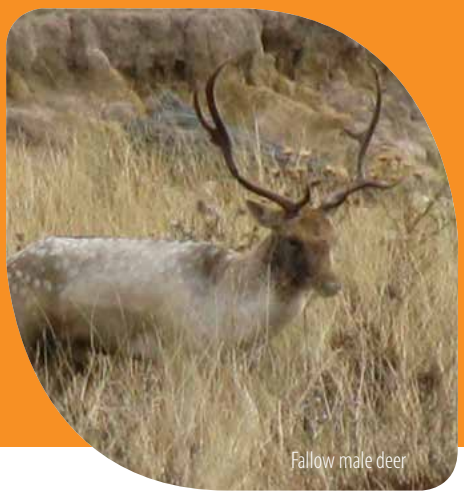
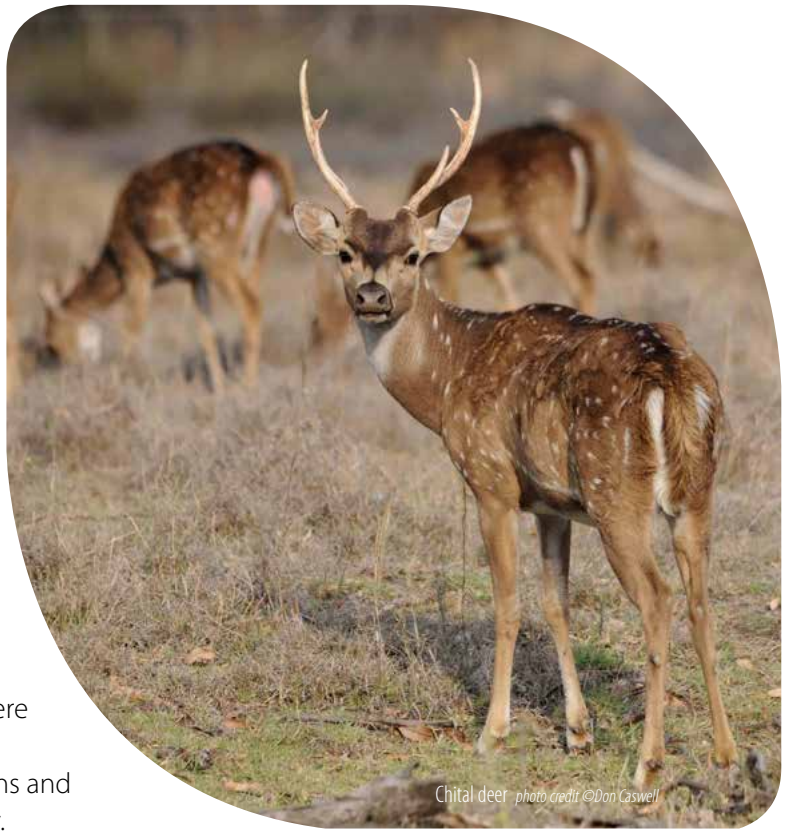


Fallow male deer

Wild deer in the Western region



Chital deer *photo credit ©Don Caswell*

About wild deer and why they are a problem

Deer have been a part of the Australian landscape since the 19th century and were initially released for recreational hunting purposes. Over the years their populations and distributions have increased dramatically.

Australia is now home to six species of deer; fallow, red, chital, hog, rusa and sambar. While deer continue to be farmed for venison, the wild populations are causing significant environmental damage.

While less prevalent in the Western region, sightings of wild deer have increased in recent years. At least three species of wild deer can currently be found in the Western region, with another two species likely*.

- Chital deer (*Axis axis*)
- Fallow (*Dama dama*)
- Red deer (*Cervus elaphus*)
- Sambar deer (*Cervus unicolor*)*
- Rusa deer (*Cervus timorensis*)*

Where there are high numbers of wild deer, diversity and abundance of plant species is lower. Saplings are commonly destroyed by deer as they rub against them, trample or eat them. Weeds may flourish in areas where deer are not adequately controlled.

Wild deer compete with native animals and livestock for food and generally add to grazing pressure.

As hoofed mammals, deer can act as carriers of disease that affect livestock such as cattle and horses. They also contribute to erosion and degrade the water quality in creek and river systems.

**Unconfirmed reports have been received of wild sambar and rusa deer in the Western region.*

NSW GOVERNMENT

Landcare New South Wales

This project has been funded by the Managing Established Pest Animals and Weeds program

For more information contact:
Local Land Services on 1300 795 299 or visit www.lls.nsw.gov.au

Signs of wild deer

Deer can be elusive and hard to observe. Therefore, knowing the signs of deer including identifying tracks, scats, trails, wallows, rubs and scrapes can be valuable for monitoring of the presence and abundance of deer.

Deer tracks

The most important part of spotting deer tracks is knowing the general shape of the deer's track and how to distinguish it from the tracks of other animals. Deer have a hoof that is split (cloven) which appears as two symmetrical halves in an oblong crescent shape.

When viewed upside down, deer tracks form a heart or triangular shape made up of the two hooves.

The sides of deer tracks are convex (curved outward) and the tips of hooves bend toward the inside of the track.

Deer

Goat

Sheep

Pig

Trails

Deer follow the same general "pads" from bedding areas to food plots and back again and will beat down the earth and grass enough to leave behind visual proof of their movements.

Wallows

Wallowing is where deer bathe and roll around in the mud. They create wallow sites in wet depressions in the ground, eventually forming quite large sites (two-three metres across and up to one metre deep).

Rubs

A deer rub is an identifiable mark on trees made by a male deer caused by rubbing his forehead and antlers against the base of a tree. Spotting deer rubs on trees is a good indication you have deer on your property.

Scrapes

A deer scrape is a bare patch of ground shaped like an oval or triangle with an overhanging branch. To make scrapes, deer paw away leaves and debris exposing the soil, which acts as a host for the scent they leave behind.

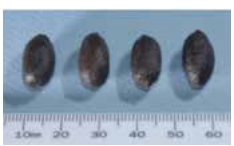
Deer scats

Deer produce rounded, oval or oblong scats that may be deposited either separately or in clumps containing large numbers of pellets.

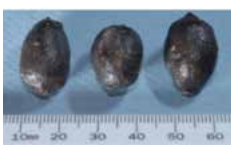
Clumps of deer scat usually break down into separate pellets upon contact with the ground. The size and form of scats may vary within and between different species of deer.

In a field situation, deer scats can be easily confused with other introduced herbivores such as goats and sheep.

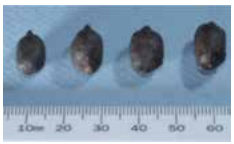
Fallow deer



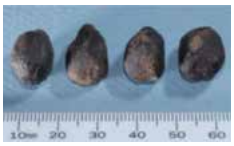
Red deer



Goat



Sheep



Wild deer in the Western region

Deer identification

Feral deer are an introduced species that threaten biodiversity and cause significant damage to the environment. The three most common species of wild deer which can be found in the Western region are outlined below.

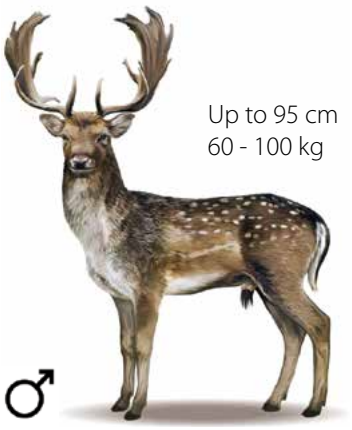
Fallow deer

Antlers:

Flattened antlers up 50 cm with numerous points.

Features:

Both sexes are highly variable in colour including red, black, white and spotted and feature a heart shaped pale rump patch with black outline and a long tail. Bucks have a penile sheath and Adams apple.



Fallow deer are the most widespread of the species in the Western region with wild populations confirmed in areas around White Cliffs, Bourke, Cobar, Ivanhoe and Balranald as well as areas boarding other Local Land Services regions and the Victorian border.

Chital deer

Antlers:

Smooth and slender antlers up to 90 cm with three tines on each.

Features:

Both sexes feature a striking white throat patch and reddish to chestnut brown coat with dark brown/black muzzle white spots and a long tail. Chital deer have a distinctive high-pitch alarm call when disturbed.

A number of wild chital deer populations have established areas to the south and east of Cobar bordering the Central West Local Land Services region.

Red deer

Antlers:

Multi-pointed complex antlers up to 90 cm.

Features:

Both sexes have a large pale rump patch with a grey-brown coat in winter turning reddish during summer. Red deer have long and pointed ears and a short tail. Calves have distinct white spots.

Populations of wild red deer have been confirmed to the east and north-east of Balranald.

Questionnaire

Test your knowledge on wild deer by answering the questions below? Answers can be found by reading this document and the *Do I have wild deer on my property? A guide to managing wild deer in Western NSW* and the *NSW Government's Deer Identification Guide*.

1. What are the top three species of wild deer in the Western region?

2. Which deer species, found in the Western region has a short tail?

3. Who do you notify if you have seen signs or sighted a wild deer?

4. What is the most common species of wild deer in the Western region?

5. What are the most effective forms of control for wild deer?

6. How did deer become a problem in Australia?

7. Which deer species can be identified by a white throat patch?

8. What diseases do they transmit?

9. What are the main signs of wild deer?

10. What threats do wild deer pose on the environment?

11. How much food will a wild deer consume, when compared to sheep or cattle?

Whose track is that?

_____ _____ _____ _____