

# Feral Deer

Your Environment  
Levy in action



Red Deer grazing in the Mary Valley

Within the Sunshine Coast region there are established feral populations of Red and Rusa Deer. Since migrating into the Mary Valley more than 100 years ago, Red Deer have established stable, wild populations. In comparison, Rusa Deer have only recently become established on the Sunshine Coast and are rapidly expanding their range. Isolated sightings of other species of deer have also been reported.

Although wild or feral populations of deer are seen as a commercial and visual asset by some sectors of the community, they can also have significant negative economic, environmental and social impacts. All species of deer are declared pest animals in Queensland if they are not kept in approved enclosures.



A potential traffic accident in the Mary Valley



Thermal images captured during a night survey

## Deer management

Council aims to work with the community to manage the feral deer by:

- Conducting surveys to determine the distribution, population size, habitat use and impacts of feral deer
- Developing community awareness of feral deer impacts and the benefits of effective management
- Assisting the community to control feral deer in areas where they have only recently become established or are having a significant impact.

## Feral deer impacts

### Economic impacts

Deer can damage agricultural and horticultural crops, irrigation systems and fences.

Feral deer compete with domestic stock for pasture and supplementary feed; three - four deer will consume the equivalent to one cow.

### Environmental impacts

Feral deer damage trees and native regeneration, disperse weed seeds and contribute to erosion.

### Social impacts

Deer can generate uninvited, illegal and dangerous hunting activity. Deer can also cause serious traffic accidents due to their size, shape and preference for night time movement.

### Disease impacts

Feral deer pose a risk to livestock industries and human health by aiding in the spread of disease including leptospirosis and bovine Johne's disease.



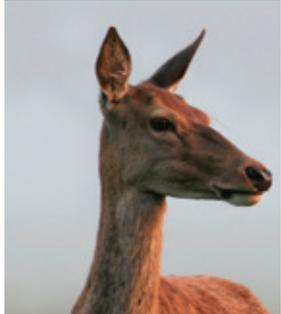
Red Deer



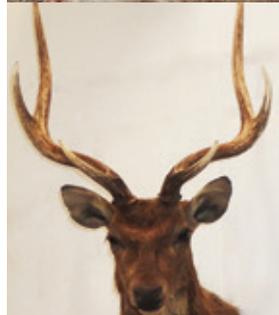
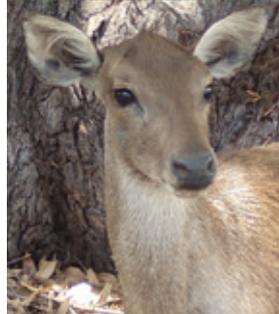
Rusa Deer

## Species identification

### Red Deer



### Rusa Deer



Red and Rusa Deer are the most common species observed within the Sunshine Coast region. The different species can be identified by observing their physical and behavioural differences. Some more notable differences are:

**Face:** Red Deer have angular facial features with larger, pointier ears.

**Rear:** The pale rump patch on a Red extends up either side, and a hand span above, the base of the tail. In comparison, a Rusa's rump patch will stop at the underside of the base of the tail.

**Tail:** The tail on a Rusa will be two to three times longer than a Red.

**Antlers:** The antlers of a mature Red stag will have multiple tines. Rusa stags will normally grow a maximum of three tines per side. Both species will cast their antlers annually and grow new ones. Red stags will cast in August/September. Rusa will normally cast in December/January (although out of season behaviour has been noted with Rusa).

**Breeding:** Red Deer rut in late March/April and fawn in Nov/Dec. The fawns are spotted and the spots fade at about three months of age. Rusa normally rut in July/Aug and they fawn in April (although out of season breeding behaviour has been observed and they are known to breed three times in two years in ideal conditions).

**Movement:** When Rusa move, especially when trotting, they carry their head low with the neck almost in-line with their spine. In comparison, Red Deer will run with a more upright attitude.

**Colour:** Colour is not a good indicator of species type as different conditions (like seasons) can make them appear very similar.

**Size:** Although Rusa are smaller, individual size varies considerably with age, condition and season and is therefore of limited use for determining species type unless viewed side by side.

### How you can help

The community can assist Sunshine Coast Council to monitor changes in the deer population and to identify new populations or range extensions.

If you have any information or sightings of deer in your area please contact Council at [mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au](mailto:mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au) or via the below details.

### Council assistance

If you suspect there may be deer present on your property, Council can assist you to determine their presence or absence.

Council's Feral Deer Officer can advise you how to reduce the impact of deer or assist with the control of deer on your property.