



Joint media release: New Feral Deer Plan Protects Agriculture and Environment

14 August 2023

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Senator the Hon Murray Watt
Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP

The first National Feral Deer Action Plan was launched in Canberra today, detailing a collaborative approach between government and non-government organisations to manage feral deer.

The Plan sets out 22 actions to improve feral deer management in Australia, all with the aim to stop the spread of large populations and reduce their impact; control or eradicate small, isolated populations before they spread; and prioritise and protect significant sites from their impacts.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt said many dedicated stakeholders are working together to tackle the challenges of feral deer.

“The Albanese Government understands the importance of managing feral animals in Australia to protect our agricultural industries and the environment,” Minister Watt said.

“That’s why in June I announced almost \$1 million in funding to extend the national feral deer management coordinator program for another two years to help deliver the Plan.

“This builds on over \$4 million invested in deer control projects through my department.

“Managing feral deer is a shared responsibility between landholders, community, industry, and government—and under the Albanese Government we continue to do our share, supporting you to get the job done.”

Minister for Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek, welcomed the launch of the plan as a significant step forward for protecting nature.

“Feral deer numbers have exploded from 50,000 in 1980 to between one and two million, today. They are the ‘next rabbit’ of Australia’s feral species,” Minister Plibersek said.

“The National Feral Deer Action Plan will develop and trial new tools, to build capacity to detect, cull and prevent further spread of this feral pest.

“Feral deer do enormous damage to our native wildlife and precious places – they kill threatened species and damage critical habitat.

“Our government is committed to protecting our precious species and leaving nature better off for our kids and grandkids.”

Feral deer are estimated to cost Australian communities and primary producers \$91 million a year, they cause extensive environmental damage, spread disease, and are increasingly becoming a traffic hazard.

They are responsible for derailing land regeneration programs by ring-barking young trees, they also trample native wildlife habitats and destroy grazing lands by creating large wallows.

A national approach to feral deer management is expected to make significant impacts on the deer population in Australia now before control in the future becomes more costly.

Minister Watt thanked the National Deer Management Coordinator, Dr Annelise Wiebkin, from Department of Primary Industries and Regions in South Australia, who together with a working group, delivered the Plan.

The Plan is available on the National Feral Deer Action Plan [website](#).