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Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan Project

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WILD FALLOW DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the proposed management plan for wild fallow deer.

Private Forests Tasmania is an independent statutory authority established under the *Private Forests Act 1994*. We work to facilitate and expand the sustainable growth and development of the private forest resource in Tasmania. Under our [Corporate Plan 2020-23](#) one of our goals is to work with policy makers and regulators to improve regulatory efficiency and practical policy settings for private forestry.

Fallow deer have been a challenge for private forest growers for some time, primarily through the impacts of browsing on young trees. Deer browsing damages both natural forest regeneration and newly established plantations adding considerable costs to private forest growers. Costs are incurred in controlling deer populations and in responding to the damage they cause to young tree crops. Private Forests Tasmania's view is that this unfairly impacts primary producers in favour of recreational hunters who seek to maintain or expand populations.

Nevertheless, Private Forests Tasmania acknowledges and commends the Government's recent initiatives in the regulatory and policy settings concerning fallow deer. These include:

- formation of the Tasmanian Game Council;
- transition from a 1-year to a 5-year crop protection permit with subsequent reduction in regulatory requirements concerning quotas and tags for antlerless deer;
- conduct of a state wide deer population census;
- current proposal to prepare a fallow deer management plan.

The proposed management plan provides a further opportunity to improve the management of deer and assist private forest growers to reduce costs associated with deer control. Private Forests Tasmania recommends the following be considered by the management planning process.

Deer population density targets and range management

Different deer densities are appropriate for different land uses. For example, deer ranges that encompass sensitive reserved vegetation or land under production threatened by deer browsing are suited to the maintenance of low deer densities and even eradication, while it may be appropriate to maintain a significant population in core hunting ranges (see discussion on private game reserves below).

Using the information and results of the deer population census, population targets with associated performance measures could be set to manage and monitor deer numbers at appropriate levels across ranges. The recent partial deregulation of crop protection permits with regard to quotas and tags for

antlerless deer, will assist land managers to control populations in ranges threatened by deer browsing such as where commercial forests are being established and/or regenerated.

Provision made to establish private game reserves

Private landowners who wish to use their land for deer hunting could have a private game reserve declared on that land. This would provide for a maintained deer population and legitimate recreation and shooting royalties made available to the landowner. Ideally these reserves would be located in the core hunting ranges and be contiguous with other private and public land dedicated to game management. The Private Timber Reserve concept, which is administered by Private Forests Tasmania, could be used as a model to establish these types of reserves. Outside of these dedicated game management areas, deer would be considered feral and further deregulation could occur that allowed landowners to pursue deer eradication at a property level, and by agreement with adjacent landowners, at a multiple property or landscape level.

Salvage of deer meat

Landowners incur significant costs to control deer populations that could be offset by the sale of meat otherwise left to decompose in the landscape as a wasted resource. The management plan should consider a trial be established to allow the harvest of deer culled under a crop protection permit for meat processing similar to what is already occurring in Tasmania with forester kangaroos. This should be carefully planned and implemented so as not to adversely impact existing deer farms that have invested in their business over many years and have established hard won markets for their products.

Yours sincerely,



Penny Wells
CEO Private Forests Tasmania