

FACT SHEET

Hunting Sambar Deer with hounds in Victoria

Hounds have been used to hunt Sambar Deer for over 100 years in Victoria. Hunting Sambar Deer with hounds can be an effective way to hunt Sambar Deer in environments that are difficult for stalking. Hunting with hounds is a very active and social recreation. However, given its highly visible nature and the fact that unrestrained hounds are used, there are a number of laws to ensure that hound hunting is conducted in a safe and humane manner and one that minimises impacts on other public land users.

There are laws that restrict where and when hunting with hounds can occur, the number of hunters and hounds that can be used at any one time, as well as restricting the breeds of hounds that can be used.

On 11 September 2012, the Victorian Government remade the game hunting regulations. The Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 have changed a number of laws relating to hound hunting. These include:

- the hound hunting season.
- permitted hound breeds and breed standards.
- the number of hounds that can be used during a hunt.
- the number of hunters that can hunt at any one time.
- registration requirements for hounds.
- identification requirements for hounds.
- closed areas for Sambar Deer hunting with hounds.

The new laws continue to require people to pass the Sambar Deer Hunting with Hounds Test before being able to hunt with hounds. Some exceptions apply for holders of a junior Provisional Game Licence and Non-resident of Australia Game Licence. This test ensures that hunters are aware of their legal obligations and helps to foster an ethical approach towards hunting and the responsibilities of hunters in the community.

Hound hunting season

The new laws have changed the start date for the hound hunting season. This was to address the issue where the previous season opening was linked to Easter and changed every year.

The new start date for the open season for hunting Sambar Deer with hounds is 1 April every year. The last day of the season remains unchanged at 30 November.



However, when Easter falls within the season, hound hunting is closed from the Thursday before Easter until the Thursday after Easter, inclusive.

The season dates address concerns about the length of the season when Easter falls late in April and provides a regular start date. It also avoids hunting during the busy Easter holiday period.

Permitted hound breeds and breed standards

In addition to pure-bred Beagles and Bloodhounds, pure-bred Harriers will also be allowed for hound hunting.

The new laws prescribe the height and breed standards of hounds, removing previous height exemptions for pedigree hounds and tolerances for height limits for hounds without pedigree papers. From the time the regulations take effect, any newly registered hound must comply with the following maximum height at withers:

- Bloodhound – 69 cms
- Beagle – 40 cms
- Harrier – 53.5 cms

Any hound that was registered under the previous regulations will be eligible for use for its lifetime, even if it does not conform to the new regulated height limits.

These changes have been introduced to remove the incentives for hunters to breed pedigree hounds that do not conform to the breed standards and for hunters to crossbreed Beagles with larger hounds in order to produce bigger and faster dogs.

Hound height limits will be strictly enforced. Any hound that is found does not conform to the breed standard or height limit will be deregistered and hunters may be prosecuted for hunting with an illegal hound.

Numbers of hounds that can be used during a hunt

The new laws maintain a maximum pack size of five hounds but allow the use of up to three additional pups (hounds under the age of 12 months) in training.

This recognises that allowing an additional three pups with the five hound pack allows effective training of pups without compromising how a pack functions and impacting on the success of a hunt.

Numbers of hunters that can hunt at any one time

To provide training opportunities for junior Game Licence holders (between the ages of 12 and 17 years) and non-Australian resident hunters, the new laws allow up to two junior or non-Australian resident hunters to hunt Sambar Deer with hounds without being considered part of the maximum 10 person hunting team.

However, both junior and non-Australian resident hunters can only hunt if they are under the direct supervision of a fully-licensed hunter who has passed the Sambar Deer Hunting with Hounds Test.

Registration requirements for hounds

Consistent with the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the new hunting laws require that **all hounds** registered for hunting **must be microchipped**. The previous option for using an ear tattoo to identify a hound less than twelve months of age has been removed.

In addition, the new laws now allow hounds to be registered to hunt Sambar Deer for life once they are mature (over 12 months of age), rather than requiring registration to be renewed every three years.

As hounds have generally reached physical maturity at 12 months, it is appropriate to allow life-long registration after the hound has reached 12 months of age. This reduces the administrative burden and costs for hunters and the Game Management Authority.

Any registered hound that grows taller than the prescribed height limit is considered an illegal hound and hunters using these hounds can be charged with a number of offences. If hunters believe that their hound no longer conforms to the height limit or breed standard, it is recommended that they contact one of the below organisations to have their hound re-assessed:

- Australian Deer Association - www.austdeer.com.au
- Victorian Hound Hunters Association - www.victorianhoundhunters.com.au
- Victoria Deer Association - www.vda.org.au

Identification requirements for hounds

In response to concerns over personal privacy, hound owners are now only required to include their full name and hound registration number on a permanent tag or label fixed to the collar of the hound.

Many hunters like to put additional information on a hound collar to assist in recovery of a hound should it become temporarily lost. While this is not required under the game laws, it makes good sense to do so.

Closed areas for Sambar Deer hunting with hounds

The regulations maintain the restriction on the use of hounds for hunting Sambar Deer to Crown land (where dogs are permitted, e.g. State Forest) and private land (with the permission of the land owner or manager) within the area bounded generally on the south by the Princes Highway, on the west by the Hume Highway and the north by the New South Wales border.

The regulations also maintain the areas closed to all deer hunting around Warburton and surrounds and Rubicon and surrounds, as well as the closure of deer hunting with the use of hounds around Jamieson and Marysville.

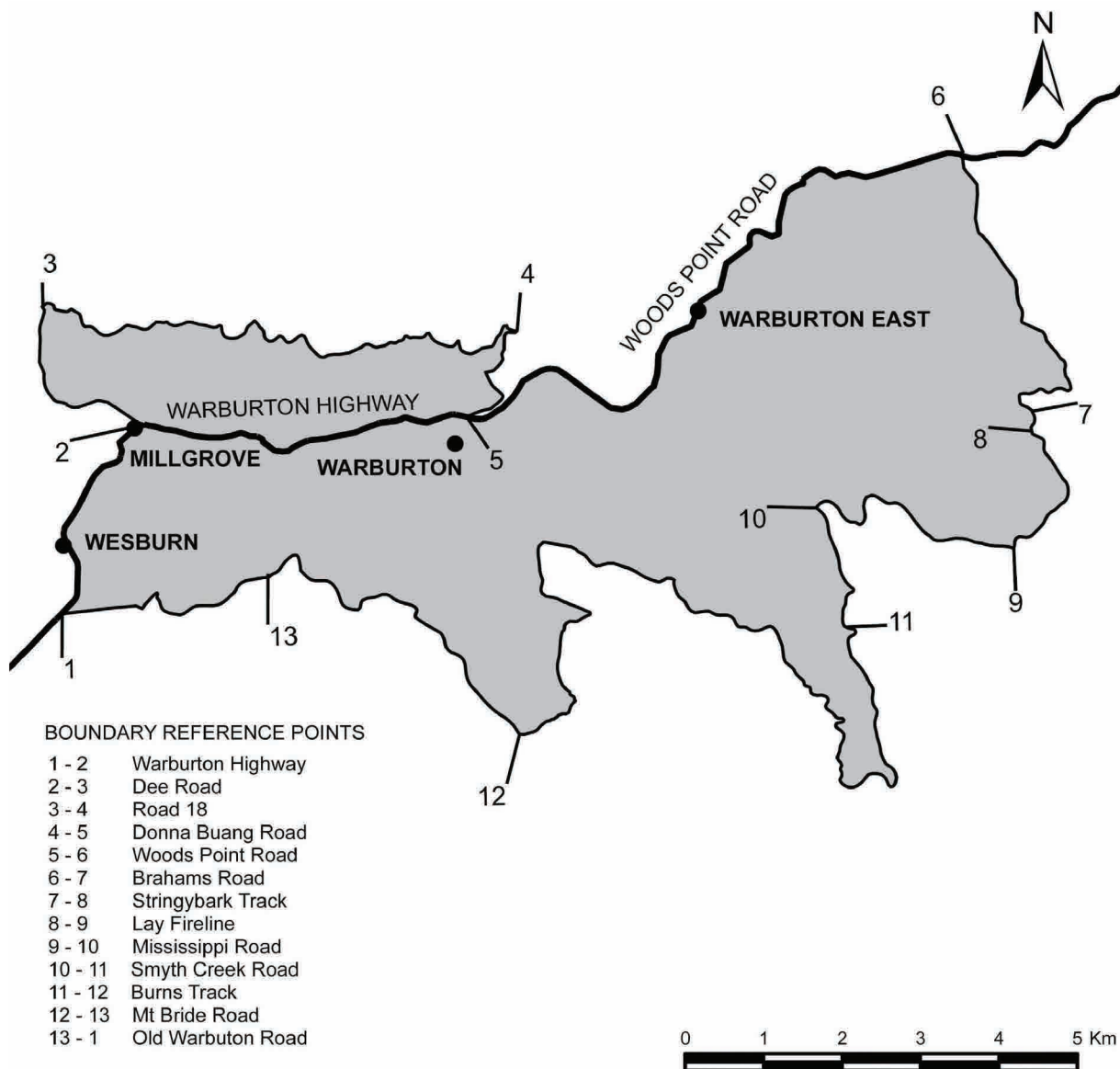
The new regulations have closed some additional areas to deer hunting. One of these relate specifically to hound hunting and two applies to all forms of deer hunting. These closures apply in the following areas (see accompanying maps):

- the area immediately around the township of Warburton (closed to all forms of deer hunting).
- the Buttercup Lane area adjacent to the township of Merrijig (closed to hound hunting only).

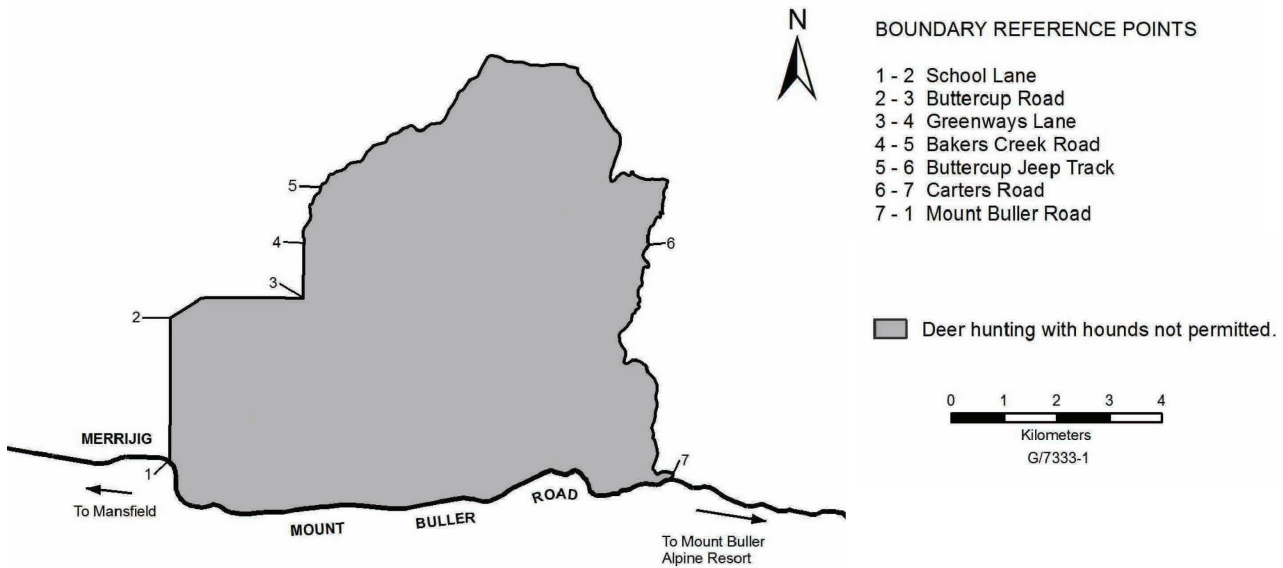
- the area immediately around Mt Timbertop and the Timbertop Campus of Geelong Grammar, near the township of Merrijig (closed to all forms of deer hunting).

These changes permanently close areas that have already been subject to temporary closures under the *Wildlife Act 1975*, following requests from Victoria Police. Despite this, deer may continue to be hunted on private property within these areas with the permission of the owner or occupier of those lands.

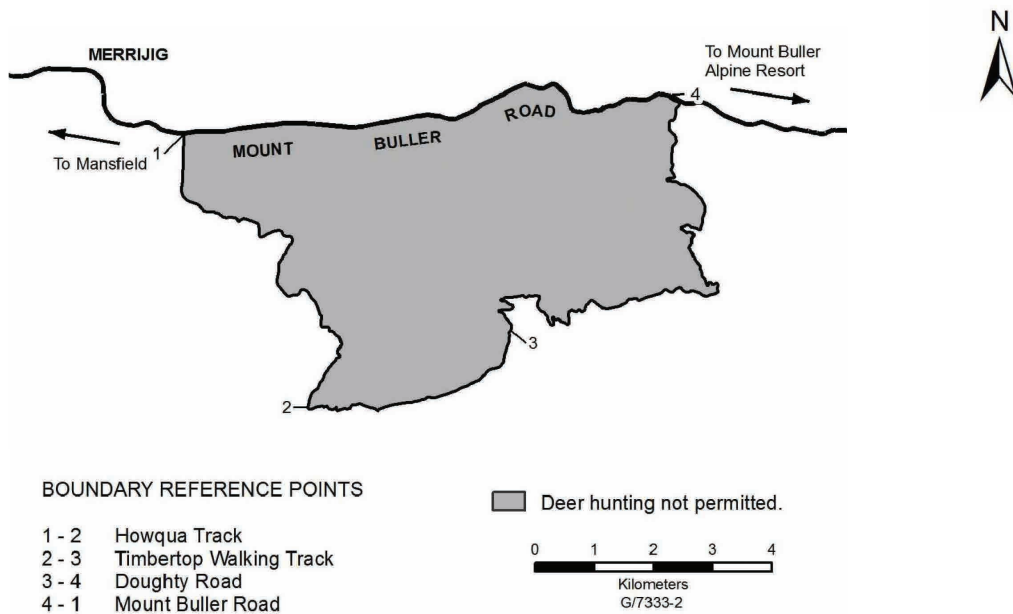
Warburton Township – closed to all forms of deer hunting



Merrijig and surrounds – closed area for hunting with hounds



Mount Timbertop Area – closed to all forms of deer hunting



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