

# New laws to enable the commercial processing of wild deer

## What do the changes mean for you?

The Victorian Government is committed to delivering its \$5.3 million Sustainable Hunting Action Plan (SHAP). The Plan supports and guides the game hunting industry's long-term growth and provides practical actions that benefit the environment, the economy and the Victorian community.

Under the SHAP, the Government is reducing the regulatory barriers relating to the commercial processing and use of harvested wild deer. Recent changes allow farmers to more easily dispose of problem wild deer and for commercial field harvesters and meat processors to process wild deer for human and pet consumption.

This information sheet details what the changes mean for farmers, commercial field harvesters and public land managers.

### Farmers

Landowners can destroy problem wild deer on their properties where they are causing damage and the carcasses can be processed commercially.

Wild deer carcasses need to be handled in accordance with PrimeSafe requirements and the relevant Australian Standard if they are destined for commercial processing.

Landowners can use commercial field harvesters (see next section) as agents to handle the wild deer in accordance with PrimeSafe requirements and the relevant Australian Standard.

Landowners can also have problem wild deer processed at a rendering plant for inedible rendering (e.g. for fertilizer).

Wild deer are a valued hunting resource to some. However, they can cause damage to crops, fences and other farm infrastructure. They can also compete with livestock for feed.

In these situations, private landowners can legally shoot most species of wild deer (except Hog Deer) on their properties, without the

need to apply for a permit or purchase a Game Licence. This can be done during the day or at night under spotlight and is subject to certain conditions such as minimum firearm calibre requirements to ensure the animals are destroyed humanely.

For more information on these conditions, please see the [‘Controlling problem deer on private property’](#) fact sheet available on the Game Management Authority’s website at [gma.vic.gov.au](http://gma.vic.gov.au)

Landowners can also engage the services of an agent (like commercial field harvesters) to assist with the shooting. In these situations, the agent must carry written permission from the landowner whenever shooting is taking place and when transporting wild deer.

A copy of the [permission form](#) to be completed by the landowner is available for download from the Game Management Authority website at [www.gma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au). The permission is valid for up to 12 months unless sooner revoked by the landowner.

Recent changes to laws also allow wild deer (except Hog Deer) causing damage on private

land to **be used for commercial purposes**, in certain circumstances.

Under the changes wild deer will be able to be processed at meat processing facilities **licensed by PrimeSafe**, if the appropriate licensing and standards can be met. This includes for human or pet consumption, or for inedible rendering.

PrimeSafe is responsible for the necessary licensing and approval arrangements for commercial field harvesters. Wild Game Meat Harvest Guidelines are available at [www.primesafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.primesafe.vic.gov.au).

The laws also allow farmers to take wild deer carcasses directly to rendering plants for inedible rendering (e.g. for fertilizer).

For farmers, this means that there are now more options for removing problem wild deer and their carcasses from their properties.

It is important to remember that recreational hunters harvesting wild deer under a Game Licence whether on private land (with permission from the property owner), or public land, **can only harvest deer for their personal consumption**.

### Commercial field harvesters

Commercial field harvesters can harvest unprotected wild deer (except Hog Deer) from private land for human or pet food consumption only with the permission of the landowner and only in accordance with PrimeSafe requirements.

Commercial field harvesters can work with landowners, forest plantation managers, public land managers and commercial meat processors to utilise wild deer for human or pet food consumption.

The Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Wild Game Meat for Human Consumption (AS4464:2007) or the Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Pet Meat (AS4841:2006) requires that game be harvested by an approved field harvester.

PrimeSafe is responsible for the necessary licensing and approval arrangements for commercial field harvesters. Wild Game Meat Harvest Guidelines and copies of the Australian Standards are available at [www.primesafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.primesafe.vic.gov.au).

Authorised commercial field harvesters can harvest unprotected wild deer (except Hog Deer) from private land as an authorised agent of the landowner.

When acting as an agent on private property, commercial field harvesters must have written permission from the landowner on their person whenever shooting is taking place and when transporting wild deer.

A copy of the [permission form](#) to be completed by the landowner is available for download from the Game Management Authority website at [gma.vic.gov.au](http://gma.vic.gov.au). The authorisation is valid for up to 12 months unless revoked sooner by the landowner.

Commercial harvesting of wild deer from Crown land is not currently permitted, unless it is part of an invasive species control program run by a public land manager such as Parks Victoria.. Under these programs, commercial field harvesters can be contracted by public land managers and subject to relevant permits use the wild deer carcasses for commercial processing (see below).

### Public land managers

Public land managers can now have wild deer that are harvested during control programs processed commercially.

Wild deer intended to be processed for human or pet consumption need to be handled in accordance with the relevant PrimeSafe requirements and Australian Standard.

Wild deer control programs are conducted by various public land management agencies (e.g. Parks Victoria).

Any control programs conducted on public land are conducted under relevant permits and controls, depending on where the control activity is occurring.

The wild deer from these control programs may be used for commercial purposes, as determined by the public manager, depending on the objectives of the control program, stakeholder consultation and permit conditions.

Public land managers may also decide to take the wild deer to landfill or a commercial rendering plant for appropriate processing.

## Commercial meat processors

Meat processing facilities (e.g. game processing facilities, knackereries, rendering plants/pet food processing facilities) that wish to process wild deer should contact PrimeSafe for licensing requirements related to processing game.

In the past, licensed meat processing facilities like abattoirs have worked closely with commercial field harvesters (e.g. the processing of kangaroo for pet food) and farmers to obtain a reliable source of animals for processing. It is expected similar arrangements will be entered into by interested parties.

All wild game meat that is processed at a PrimeSafe licensed facility must be handled in accordance with the *Meat Industry Act 1993* and the relevant Australian Standards. The relevant standards are:

- Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Wild Game Meat for Human Consumption (AS4464:2007);
- Australian Standard for the Hygienic Production of Pet Meat (AS4841:2006 PISC Report 88 – Amended 2009); and
- Australian Standard for Hygienic Rendering of Animal Products (AS5008:2007).

For copies of the Australian Standards and other information relating to requirements for PrimeSafe licensed meat processing facilities, please visit the PrimeSafe website at [www.primesafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.primesafe.vic.gov.au)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do I become a commercial field harvester?

For a PrimeSafe licensed meat processing facility to accept game for processing, it must be harvested by a person approved in writing by PrimeSafe. Visit the PrimeSafe website ([www.primesafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.primesafe.vic.gov.au)) for information about the commercial field harvester approval requirements.

### As a commercial field harvester, can I harvest wild deer from private farm land?

Yes, you can take any wild deer (except Hog Deer) that is causing damage, but only with the written permission of the landowner. You are required to carry written permission while on the property and when transporting deer

from the property. This permission is granted through a permission form which can be found at [www.gma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au). The permission is valid for up to 12 months **but can be revoked by the landowner at any time.**

### As a commercial field harvester, can I harvest wild deer from Crown land?

No, unless it is part of an invasive species control program run by a public land manager.

Some public land managers may decide to use the services of commercial field harvesters for specific control programs. It will be up to these land managers to decide if the wild deer will be processed for food, rendered for fertilizer or disposed to landfill.

Forest plantation managers that lease Crown land can apply to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) for an Authority to Control Wildlife under the *Wildlife Act 1975* to control problem wild deer on their lease and may engage the services of commercial field harvesters that comply with PrimeSafe requirements.

### Does a commercial field harvester require a wildlife controller licence from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning?

No, PrimeSafe authorised commercial field harvesters acting in accordance with the conditions of the deer unprotection order do not require a wildlife controller licence. The unprotection order conditions are found on the back of the [permission form](#) granted by the landowner for agents to control problem deer.

Commercial harvesters can only operate on Crown Land under a land manager's Authority to Control Wildlife (ATCW) issued under the Wildlife Act by DELWP.

### As a landowner/farmer, can I or my agent take problem wild deer shot on my private property to a commercial meat processor?

Yes, however, all meat that is destined for human or pet food consumption must be handled and processed in accordance with strict PrimeSafe requirements and licensing under the *Meat Industry Act 1993* and relevant Australian Standards.

This is where engaging the services of a commercial field harvester (that can act as a landowner's agent) could be useful in controlling problem deer. These commercial harvesters usually have working relationships

with commercial meat processors and are aware of, and can comply with, the relevant accreditation, licensing, destruction, handling, storage and transportation requirements. The commercial field harvesters are often actively seeking farm properties to assist with controlling problem wild deer that are causing damage to farm properties.

A farmer can now also have problem wild deer processed at a rendering plant for inedible rendering (e.g. for fertilizer).

**Can a recreational hunter authorised under a Game Licence act as a commercial field harvester?**

No. Game licence holders are recreational hunters and are only permitted to hunt wild deer for their own personal consumption. Deer taken under the authority of a Game Licence cannot be accepted or processed by a licensed PrimeSafe facility.

**Can a recreational hunter with a Game Licence sell, trade, give away or donate wild deer they have harvested?**

No. Deer harvested under a recreational Game Licence is for personal consumption only.

**Can a recreational hunter authorised under a Game Licence take their harvested wild deer to a PrimeSafe licensed retail butcher for processing for personal consumption?**

No. Only carcasses harvested in accordance with Australian Standard 4464:2007 are permitted to be in a facility licensed to process meat for human consumption and the butcher would need to be specifically licensed to process game.

**Will recreational hunters be able to take wild deer to a retail butcher in the future for processing for personal consumption?**

The Government is currently reviewing legislative barriers that prevent deer hunters from taking deer to retail butchers for processing for the hunter's personal consumption. Any new developments will be communicated to hunters as they arise.

**How does a recreational hunter minimise the food safety risks associated with the wild deer they have harvested?**

Download and read the "Food Safety for Deer Hunters" information sheet from the Game

Management Authority website at [www.gma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au).

**Which laws were changed?**

Amendments to enable wild deer to be processed in a PrimeSafe licensed facility and to remove barriers to wild deer being possessed for commercial purposes were made under the *Meat Industry Act 1993* and the *Wildlife Act 1975* through the following instruments:

- Meat Industry Amendment Regulations 2018
- Wildlife Amendment Regulations 2018
- Wildlife (Game) Further Amendment Regulations 2018
- New replacement Order made under section 7A of the *Wildlife Act 1975*
- Notice made under section 5(5) of the *Meat Industry Act 1993*.

Additional information can be found at the agencies listed in the Further Information section of this fact sheet.

**What else is being done to tackle problem wild deer?**

The government has encouraged the removal of wild deer from the landscape by opening a further 90,000 hectares of National Park to recreational deer hunting.

Except for Hog Deer, there is an all year open season on wild deer in most areas with no bag limit. This has resulted in 106,000 deer being harvested in 2017.

A statewide Deer Management Strategy will also take a coordinated approach to managing wild deer in Victoria.

The Government is examining options for the commercial processing (e.g. butchering, mincing, sausage making) of recreationally harvested wild deer for the personal consumption of the hunter. This should encourage more recreationally harvested wild deer to be fully utilised and harvested.

Illegal spotlighting is being targeted to stop people illegally shooting wild deer at night on public land. Fines, equipment seizure and forfeiture, firearm licence cancellation and imprisonment are some of the penalties that can apply.

Deer control programs, using professional and sometimes accredited volunteer hunters, are being undertaken by Parks Victoria at various parks around the State. Water authorities, Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare, Local Government and other community and conservation grounds also undertake various activities to manage the impacts of deer, including deer control.

## Definitions

**Recreational hunter** – Hunter with a Game Licence endorsed for deer.

**Commercial field harvester** – A commercial shooter who is able to be accredited by a state meat regulator (i.e. PrimeSafe or interstate equivalent) and can harvest and handle wild deer in accordance with the relevant Australian Standard.

**Commercial meat processor** – Facility licensed by PrimeSafe to process meat, e.g. abattoir, game meat processing facility, knackery, pet food processing facility.

**Public land managers** – e.g. Parks Victoria, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

**Spotlighting**- Shooting deer at night using spotlights within the meaning of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012.

## Further information

### Game hunting

Game Management Authority  
[www.gma.vic.gov.au](http://www.gma.vic.gov.au)

### Game meat processing, licensing and accreditation

PrimeSafe  
[www.primesafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.primesafe.vic.gov.au)

### Game hunting policy

Forest Industries, Fisheries and Game  
Department of Economic Development, Jobs,  
Transport and Resources  
[www.economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au](http://www.economicdevelopment.vic.gov.au)  
9658 4908

### Food Safety

Department of Health and Human Services  
[www.health.vic.gov.au](http://www.health.vic.gov.au)

Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport  
and Resources

1 Spring Street Melbourne Victoria 3000

Telephone (03) 9651 9999

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