

27 may 2016

Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 5341
Sydney NSW 2001
Submission by email to nrc@nrc.nsw.gov.au

Re: State-wide review of NSW pest animal management – Issues paper submission

I write in regarding the above review, and in particular, my comments and submission is focused on the extremely unnecessary draft report proposal that the status of all species of feral deer should be changed from game to pest animal, by removing them from the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002*.

I have been an avid and passionate outdoorsman all my life, while myself and my family have strong connections to the land, agriculture and farming, I see a definite and continued need for pest control for species such as pigs, foxes, dogs, cats, rabbits & other species that have proven to be detrimental to agricultural productivity and a risk to the environment.

One things I am strictly opposed to however, is the proposal to remove the status of Deer from Game to pest. I am director of Australian hunting gear brand Moroka.30, I am also the presenter of Beyond The Divide, Australia's first ever hunting television series. As a keen hunter I have been travelling to NZ for 2 decades to hunt their on public land and have seen the shocking and devastating effects that poison baiting through 1080 have had on the ecosystem.

If anything is to be learnt from NZ, it is that effective recreational hunting, combined with an effective management program is the solution to controlling numbers. When you incorrectly name something a pest as you are proposing here, you place the onus on the landowner to legally control these animals, when the landowners are already financially pressured enough as it is trying to make a living. Of course, I understand the need to remove red tape to allow easier and simpler control measures on private land and the need for spotlighting in certain private areas, however, in many areas, deer are also a welcomed and sustainable resource that can be easily maintained through hunting and it is this mindset that you should be focusing on, not the one of declaring it a pest and letting the 1080 rain down.

In NZ we are now seeing unique situations emerge that have proven that effective deer control through sustainable resource hunting is the way forward. The Sika on the north Island in the Kaweka Forest, The Wapiti in the Fiordland, inside a world heritage area. Both ideal scenario's where recreational hunters are a crucial part of deer management, and in some cases efforts are now being made to justifiably remove the pest status of deer that has inadvertently cost NZ severely. Its also crucial to look at the flow on effect of recreational hunting; a strong economy through the financial benefits provided to the community and an excellent source of free range meat, not to mention promotion of a safe, exciting and challenging recreational activity.

In summary, the following are some serious flaws in the current proposal:

- The draft recommendation is not supported by evidence.
- Experience in other jurisdictions (e.g. Queensland) is that a pest listing does not result in any improved outcomes across any of the stated objectives for the review (triple bottom line).
- A pest listing could place a legal onus on landowners to control deer emanating from adjacent crown land with no support from Government. Deer populations are increasing and game management principles suggest that this will continue over the short to medium term.
- The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia NSW submission has been relied upon as a justification for the recommendation and as an indication of support from shooters and hunters.

- There is considerable opposition to this amongst shooters (including within the SSAA) with their support being viewed as an attempt to place their organisation and members at the centre of all wildlife management in New South Wales.
- The joint SSAA/NRC program is more than six hundred times more expensive than the demonstrated best practice for the use of recreational hunters for wildlife control on NSW public land.
- The interim report into the SSAA/NRC joint supplementary pest control trial (February 2016) reports that the program has removed 2,846 animals at a cost of \$3.6million = \$1,264.93 per animal. By contrast the last Public Benefit Assessment tabled for the Game Council NSW (June 2013) reported a removal of 1,230,090 animals at a cost of \$2.5million = \$2.08 per animal.
- Arrangements to allow landowners to effectively control wild deer on their land are in place but are not well understood by the community.
- Declaring an animal a pest, opens the door for the even more indiscriminate use of poisons which can inflict painful deaths unnecessary and kill other species. Australia already is the second largest user of 1080 poison in the world after New Zealand

To finish I wish to clarify that while being both a member of the Australian Deer Association and The SSAA, I fully support the ADA's submission, while I distance myself completely from the SSAA's submission, particularly in regard to the following statement submitted November 30th 2015 by Diana Melham:

"There has been considerable ground swell amongst members who believe that as it has been made too difficult and costly to be permitted to hunt deer on private land, deer numbers are not being controlled to the extent they were prior to the declaration of deer as game. In fact, many members no longer hunt deer altogether in protest of having to pay for a licence to hunt an introduced species on private land. Since land owners and occupiers of private land are currently exempt from holding a NSW game hunting licence it is only fair that hunters on private land are provided the same opportunity. Members have also expressed a desire to hunt deer all year round, as they do in Victoria (with the exception of Hog deer), and would like to be able to hunt deer at night under spotlight when the animals are more active."

I wish to make it painfully clear that I was not consulted by SSAA prior to their submission on the draft report being lodged, and nor does the SSAA speak on my behalf, nor represent my views on the draft report, particularly in reference to the use of spotlights.

You have identified in your draft report as one of the main issues being "Feral deer have been identified as one of the most important emerging pest animal threats in NSW" As this is an emerging threat and obviously one you have no prior experience with, in seeking recommendations moving forward, I strongly urge to consult with senior Victorian and Tasmanian ADA members who combined have decades of experience and have pioneered the way forward for deer management in this country. I also strongly suggest you seek recommendations with foreign authorities, in particular those from NZ such as the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and their highly successful deer management program inside a National Park, inside a World Heritage Area.

The best method of managing deer, is to devise a sound and proper deer management plan based on facts and experience, not simply to rename them as a pest.

Robert Fickling
 Director, Moroka.30
 Producer & presenter, Beyond The Divide.