

Feral deer

Cervus spp.

What does it look like?

Deer are ruminant mammals. Males grow antlers in spring and shed them in late winter. There are several species of deer present in Southland including Red deer, Wapiti (Fiordland), Whitetail (Stewart Island) and Fallow deer. Red deer are the largest of the three species and tend to be reddish-brown, occasionally with white spots around the spine. The most common colour for Fallow deer is brown-black back with paler grey-brown underside and neck, and no spots.



Why is it a problem?

Deer are selective browsers and target particular forest species over others. This can result in significant changes to forest composition and has effects on the fauna that rely on those plants. Deer can destroy the understorey of native forest by browsing, grazing, bark stripping and trampling, which in turn may increase soil erosion. Feral deer can reduce production by consuming pasture and crops and exotic forests. They have also been implicated in the transmission of bovine Tb.

The hinds are capable of producing a single calf (rarely twins) annually. Deer mate in autumn and the fawns are born in late spring.

Deer populations are increasing in some areas of Southland and control of these are encouraged to limit the impacts that deer can cause.

Control methods

Shooting/Hunting

Either commercial (ground and aerial methods) or private operators should be considered.

Identify areas where this will be most effective e.g, winter crops, new pasture

Ensure all care is taken to be safe and abide by the firearms code when shooting.

Ensure you have landowners permission.

Related links

Bionet <https://www.bionet.nz/library>

DOC <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests/deer/>

Management programme

Organisms of interest

Request info

<https://eservices.es.govt.nz/online-services/new/BiosecurityRFS/step/1?Subject=AnimalPests&Species=596>