

Media release

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More Victorians join the hunt for deer

The new 2017 deer harvest report has revealed 106,000 deer were taken by approximately 37,000 licensed recreational deer hunters across Victoria.

Produced by the Game Management Authority (GMA) in collaboration with the Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research, the deer harvest report provides data on the number of deer harvested annually based on regular telephone surveys of licensed deer hunters.

Throughout 2017, licensed deer hunters were asked a series of questions related to their hunting activity, such as how many deer they harvested, what hunting methods they used, where they hunted, the number of days they hunted, and the species of deer harvested. The results only account for deer harvested recreationally by licensed hunters and not those taken as part of control programs.

GMA Chief Executive Officer Greg Hyams said the report found the 2017 deer harvest was the largest on record, continuing the trend of an increase in both the number of deer recreationally harvested and number of licensed deer hunters.

“During 2017, total licensed deer hunter numbers peaked at an all time high of 36,968, including 4,829 hound hunters.”

“Surveys showed each licensed deer hunter hunted for approximately 5.5 days in 2017, or 184,300 hunter days in total, with an average seasonal harvest of three deer,” Mr Hyams said.

“The most commonly harvested species in 2017 was Sambar Deer with an estimated total harvest of 88,816, followed next by Fallow Deer, with an estimated 15,515.”

“In total, an estimated 106,275 deer of all species were recreationally harvested during the 2017 calendar year, the highest recorded.”

“While stalking was the most preferred hunting method used, accounting for the majority of the harvest, hunting Sambar Deer with the aid of hounds was more efficient.”

“The top five towns where deer were harvested were Myrtleford, Mansfield, Bright, Dargo and Licola and the top five towns where most deer hunting occurred were Mansfield, Myrtleford, Licola, Dargo and Omeo. The majority of deer were taken on public land.”

Mr Hyams said the increasing harvest is likely due to the increasing distribution and abundance of deer as well as greater numbers of deer hunters in Victoria.

“The 2017 recreational deer harvest was 73% larger than the average harvest calculated since 2009, with an increase in licensed deer hunters of 147% since 2009,” Mr Hyams said.

“We recognise that deer can have an impact on the environment and agriculture and the data obtained from this report helps to inform decisions regarding their management and the management of public and private land in Victoria.”

The Victorian Government recently expanded deer hunting opportunities by making available an additional 90,000 hectares in the eastern alps of the Alpine National Park for deer hunting.

In recognising that deer are valued by some sectors of the community and also acknowledging the impacts that they have on biodiversity and agriculture, under Victoria’s Sustainable Hunting Action Plan, the government will shortly release a draft statewide deer management strategy for public comment. This strategy will guide the management of deer in Victoria into the future.

For a full copy of the deer harvest report or more information on game hunting in Victoria, visit www.gma.vic.gov.au

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