

# Advice for deer keepers

Limestone Coast Landscape Board

Ear tagging farmed deer is important to tell the difference between farmed and feral deer. Along with appropriate fencing, it helps with on-farm management practices.

## Keeping deer

Domestic (farmed) deer are kept in an enclosure designed and maintained at all times to ensure they cannot escape. This includes deer that are;

- kept as pets,
- on hobby farms,
- located in wildlife parks, petting zoos/farms, other non-commercial operations,
- in commercial operations including for meat or velvet production,
- kept for hunting purposes.

Detailed information on keeping deer can be found on the PIRSA website including:

- The South Australian Deer Policy 2019.
- The Notice of Control Measures for domestic deer on mainland South Australia.

People who keep, sell or move deer must have deer registered on their Property Identification Code. On Kangaroo Island, a permit to keep deer must also be obtained from the Landscape Board.

## Permanent ear tags

All domestic deer over 12 months of age must have a permanent ear tag, which has an identification code linked to an owner's Property Identification Code.

Under the *Livestock Regulations (2013)*, it is an offence to move or sell domestic deer not fitted with an ear tag bearing the Property Identification Code of the land from which they are moved.

## What are the benefits of ear tagging farmed deer?

- Ear tags distinguish domestic deer from feral deer.
- A tagged deer has up to 7 days protection from being culled if it escapes onto neighbouring property and if the neighbour/ deer keeper/ landscape board are notified (this period enables the deer keeper to recover the deer)
- Ear tags assist with identification of animals for on-farm management practices such as genetics, vaccinations and breeding.

## What type of ear tag is required?

- The ear tag should be appropriate for the species of deer.
- To provide an escaped deer with up to 7 days protection, the tag must be clearly visible from a distance.
- Deer should be tagged with good quality tags.
- Tags with the Property Identification Code and/or identification codes can be bought from rural merchandise stores.

## What is the best time to ear tag farmed deer?

Deer can be tagged within a week of birth, when they can be easily handled. Tagging of older deer may be done;

- outside of the rut, which spans February to May (fallow deer) and February to July (red deer),
- under sedation (administered by dart gun or hand injection),
- by your local veterinarian by discussing options, including if a suitably qualified person can administer anaesthetic in accordance with the direction of a veterinary surgeon,
- in yards or in a crush, at the same time as
  - antler removal (often October-November and January-February)
  - velvet harvest
  - health treatment.

## How can ear tagging be done safely and effectively?

Tagging of older deer is best done by experienced personnel, using suitable yards and handling facilities designed for deer. It is important to allow deer to become familiar with yards before using them to tag deer.

Tagging can be achieved by;

- using portable fencing to create temporary yards or holding facilities,
- funnel deer through a curved laneway into holding facilities using a deer crush,
- separating herds of deer into smaller groups in holding pens,
- improving the design of enclosures,
- engaging experienced personnel or contractors.

Commercial deer farms routinely tag deer and may provide advice on handling facilities or offer on-ground support.

## Best practice when handling deer

- Handle deer quickly and quietly.
- Observe and respect deer behaviour.
- Handle deer early or late in the day when they are calmer.
- Avoid handling deer in extreme weather.

## Where can I find information on deer husbandry, handling and yards?

Consult with livestock veterinarians, other deer keepers or industry specialists for advice on the design of deer handling yards including;

- Deer Industry Association of Australia.
- Deer Farming Handbook by Chris Tuckwell.
- Codes of practice for welfare of deer.

## Responsibilities of registered domestic deer keepers

The Gazetted Notice of Control Measures details responsibilities for all domestic deer keepers dependent upon when the property was first registered with the Department of Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) for the keeping of deer.

## For properties who first registered with PIRSA to keep deer after 1 February 2019

**In the case of deer kept by, or with consent of an owner of land, who first registered with PIRSA to keep deer after 1 February 2019, the deer must be kept on land within enclosures with boundary fences that;**

- are constructed (including gates) to a minimum height of 1.9 m from the ground on either side of the fence; and
- are constructed (including gates) using pre-fabricated deer mesh attached securely to poles that are a maximum of 8 m apart; and
- have a bottom wire (high tensile, either barbed or not-barbed) that:
  - runs through staples on posts, *and*
  - can be tightened as needed; *and*
  - is attached to the prefabricated deer mesh as low as practical, but no more than 50 mm above the ground; *and*
- have a strainer wire at the top of the fence, attached to the prefabricated deer mesh and posts,
- are maintained (including gates) in a state of good repair in accordance with these specifications, free from any gaps, holes or damage; and are kept free from fallen trees or branches.

## For ALL properties that keep deer

**In the case of all deer kept by, or with the consent of, the owner of land (irrespective of when the owner registered to keep deer):**

- the deer must be kept within enclosures with boundary fencing (including any gates) constructed and maintained at all times to a standard sufficient to prevent the escape of any deer, taking into account the particular terrain,
- any extensions, replacements or alterations made to the fencing after the date of the 20 August 2020 must comply with the specifications set out in the Gazetted Notice of Control,
- all deer over 12 months of age kept on the land, and all deer of any age being moved from the land, must carry a permanent ear tag which has an identification number linked to the deer keeper's Property Identification Code,
- immediately upon becoming aware of an escape of deer kept on their land, the owner of land must:
  - Inspect and repair any damage to, or means of escape from, the deer enclosure fences,
  - Report the escape of deer to the Landscape Board and provide detail as to the number and type of escaped deer, the date, time, location and cause of the escape (to the best of their knowledge).

**Owners of land who find tagged domestic deer, which they do not own, on their land must, as soon as reasonably practicable, notify the Limestone Coast Landscape Board, and must not capture or destroy the deer for a period of 7 days after notifying the landscape board, or such earlier time as notified by the landscape board.**

## Best practice tips

General advice for registered keepers of domestic deer.

- Exchange contact details with neighbouring land owners to allow notification if deer escape.
- Routinely inspect boundary fences, especially after significant weather events.
- Save contact details for your local Landscape Board and veterinarian in your phone to report escapes.
- Stock a suitable amount of spare fencing materials for immediate repairs.

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## More information

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