SUBMISSION REGARDING:

PROPOSAL TO RE- CLASSIFY DEER FROM "GAME" TO "PEST" ANIMAL (IN NSW)

I am writing this submission because I consider any proposal to re-classify wild deer, currently universally a game animal, to be a pest animal (in NSW only) as seriously flawed and with disastrous consequences for ALL stakeholders in this issue.

My interest in this subject is threefold, and has been ongoing for approximately 45 years:

1. As a conservationist interested in the global maintenance of healthy natural animal populations of all species, for the good of the planet, and;
2. As a deer hunter interested in the ongoing pursuit of this quarry both as a sport and as a source of healthy food obtained non-commercially, and;
3. As a proponent for animal welfare.

In regard to my first point, I think it reasonable that wild animal populations, indigenous and non-indigenous (this is rather a loose classification when deer populations have been in existence in the wild in Australia for >150 years, as long as European settlement) is a net benefit to the ecology and bio-diversity of the country and indeed the planet, and vital to humanity's existence in many potential circumstances. Declaration of pest status "opens the door" to harmful eradication practices such as biological and chemical poisoning. All that is really necessary and proper is:

1. A scientific evaluation of the populations, and a scientific evaluation and balance of the benefits and disadvantages of that level of the populations and their geographical and temporal distribution.
2. If controls are deemed necessary, choice of the least harmful and cost-effective methods of control. Of course hunting for food is vastly superior on all counts to "cane toad" and "DDT" type solutions.

In regard to my second point, considering the very large numbers of citizens interested in the pursuit of deer as game, surely the organisations that represent these people should be the primary point of consultation for population management – in either of the both directions. Please do not fail to appreciate the importance deer hunters place on the maintenance of sustainable, healthy game populations. Declaration of game as a pest degrades the high value placed on these species, and assigns zero or negative value. This contradicts the economic benefit of hunting, including potential greater economic "value added" benefits in a world that reduces the value of protein to the price of some unknown chemical compound on a supermarket shelf. Deer do not have zero value.

In regard to my third point, as I have mentioned earlier, there are horrible consequences when animals (particular larger sentient mammals quite comparable with sheep, pigs, cattle, puppies and pussies) get poisoned or attacked with biological weapons. Inevitably this would come with any ruthless "eradicate at any cost" strategy. Inevitable too, non-target species are affected. Please keep your pest declarations for introduced "fruit fly" and "fire ants".

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Graeme J. Kerr

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