



# Feral deer

## Why are they a pest?

Feral deer are harmful to native biodiversity. They eat entire understories (smaller trees, shrubs, herbs and seedlings) of native bush, which then affects native flora and fauna.

Deer can carry and spread bovine tuberculosis and are a road safety hazard. They also have a negative effect on farms, eating planted crops.

The term 'feral deer' includes several species, such as red deer, fallow deer, white-tail (Stewart Island) and wapiti (Fiordland).

## What do they look like?

- **Size:** Feral deer vary in size depending on species.
- **Appearance:** **Red deer** are reddish-brown and sometimes have white spots on their spines. **Fallow deer** are noticeably smaller and have four main colour variations. The most common is brown-black back with paler grey-brown underside and neck, and no spots. **White-tail deer** are a smaller species with a light-brown summer coat and a grey-brown winter coat with a white underside. **Wapiti** is the largest species — they are chestnut brown with a distinctive cream rear. Bucks (males) can be easily identified from does/hinds (females) by their antlers.
- **Signs:** Hoof tracks, scat (droppings), and tree rubbings where bucks have rubbed their antlers, damaging tree bark. Deer can graze as high as 1.8 metres and can clear the forest understory, leaving large barren patches.
- **Similar species:** Deer are classed as an ungulate (hoofed mammal). Similar pest species include feral goats and feral pigs.
- **Habitat:** Feral deer inhabit several environments, including forests, shrublands, grasslands and plantations.



### Common name:

Feral deer

### Scientific name:

*Cervus elaphus*, *Cervus nippon*, *Cervus dama*

### Management programme:

Site-led

Site-led programmes have rules for specific pests that only apply in that area. Site-led areas have special biodiversity and other values to protect.

## When can I spot them best?

Feral deer can be spotted year round.

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## What are the rules?

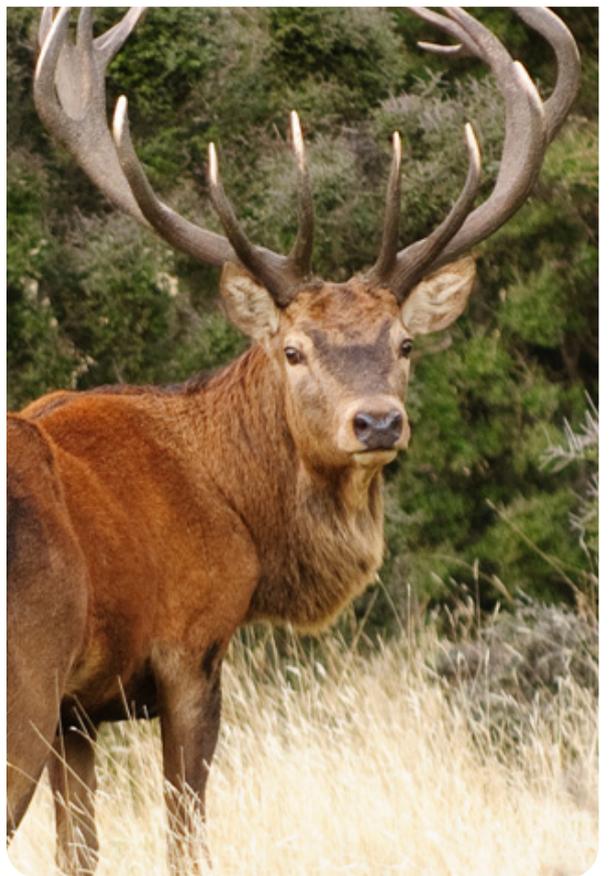
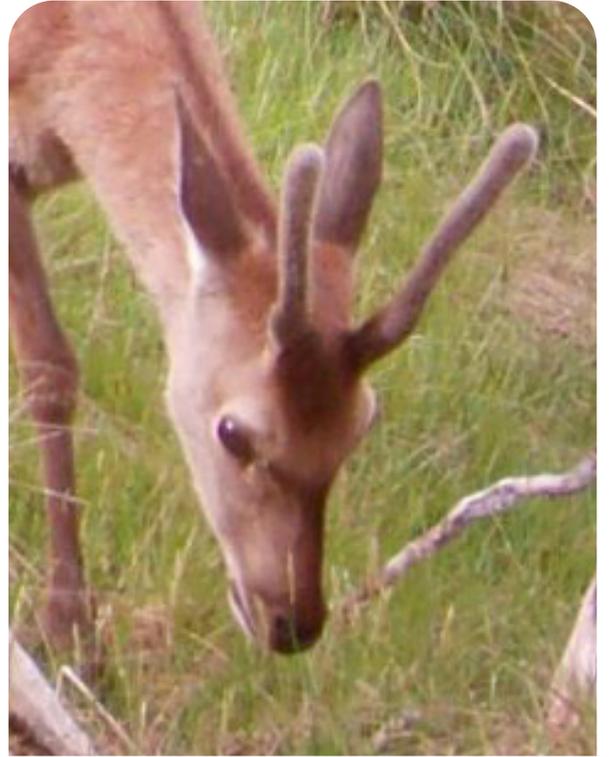
Feral deer are managed as pests under the Wild Animal Control Act 1977. They can be hunted as a resource, but their control is necessary to prevent damage to native ecosystems, and it is illegal to release them into the wild without a permit.

To improve and prevent further damage to indigenous ecosystems, feral deer are in the site-led programme of the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan (2019–2029).

The Dunedin site-led areas are West Harbour (including Mt Cargill, Quarantine Island and Goat island) and Otago Peninsula.

No person shall keep, hold, enclose or otherwise harbour feral deer in any place, either in transit to or present in site-led areas.

To achieve this, ORC takes a lead role in supporting the goals of community groups and agencies in site-led areas in relation to feral deer. This may be through advice, education, funding, or requiring landowners to undertake control when needed.



## What should I do?

For information on controlling feral deer, visit the Department of Conservation website at [doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests-and-threats/deer/](https://doc.govt.nz/nature/pests-and-threats/animal-pests-and-threats/deer/)

For more information, visit [orc.govt.nz/deer](https://orc.govt.nz/deer)

