



The way forward for Tasmania's Fallow Deer

Summary:

The Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee has met with members and constituents regarding a series of revisions and proposals that if implemented, has the ability to positively change the way in which Tasmania's magnificent Fallow Deer herd is managed for the benefits of hunters, landowners and the environment.

These revisions and proposals don't represent a fixed position or roll out schedule, but provide an overview position on all or some of the changes that could be made. Some of these changes could be made on a standalone basis, but others may require that a series of changes be made as a prerequisite.

These revisions are structured into the following categories:

1. Extension to the current antlerless season
2. Increase the allowable harvest of antlerless deer with a recreational licence
3. The implementation of an electronic tagging system for harvested deer
4. The development of individual 'Deer Management Zones'
5. Increase the duration of crop protection permits from an annual permit to 5 yearly with yearly returns.
6. Allow greater access for recreational hunters to remove deer from public land

1. Extension to the current antlerless season:

The current antlerless deer season is structured in two parts, one of which takes place during the March Buck season and the other which begins in early May. The 2019 season dates are as follows:

- 9th March - 31st March = **23 days**
- 11th May - 30th June = **51 days**

The TDAC believes that the split season and the early closure date is restricting a recreational hunter's ability to harvest all of the deer that are allocated to them at the time of purchasing a licence. The closure date becomes even more restrictive once you consider that antlerless deer are still able to be harvested under crop protection permits (CPP) until early November.

The TDAC therefore believe the recreational antlerless deer season should be more closely aligned to the CPP's issued by the Department and propose the following dates for a continuous season:

- 14th March - 1st November = **237 days**

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2. Increase the harvest of antlerless deer with a recreational licence:

Recreational hunters are issued a quota of three deer per licence application. Hunters are then able to harvest 1x male deer and 2x antlerless deer *or* 3x antlerless deer. In order for recreational hunters to remove more deer from the landscape a quota increase is required.

The TDAC proposes that the status quo remains for harvesting male deer (1 x per licence) however the number of antlerless deer allowed per licence is to be heavily increased or unlimited. This will allow hunters to easily remove deer in high population areas whilst also targeting more remote World Heritage Areas where the deer numbers are less but their removal is critical.

It is important to note however that unless the antlerless season is extended as per Cat. 1, an increase to the quota will not be beneficial. Hunters require a larger quota and more time to fill it.

3. The implementation of an electronic tagging system for harvested deer

The current requirement for hunters to tag any harvested deer is critical for the operations undertaken by Tasmania's Wildlife Rangers. It is however costly to implement, difficult to manage and cumbersome for hunters and landowners.

The TDAC understand the importance of a system that allows for traceability of harvested deer, however believe there are more modern alternatives to traditional metal and plastic tags for large amounts of harvested antlerless deer that will still deliver the same accountability for hunters yet will also allow for extensive data collection for the various departments.

For example, in 2018 there were approximately 24,500 tags issued for harvesting antlerless deer:

- Crop Protection Permits = **14,500**
- Recreational tags @ 2 x per hunter = **10,000**

Therefore, the TDAC propose that an electronic tagging system (eTag) be implemented where smartphones and apps are used to track and log the harvest of antlerless deer both under recreational licences and CPP's. This will drastically reduce the costs associated with printing and distributing traditional tags and will allow for accurate data to be collected so deer harvest numbers in specific areas can be assessed in real time.

A similar eTag system has been used by Sustainable Timbers Tasmania for many years for the tracking of harvested sawlogs during transportation. Discussions between the developers of the software and the TDAC have been undertaken and the TDAC believe there are many benefits to implementing a system such as this in order to successfully manage the Tasmanian deer herd.

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4. The development of individual 'Deer Management Zones'

The topic of a 'Traditional' and 'Non Traditional' deer range is quoted extensively when trying to control problem deer in areas where they have rarely been sighted before.

The TDAC believe that by establishing Deer Management Zones (DMZ) the ability to remove all deer from a certain area, whilst limiting harvest in other areas could be easily implemented. Coupling this with the introduction of an eTag system would allow hunters to target areas such as WHA's where the harvest of all deer can be unlimited.

5. Increase the duration of CPP's from an annual permit to 5 yearly

Antlerless deer could be added to the current five-year Bennett's/Rufous wallaby and Brushtail possum permits that the Department currently issues, using the same conditions and adding the term 'This permit is valid for the taking of antlerless deer during the antlerless season'.

The status quo would remain where permits are issued by the Department with the landowners nominated hunter's names already printed on them as well as some blank permits for casual hunters that have gained access to the property to help reduce red tape for the landowner.

By introducing an increased or unlimited harvest for antlerless deer, (depending on DMZ) the only time a landowner would need to apply for a CPP would be if the removal of male deer from their property is required, or antlerless deer are required to be removed by utilising a spotlight at night.

As recreational hunters are also required to complete a 'harvest return' at the completion of the season, this data can instead be extracted from the eTag database, reducing the need for landowners to present this information at the Departments request.

These changes would also have the added benefit of meeting the State Governments objective:

"The permits will be managed with appropriate checks and balances, including the provision of returns (reporting) on the deer taken to assist in understanding population dynamics."

6. Allow greater access for recreational hunters to remove deer from public land

Parks and Wildlife should investigate the opening of the Conservation Areas and Regional Reserves listed here on page 4. An appropriate process for hunting in these reserves then needs to be established. This would assist landholders and land managers by removing 'safe havens' for deer adjoining their properties.

Conservation Area's

Alpha Pinnacle	275.50 ha
Apsley	456.98 ha
Badger Spur	146.95 ha
Cleveland Lagoon	75.33 ha

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Devil Den	81.95 ha
Exe Rivulet	78.40 ha
Gordons Ridge	163.61
Gravelly Ridge	2293.83 ha
Harry Walker Tier	496.14 ha
Little Quoin	289.24 ha
Moss Gully	408.46 ha
Mount Bethune	352.67 ha
Royal George	269.84 ha
Spinning Gum	487.18 ha
Strickland	199.03 ha
Table Mountain	283.51 ha
Tiger Rise	133.70 ha
Tunbridge Tier	525.99 ha
Unnamed long Marsh	1538.64 ha
Unnamed Toom's lake	1498.18 ha
Waddles Creek	413.05 ha
Wye River	427.82 ha
Total	11,313.59 ha

Regional Reserves

Avoca	933.02 ha
Castle Cary	5995.03 ha
Dog Kennels	582.95 ha
St Pauls	4394.94 ha
Total	11,905.94 ha

Combined

Total	23,219.53 ha
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