

# Fact Sheet

## The program

This animal control program is funded for three years through the state government's Biodiversity Response Planning grant scheme.

- The program aims to reduce the number of deer and feral goats from priority sections of the Grampians National Park and Black Range State Park. Neither of these parks are regulated to allow hunting by members of the public.
- Deer and feral goats will be controlled in a 47,000-hectare area over the next three years through an integrated program that will deploy professional and accredited volunteer shooters, and professional aerial shooting crews.
- The program will be carried out under strict conditions designed to ensure safe, effective and humane practices.

## Aerial shooting

- Between June 22– 28 June 2019, access to some sections of the park may be temporarily closed while aerial shooting from a helicopter takes place.
- Recent trials in eastern Victoria have found aerial shooting to be a highly effective method for controlling deer in remote areas.
- Highly qualified pilots and marksmen will be used during the operation.
- During the aerial operation, people may see a helicopter and be able to hear gunshots.
- Visitors are reminded to stay on designated tracks and obey all signage when out in the Park.
- Park restrictions and track closures will be signposted and information available to visitors from the Brambuk visitor centre in Halls Gap, and by calling 13 19 63.

## On-ground shooting

- On-ground operations will also be undertaken throughout the three-year program. Access to some sections of the park may be temporarily closed while on-ground shooting takes place.
- Visitors are reminded to stay on designated tracks and obey all signage when out in the Park.
- Park restrictions and track closures will be signposted and information available to visitors from the Brambuk visitor centre in Halls Gap, and by calling 13 19 63.

## Conservation

- Victoria's parks are home to more than 4,000 native plants and more than 3,000 native animal species. Parks Victoria plays a vital role in protecting native plants and wildlife.
- Parks Victoria regularly undertakes dedicated conservation programs, designed to contribute to habitat restoration or predator management across all its parks. These programs include activities such as monitoring of grazer and plant populations, revegetation, spraying, controlled burning, and animal control programs.
- These programs are crucial to restoring habitat and improving overall landscape health.
- Animal control programs are one component of a suite of conservation activities undertaken by Parks Victoria in protecting native plants and wildlife.

## Native animal management

- Populations of native species have the potential to grow beyond sustainable levels.
- As population densities increase, overgrazing, over-browsing or trampling can result in:
  - Habitat degradation and loss of native flora
  - Negative impacts on other native species dependant on those habitats
  - Mass starvation of the population as their source of food is completely consumed.

- In some cases, a native animal population may need to be actively managed to protect biodiversity and reduce the risk of large-scale population starvation.
- Native animals are managed only when a particular population is:
  - Threatening the survival of rare or threatened species or communities
  - A major contributor to serious environmental damage or long-term degradation of habitat
  - A major factor preventing habitat recovery
  - Suffering from malnutrition or disease as a result of overcrowding and an inability to disperse from an artificially confined area.

### Deer

- Deer are introduced species that are expanding throughout Victoria.
- They are having a negative impact on native vegetation and habitat for native and threatened species.
- Parks Victoria has an obligation to manage numbers in areas where they cause environmental damage.

### Feral goats

- Feral goats are prolific grazers that diminish native grasses, shrubs and trees, causing erosion, preventing regeneration and taking the food of native animals.
- They also foul waterholes and transport weeds and diseases.
- In the Grampians, they are entering areas of the Park with known Aboriginal cultural sites.

### Method

- Parks Victoria will be using skilled marksmen during the operation.
- Trapping, darting or mustering to relocate animals from the remote and arduous terrain of the Grampians Ranges is not safe for staff or volunteers and would not be effective at achieving rapid population knock-down.

### Safety and control

- We are using professional shooters, including Park Rangers who are skilled marksmen.
- This control program is being undertaken in accordance with all relevant legislation, regulations, Codes of Practice and Standard Operating Procedures.
- Strict shooting rules are in place to ensure visitor safety.
- Shooting operations occur during low visitation periods and is in remote locations of the park.
- Any visitor sites that may be impacted by shooting operations will be temporary closed.
- Signs will be placed on all major access points to the shooting areas advising visitors to keep out as firearms are in use for pest animal control.

### Animal welfare

- Veterinary personnel will be onsite and oversee aerial shooting operations and to confirm adherence with Standard Operating Procedures and humane practices.
- Only experienced, skilled and responsible shooters will be able to participate in the program, and only firearms and ammunition suitable for deer and goats will be used.
- Only animals that can be clearly seen and that are within range to achieve an instantly fatal shot will be targeted.
- Target animals will not be chased prior to shooting but stalked so as not to alarm the animal.
- If an animal is wounded, it will be located and killed as quickly and humanely as possible