

# Feral deer

Introduced into the Australian environment in the early 1800s, feral deer are a destructive pest animal that compete with livestock for pasture, eat native plants and damage fences.



Deer were introduced to Australia for farming and recreational shooting purposes. Almost eradicated in South Australia by the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires, feral deer have since become established across the SA Arid Lands (SAAL) region, with populations increasingly reported around key water points and grazing areas across pastoral properties in the Flinders and Gawler Ranges.

Feral deer compete with livestock for pasture, eat native plants, damage fences, have the potential to spread diseases, create a public safety hazard and can attract illegal activity.

Deer are reclusive animals, and it is not unusual for a landowner to have significant numbers grazing on or moving through their property without being fully aware of their presence. Apart from sightings, the biggest indicator there are feral deer on a property is the presence of tracks, damage to fencing or rubbing on trees.

Feral deer can range widely and are creatures of habit, tending to move along defined pathways. Over time the pathways develop into well-worn tracks, often going through and under fences.

## What can you do?

Feral deer are a pest declared under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

As a landholder you are responsible for the control of feral deer on your property and are required to eradicate feral deer populations where it is practical and feasible.

Deer control is best implemented at a large scale with cooperation from adjoining landholders, as deer are very mobile. It is recommended you contact the South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board (SAAL) for advice regarding the eradication of feral deer on your property and how to participate in the SAAL control programs.

## What is their impact?

### Primary production

- Competition for pasture
- Risk of spreading disease
- Ring-barking paddock trees, destroying saplings and shelter belts, particularly during the rut
- Trampling and grazing of agricultural crops



### Environmental

- Trampling, grazing and ring-barking native bushland
- Soil compaction
- Damage to fences.
- Soil erosion and compaction in areas of high use such as trails, pastures and creek lines
- Weed dispersal
- Spread of plant disease (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*)

- Disturbing native fauna by destroying habitat including the breeding sites of vulnerable species.
- Destruction of native revegetation sites and seedlings

### Social

- Attracting illegal activities on private and public properties
- Traffic hazards and vehicle accidents

## Early detection and monitoring

Eradicating feral deer is best achieved before populations establish. Any sightings of feral deer should be reported to:

- Feral Scan ([feralscan.org.au](http://feralscan.org.au)) to ensure all feral deer activity is mapped in the region.
- Contact The South Australian Arid Lands Landscape Board (<https://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal>) to help inform feral deer control programs.

## More information

Email: [saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au](mailto:saal.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au)  
Phone: 08 8429 9666

[www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal](http://www.landscape.sa.gov.au/saal)