.

In addition, as the deer population grows so will the risk of disease within the herd itself. Who will be responsible for sorting this out when it happens?

v. Forestry production

Tasmania's largest private forest manager, Forico, made an enlightening submission to the Tasmanian Legislative Council's Inquiry into Wild Deer. I recommend it to the Committee.

At a local level, on a neighbouring property the forestry enterprise required paid shooters for first 30 months of operation to control wild life including deer and that a proportion of replanting has been required as a direct result of wild animal activity. Deer are not fussy as to whether it is eucalyptus or pine.

A 2008 paper entitled "Agricultural impacts of wild deer in Victoria" included observations on one forestry operation where deer were seldom seen and yet there was stem damage to 8.5% of trees taller than 30 cms.

vi. Infrastructure and other damage

Damage to fences is hard to quantify. The deer impact is greater than caused by other wild animals due to their size and the pressure created by groups focussing on single crossing points. Additional on-farm vehicular activity needed for deer culling results in unnecessary tracking. This is very relevant in environmentally sensitive areas. Rut holes, euphemistically know as stag scrapes, can be such that they are deep enough to represent a tipping hazard for ATVs.

vii. Safety

Land holders have a legal and moral responsibility for the safety of people on their land. This may be addressed to an extent through the use of waivers and indemnities. However most land holders would not want this tested nor would they want an accidental shooting to have occurred on their land. The increasing presence of deer both in density and range and the calls for greater access for shooting be it on private or public land increase the risk of shooting accidents. In North America hunting in some areas has been discontinued due to safety concerns.

Another safety aspect relates to poaching. Not knowing who may be on your land and where they may be with their tool of trade, a high powered rifle, not only creates an uneasy feeling but sets up unanswered questions such as liability if a person who has been granted permission is injured or harmed by someone present without permission or indeed if a poacher is injured while on your land.

Related to illegal hunting activity is the fear of retribution for disturbing or resisting those involved – gates left open, stock shot, a match dropped

For those of us who live in the deer range there are personal safety considerations when driving motor vehicles especially at night.

viii. Environmental impact

There is a growing body of research on the environmental impact of feral deer which no doubt those better credentialed have dealt with.

I have been unable to find any literature that suggests feral deer are anything other than environmentally destructive.

ix. The cost of lost farm productivity.

Time lost as a result of deer whether it is through the need to co-ordinate and administer hunters, following up poacher incursions, applying for crop protection permits, culling deer, liaising with the wildlife administrators or working for change all has an opportunity cost.

Advice has been to make more use of recreational hunters. This is rejected based on my personal experience. Their availability is limited, their presence closes areas to other farm activity and their agenda seldom coincides with the real needs of the farm. A move to deploying more people using high powered weapons on the property brings with it the increasing risk of an accident, potential liability issues and the possible impact of a hunting related accident.

x. Revenue

There are positive factors related to deer on private land such as revenue that can be raised by charging hunters for property access. On larger properties where it is possible to cater for fifty or more hunters each year this is attractive. However for smaller farms it is less appealing when the administrative aspects such as contact and reference checking are considered plus the hassles caused by rogue shooters who damage the reputation of the majority. It is not just a matter of accepting any person with correct paperwork who is prepared to pay the fee. In the case of "Kingston" income raised from hunters would be less than a quarter of the current estimated cost of being forced to host the deer.

C The effectiveness of current state and national laws, policies and practices in limiting spread and mitigating impacts of feral deer

i. Legislative Framework

Feral deer in Tasmania are a partly protected species with control as per the Wildlife (General) Regulations 2010 (the Regulations). A crop protection permit (CPP) system is used for primary producers needing to protect eg crops.

As per Clause 21 of the Regulations, upon receipt of an application for a CPP may be granted or refused. If it is refused, short of seeking a judicial review, a challenging and expensive scenario for a small business person as I found out through personal experience, there is no appeal mechanism.

The safeguard on authority being used to grant CPPs, as per Clause 21 (2) states:

The Secretary is not to grant an application for a crop protection permit referred to in regulation 26 unless satisfied that it is proper to do so to prevent the destruction of, or injury to, any stock or plants caused by the wildlife specified in the permit.

The clarification I have sought to establish the criteria likely to satisfy the requirement has not been forthcoming. However any response would be largely irrelevant because absolute power already noted. On occasion there have been attempts to pervert subclause 21 (2) by suggesting reference to "plants" really only means high value crops. The parent legislation, The Nature Conservation Act (2002) provides a much broader definition.

Annual hunting licences are able to be purchased entitling the hunter to shoot three deer. More licences are sold than there are places to shoot In 2017 licenced hunters shot 6,721 deer, about a quarter of the total number legally shot.

The legislative framework is able to be used to satisfy whatever outcomes the government of the day wishes to promote.

ii. Tasmanian Government Policy

The Tasmanian Government's policy on feral deer management is headlined "Supporting Recreational Hunting". There is no documented comment about the risks, such as biosecurity risk, posed by deer. Feral deer control remains outside the logical Invasive Species section of Biosecurity Tasmania.

Interestingly in 2013 DPIPWE, in assessing an application to import Fallow deer, conducted an assessment using the Bomford model. The assessment concluded:

"This risk assessment concludes that the species is not dangerous to humans, has a extreme likelihood of establishment in Tasmania, and extreme consequences of establishment in Tasmania."

I noted on the DPIPWE website at the time that one of the reasons given for refusing the import application was concern that the genetic strain to which the application applied could lead to inferior antlers if there were to be interbreeding with Tasmania's established type! Another indication of who pulls the strings.

So, in spite of its own analysis showing the dangers of Fallow deer the Government has continued to protect the species allowing it to continue spreading in range and increase in number.

The Government, in response to a recommendation from the Tasmanian Legislative Council Inquiry into Wild Deer committed to establish the Tasmanian Game Council. In a step forward the Council includes a broader range of stakeholders than in the past ie natural resource management, private land conservation, public land management, deer farming and meat processing as well as hunter and farmer representatives. It will be interesting to see how the Council's deliberations progress and the degree to which its advice to the relevant minister, the Minister for Primary Industries, is adopted. The Government policy clearly states that the Council's purpose is to:

provide advice to the Minister on delivering contemporary and effective QDM (Quality Deer Management) in Tasmania, hunting and game management, browsing animal management and deer farming matters.

First and foremost it is about looking after hunters.

Another policy plank is:

Establish a new Game Services Tasmania within DPIPWE to support landholders, farmers and hunters to effectively manage deer and all issues relating to game and browsing animals. Game Services Tasmania will have a strong policy and functional alignment to primary industries, our supporting our AgriFood Plan and target to grow the annual farm gate value of agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050.

My first experience (earlier this year) in dealing with Game Services Tasmania was reduced (in time) access to crop protection permits.

Government policy is not supported by the majority of landowners. This comment is based on a petition I and a few others put to the relevant minister in 2010. We contacted over 100 landowners and farm managers. Of these at least 80% agreed with the contention that, on their own land, land holders should be able to control deer to the extent required. All younger landowners contacted supported the need for change.

iii. The Feral Deer Administration

For deer management Tasmania is split into inside or outside the “core deer range”. The nomination of the core deer range took place regardless of the requirements of landowners and without any consultation with them. How this happened is a further example of the lack of transparency of deer administration and the impost of a burden for which there is no compensation nor in most cases, representation in relation to the decision making process that impacts those in the core area.

The basis on which crop protection permits are granted is differentiated depending on where your land is located. For those within the core deer range CPPs are not issued during the first several weeks of the deer season, a critical time for deer control. The only way a land holder is able to control deer is by allowing those with deer licences (ie recreational hunters) onto his or her land.

The core deer range is as large as it is due to the way feral deer have been managed. When introduced it was termed “the traditional deer range”. I wonder how long it takes to become a tradition. A 1993 DPIPW map of deer areas certainly did not include my farm but now I have all the additional hassles and costs deer create. My land is also devalued due to the reduced carry capacity for domestic livestock.

My request to be provided with a list of farms deemed to be in the core deer range (to compare notes on deer control procedures) was responded to with the comment:

“There is no one list of the farms within the Traditional deer range.....”

The administration of deer has a long record of lacking transparency. Even now the availability of CPPs is not published.

When it suits the Government it is possible to modify the CPP system. Such was the case when it introduced the cull category ‘inferior males’ for the improvement of herd quality. The availability of CPPs for this purpose was not widely known. I only found out about it after an FOI request to review CPPs issued to neighbours. It needs to be added that the use of CPPs for herd management is not actually legitimate per the Regulations.

At a more formal level, ie implementing change to the Regulations for the benefit of recreational hunting there seems no impediment. The change increasing the number of deer a licenced hunter could take took just three weeks. This was in spite not being supported by the TFGA, the peak farming body in the. (The majority of deer are found on private land.)

The Government’s approach to deer control is a ‘beggar thy neighbour’ one. “Due to the transient nature of deer” one farm that may wish to maintain a greater level of control than its neighbours is not provided with support to do so. The fact that, in my case, I invest in fodder crops for my breeding and young livestock and to increase my farm output and my neighbour’s farm is now predominantly forestry with inadequate feed for the deer found there is, in the Government’s eye, irrelevant.

iv. Animal Welfare

CPPs for female deer are not available for the period November (in some circumstances this year this was extended from early to late November) to mid-March. The reason for this is given as follows:

“No permits are provided to take female deer when they are likely to be in lactation because of welfare considerations for the unweaned fawns. This policy reflects and is consistent with the expectations of the general Tasmanian community that holds exemplary animal welfare standards as a point of differentiation and a value that cannot be compromised.”

Animal welfare is very important and as a livestock farmer and wool grower I am only too well aware of this. Two points should be raised in relation to this blanket ban. Firstly, not all female deer eg immature females, are breeders. Secondly, and most importantly, how can the Government consider Tasmania to be a proponent of “exemplary animal welfare standards” when it actively supports recreational hunting and the related herd management in a manner that is well known to require the slaughter of about 20,000 deer a year as farmers and other landowners attempt to protect their enterprises?

In fairness to the Government my most recent request for greater access to CPPs for my farm, for which there is no legal impediment, is still to be responded to. I should also add that it has been made clear to me by the chair of the Tasmanian Game Council that the Minister expects that I will consider greater hunting access for recreational hunters as a part of any solution agreed to permit me greater access to CPPs.

As an interim and immediate measure landholders should be able to be granted open crop protection permits for all wild Fallow deer similar to those now available for wallabies and possums.

v. Glimmers of Hope?

There are two glimmers of hope for deer control in Tasmania. Firstly from Government policy:

*We strongly support the Quality Deer Management (QDM) approach for maintaining wild fallow deer as a world class hunting resource in Tasmania. **However deer can also cause unwanted damage to farmland and sensitive environmental areas outside of the traditional deer range, this includes the spread of deer into our Parks and reserves.***[author’s emphasis]

Unfortunately the comment also implies that deer damage to farmland and in sensitive environment areas inside the traditional deer range are not an issue.

Secondly, from the DPIPWE submission to the Senate Inquiry:

The flora within conservation areas has evolved in the absence of grazing by large herbivores such as deer. Whilst the impact of such grazing is largely unquantified it is considered undesirable that deer populations remain in these ecologically sensitive areas.

Perhaps this is a hint that assistance may at some future date, be forthcoming for landowners like me.

E Priority research questions

It is widely and legitimately recognised that there is a lack of information about feral deer, for example population statistics. I recommend that, while this information will be valuable and important for herd control, there are many of us who need immediate access to more efficient and cost effective deer control methods. We are currently limited to shooting which can be time consuming and may result in a lingering death for the targeted animals.

Another research priority for the Tasmanian Government is to understand the real attitude of land owners and land managers to feral deer on their land and an independent cost/benefit analysis of feral deer in the state.

F The benefits of developing and fully implementing national threat abatement plans for feral deer

From a Tasmanian perspective it will be sometime before there is comprehensive acceptance of the need for threat abatement and effective control of feral deer. However if there is a national plan it will be easier for Tasmania and those of us who really care about these matters to catch up.