

# Bushwalking Victoria policy on invasive animals on public land and feedback from members

**Date:** 5 Sep 2016    **Status:** Draft endorsed by Bushwalking Victoria Board.

**Submitted to:** Inquiry into the Control of Invasive Animals on Crown Land (Victoria)

## **Background**

Invasive and feral animals threaten native biodiversity because of their ability to change and destroy habitats and ecosystems and are the number one cause of native animal extinctions in Australia.

The current “business as usual” approach to eradicating or controlling feral animals is having no effect on exponentially increasing numbers of deer (especially Sambar) and wild horses.

While eradication of invasive animals on mainland public land may be difficult, there are opportunities to completely eradicate invasive animals immediately in some areas such as removing the deer population on Snake Island.

Recent significant reductions in Parks Victoria budget have greatly compromised the organisation’s ability to effectively measure and reduce invasive animals on public land.

There is clear evidence of increasing severity of landscape-scale environmental damage caused by invasive animals.

Bushwalking Victoria is not aware of any current eradication programs for invasive animals and limited control programs have been implemented inconsistently to date.

There are currently no biological control agents for horses or deer.

Recreational bushwalkers have reported some alarming close encounters with deer shooters in some national parks including along sections of the Alpine Walking Track.

## **Bushwalking Victoria’s policies on invasive animals**

Bushwalking Victoria supports the classification of the following invasive animal species as feral/pest animals on public land including national parks: deer, goats, pigs, foxes, horses, rabbits, dogs, cats, introduced rats and mice.

Bushwalking Victoria supports the humane eradication of invasive and feral animals from public land including national parks.

Bushwalking Victoria recognises that shooting is an effective method of eradicating invasive and feral animals.

Bushwalking Victoria supports shooting as part of pest control and eradication programs organised and supervised by land management authorities that use licensed professionals and/or suitably qualified land management staff.

Bushwalking Victoria considers that the safety of all users of public land is a paramount concern, noting that all shooting activities on public land pose very significant risks.

Bushwalking Victoria accepts that closures of areas of some areas of national parks and public land are required while shooting is used during eradication programs for invasive and feral animals, noting that this has a major impact on bushwalkers who wish to access these areas.

Bushwalking Victoria supports the targeting of all invasive animals during closures rather than restricting eradication to specific animal species.

Bushwalking Victoria accepts that there is a long history of shooting of deer by recreational shooters in some sections of some protected areas on a seasonal basis.

Bushwalking Victoria does not regard recreational shooting of invasive and feral animals as an effective long-term method for eradication as recreational shooters often leave a residual population of some animals.

Bushwalking Victoria opposes increasing areas available for recreational shooting in protected areas due to the danger that shooting poses to bushwalkers.

Bushwalking Victoria believes that hunting with dogs in protected areas should not be allowed under any circumstances.

Bushwalking Victoria supports increased funding for Parks Victoria and DELWP to improve research into invasive animals, investigation of biological control agents and conducting programs to eradicate them or reduce their numbers if eradication is not practical.

### Feedback on invasive animals from Bushwalking Victoria clubs and individual members

Invasive animals feedback	Name	Club
Action is required to cull deer and wild horses. Shooters should not be allowed into National Parks.	Patsy Scales	BWV
Individuals cite seeing isolated pockets of destruction (two specific examples - Warramate Hills and O'Shannassy Aqueduct).	Russell Lucas	Waverley Bushwalking Club
As regular visitors to national and state parks, we have occasionally seen the damage that some introduced animals can do. We believe that in areas where these animals are found, it is in the interest of our unique environment, that animals that are detrimental to the area, be controlled wherever possible.	Terry Manning	Melton Bushwalkers Inc.
Have been walking in the Buangor park twice in the last month on the first visit we saw a deer at the Snowgums lookout. The next time (one week ago) there were fresh deer droppings in the same area and also quite a large area between there and the Beeripmo campground where there was fresh evidence of pig diggings. We almost always see evidence of pigs every time we are up there	Anne Briody	Ballarat Bushwalking and outdoor club
Feral Goats have been a problem in the Lerderderg State Park for decades and nobody seems to be taking any control measures. I have many photographs of these animals. In 2008, I once counted more than 50 goats along a stretch of the Lerderderg River between Link tracks 1 and 2 on a morning walk. Recently we have also sighted feral pigs and severely disturbed ground where the pigs have been active. The goats destroy native vegetation. They seem to like <i>Indigofera australis</i> bushes. Every time I see one of these on my walks in the Lerderderg State Park it seems to have been pruned by goats. Likewise <i>Pseudanthus orbicularis</i> plants are often damaged. Some threatened plant species are in further danger unless goats are culled. I would like control measures to be introduced.	Bernard Katthagen	Melton Bushwalking Club

<p>Thanks for the opportunity to comment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parks Vic needs to be adequately funded to conduct enforcement against illegal hunting, which is a significant contributory factor in this issue. For example, feral pigs have become a major issue in the Wombat Forest. Parks staff have told me that they catch people with piglets that are to be released. (In NSW, same issue around Jagungal. Piglets are deliberately released, or allowed to live, but with the ears cut off so hunting dogs cannot bring them down, ensuring the population continues.)</li> <li>2. State Gov should fund public education campaign to detail effect of feral animal, and the need for substantial professional culling, to counter the absurd lines from for example most recently, brumby hunters in NSW claiming a. no problem and b. a bizarre "traditional" right to run, in effect, a brumby farm on public land. (When doing the Alpine Walking Track a couple of years ago, north of Dartmouth the damage caused by an astonishing numbers of brumbies was very obvious, and massive).</li> <li>3. State Gov should encourage and support Fed Gov to provide substantial funding to seek biological control of invasive animals. (CSIRO?) Recent example of the development of a biological control that will remove carp from the Murray River an excellent case in point.</li> <li>4. Organisations with vested interests doing culling (eg deer hunters, brumby hunters) is counter-productive and should not be supported.</li> </ol> <p>Anecdotes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. When doing the Alpine Walking Track a couple of years ago, north of Mt Skene the damage caused by deer hunters 4wds was extraordinary. Deers hunters because the good campsites were littered with dog poop, where large numbers of dogs had been tethered.</li> <li>6. Further north again, between Mt Mt Donald and Mt Clear, stumbled across are large dump of camping gear and food in drums, hidden in the bush. A deer hunters "semi-permanent" illegal campsite.</li> <li>7. Further north again, in the Alpine National Park near No 1 and 2 Divide, was surprised early morning by heavily armed deer hunters walking past our tent. Their 4WD was parked further along. Rang Mansfield Police.</li> </ol>	Duncan Brookes	BWV and VMTC
<p>DVBC is concerned at the impact that the rapidly increasing numbers of invasive animals is having on Crown Land and very much supports efforts to reduce the numbers.</p>	Chris Close	Diamond Valley Bushwalking Club
<p>I have encountered deer damage in the Tomahawk Creek region near Mt Stirling while on a search. Recreational hunting occurs in this are but appears to be ineffective in reducing deer numbers. Significant damage was evident to some trees and several bogs and creeks. I have also seen large feral goat populations at the base of cliffs in the Grampians several years ago.</p>	Peter Campbell	BWV