

The control of invasive Native and Introduced species on Crown Land in Victoria



Scope

- Clarification on Safety and Accountability and procedures common to Contractors and Volunteers in the ANP Management Program.
- Current management options for Public and Private Land.
- Key Issues
- The need for a Paradigm Shift in Wildlife Management.
- The Benefit of using Volunteer Hunters.
- Common Ground.
- Measuring volunteer effectiveness.

Pose a question: Could using volunteer hunters in managed programs be the turning point in invasive species management in Australia?

Safety and Accountability in the ANP Program Contractors and volunteers

- Trained to industry standard and fully insured for \$20M public liability.
- Fully accountable under the law for any issue that amounts to a breach of:
 - Victorian Criminal Law, and The Game Management Authority Act 2014.
 - The Wildlife Act 1975, The Wildlife (Game) Regs 2012, The Wildlife Regs 2013 and The Wildlife (State Game Reserve) Reg 2004.
 - The National Parks Act 1975 and The Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978.
 - The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986 and the Firearms Act 1996.
 - Victorian Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations.
- Required to comply with Codes of Practice such as Pest-Smart DEE001: Ground shooting of feral deer, and Parks Victoria safety policies on fatigue, working alone, and the use of equipment such as chainsaws.

Procedures common to Contractors and Volunteers in the ANP

- Park not closed - entry points are signposted and tour groups formally advised.
- The response from bushwalkers personally encountered to date has been very positive.
- School group camped with Contractors – PV Staff took a PR opportunity.
- Operators are briefed in detail on protocols and procedures for safe shooting.
- Operational planning is collaborative - PV staff retain full oversight and control.
- Operators (Shooters) are issued PV radios and GPS.
- Scheduled radio reporting.
- GPS are used to track and log data for CPUE information.
- PV staff track the Operator's position throughout the operation for safety.



Current Management Options – All Land Tenures

- Effective management requires a sustained, landscape scale, integrated approach using all options.
- Game status of deer is no barrier to management.
- **Ground Shooting.** Effective, species specific but not the only method.
- **Heli shooting.** NSW NPWS shooting sambar (cost & canopy are limiting factors).
- **Electric fencing.** Good for small properties 5 strands x 1.5m high, bottom strand 100mm keeps out deer.
- **Tree guards and exclusion fencing.** Used widely in the US and UK – factor additional cost into Land Care grants (opportunity cost).
- **Chemical deterrents.** “Sen-Tree”. PVA glue, soap, egg and sand / grit sprayed on trees deters deer, rabbits and wallabies.
- **Human Scent.** Great for urban and peri urban sites.
 - Human hair, sweaty T shirts or used handkerchiefs on trees rubbed by deer.
- **Cost.** Landholder responsibility regardless of game or pest status (opportunity cost).



Mt Beauty



Mitta Valley



Mt Beauty

Key Issues

- Generation of social licence.
- Ownership – if you are impacted you are a stakeholder.
- Carcase Management.
- Measures and metrics to assess effectiveness.
- Lack of collaboration among stakeholders.

How will stakeholders address these issues?

- Govt could create an Invasive Species Working Group.
 - Members from VICPOL (Firearms Registry and Operations), DPI, GMA, DEDJTR, DELWP, PV, ADA, SSAA, FGA, VNPA, Professional Hunters Association, Federation of Bushwalking Clubs, VFF, Land Care

The need for a Paradigm Shift

Pat Pirelli the horseman said:

“If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got”

Current Australian wildlife management is mired in introduced species bias and dogma:

- “A paralysis of analysis”
- Calls for more research or for pest listing have not translated to Landscape scale management programs

We need to cut through the noise and smoke and ask:

- What can we do right now and what is stopping us? And;
- How can we shape volunteer hunters to achieve our Mission?

The Benefit of using Volunteer Hunters

- Volunteer strengths are our numbers, hunter skill-sets, diversity of experience, collaboration and adaptability. (If well led we are more like Monash than Haig)
- We are a cost effective component of an integrated and adaptive management approach that helps PV achieve its Mission.
- Volunteers extend the reach, duration and effect of wildlife management programs. We can be used:
 - on low value or unfunded programs,
 - on a range of simple or complex activities,
 - concurrently with contractors or in follow on management.

What do we get out of it?

- Good PR – changes negative stereotypes.
- Allows us to make a contribution to biodiversity.
- Allows us to be part of something bigger than ourselves.

Common Ground

- **Pest or Game?** Most native and introduced species can become invasive and all animals require management. Why not just call them what they are and manage them?
- **Humaneness.** The PV Volunteer programs use ground shooting to manage deer IAW the COP. The Invasive Species Council and the RSPCA acknowledge that ground shooting is the most effective technique currently available for deer control.
- **Sustained control.** We all agree that effective wildlife management requires sustained and measurable control programs based on reducing impacts.
- Recreational hunting is not wildlife control and wildlife control is not recreational hunting
- The Victorian Recreational Deer harvest may be difficult to measure, but
 - Longest running and most cost neutral wildlife management program in Australia.
 - Has an economic effect, and must have an environmental effect.
 - Who else will remove 60,000 deer annually from Public and Private land?
- Stakeholders can manage wildlife populations **concurrently** through recreational hunting and management programs that use contractors and volunteers.
- It is not an “either – or” situation.

Measuring Volunteer Effectiveness

Really asking: How do volunteers help the Landholder achieve their Mission?

- **Measures and metrics.** I would like to challenge the scientific community, the GMA, DELWP, PV and the hunting organisations to develop a workable measure of the effectiveness of the recreational harvest.
- **Focussing Recreational hunter effort.** I would like to challenge the GMA, DELWP, PV and the hunting organisations to examine ways to focus recreational hunter effort to high value and significantly impacted areas of public land.
- **Improving Hunter performance.** I would like to challenge hunters to shoot more female deer, to improve their knowledge and skills by attending hunter education courses, to mentor and encourage new hunters and to hunt more often and shoot more deer.
- **Funding.** Perhaps some of the revenue generated by recreational hunting in Victoria could be allocated to the organisation or individual who develops such metrics as a performance bonus?

Conclusion

- ✓ **Game status does not restrict management.**
- ✓ Generate social licence for a paradigm shift in wildlife management.
- ✓ **Ownership** – if you are impacted you are a stakeholder.
- ✓ Operators are qualified, safe and accountable.
- ✓ Develop measures and metrics to assess effectiveness.
- ✓ Create an **Invasive species working group.**
- ✓ **Posed the question:** Could using volunteer hunters in managed programs be the turning point in invasive species management in Australia?
 - ✓ The answer is **yes.**