Advice for deer keepers

Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board

Ear tagging of deer allows escaped domestic (farmed) deer to be identified and retrieved by their owners. Untagged deer are considered to be feral and must be controlled by landholders. Not tagging your deer puts them at risk of being shot if they escape.

Keeping deer

As with all livestock there are a range of regulatory requirements for the keeping of deer that must be complied with. Two pieces of legislation and their associated regulations apply to the keeping of deer – the *Livestock Act 1997* and the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

Regardless of whether you treat your deer as pets or as livestock, for regulatory purposes they are considered livestock under the Livestock Regulations 2013. These regulations require domestic deer to be registered with Primary Industries and Regions SA using the owners Property Identification Code (PIC). All livestock, including deer, must be tagged prior to leaving the property. The tag must bear the PIC number.

Requirements for the confinement and on-property identification of farmed deer have been established under the *Landscape South Australia Regulations 2020* through a Control Notice.

Permanent ear tags

All domestic deer over the age of 12 months must at all times be fitted with a visible permanent ear tag that links to the PIC number of the owner's property. If a deer escapes, then a deer farmer has seven days after being notified to retrieve the deer before it is classified as feral. If a landholder finds tagged deer on their property they must notify the relevant landscape board who will then inform the owner that they have seven days to retrieve the animal.

Best time to fit ear tags

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 livestock veterinarian
- Under sedation administered by a suitably qualified person in accordance with the directions of a veterinarian
- In yards or in a crush, at the same time as:
    - antler removal (often October-November and January-February)
    - velvet harvest
    - health treatment

Fencing

There are defined fencing standards for the confinement of domestic deer. Two sets of fencing standards currently exist for the keeping of deer – one for those deer farms registered prior to 1 February 2019 and one for those deer farms that either alter their existing fences or registered to keep deer on or after 1 February 2019. The fencing standards relate to fencing and gate(s) height, fencing construction and fencing materials. Deer farms registered after 1 February 2019 must confine their deer with a boundary fence that meets the following requirements:

- Constructed (including gates) to a minimum height of 1.9m from the ground on either side of the fence i.e. the ground level on both sides of the fence must be taken into consideration
- Constructed (including gates) using pre-fabricated deer mesh attached securely to poles that are a maximum of 8m apart
- Have a bottom wire (high tensile, either barbed or not-barbed) that:
    - runs through staples on posts
    - can be tightened as needed
    - is attached to the prefabricated deer mesh as low as practical, but no more than 50mm above the ground
- Have a strainer wire at the top of the fence, attached to the prefabricated deer mesh and posts

All fences must be maintained (including gates) in a state of good repair in accordance with these specifications, free from any gaps, holes or damage. Fences need to be kept free from fallen trees or branches.

Farmed deer inspections

Officers authorised under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* will inspect deer farms at a minimum of every two years to confirm that fencing standards are being met and that deer are tagged. The purpose of these inspections is to ensure farmed deer are not able to escape and contribute to growing feral deer population.

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Disclaimer

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Best practice tips

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

Further guidance and advice

Livestock veterinarians and industry specialists are a great source of advice on deer husbandry, handling and yards. Other sources include:

- Deer Industry Association of Australia
- Deer Farming Handbook by Chris Tuckwell

For further guidance on confining and ear tagging requirements

- The Notice of Control Measures for Declared Animals in Declared Areas: Domestic Deer on mainland South Australia, gazetted on 18 August 2020 under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019* section 192(3)(a).

Available on PIRSA website
https://pir.sa.gov.au/biosecurity/animal_health/deer

More information
Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board

Mount Barker Office: Cnr Mann & Walker streets, Mount Barker, 5251 (08) 8391 7500

Willunga Office: 5 Aldinga Road, Willunga, 5172