

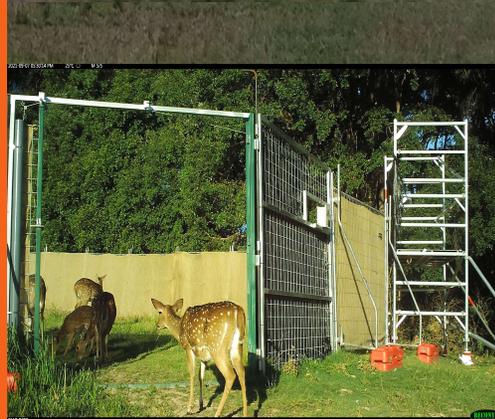
North Coast Local Land Services

Urban feral deer management coming soon to a backyard near you!

2023 NSW Vertebrate Pest Symposium

Dubbo NSW

October 2023



Michael Elliott



North Coast Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan

- The operational plan that is derived from the National and State pest management strategies
- Defines the pest priorities for North Coast Local Land Services
- Feral deer are identified in the plan as a priority pest animal
- Local Land Services is tasked to deliver pest management across NSW

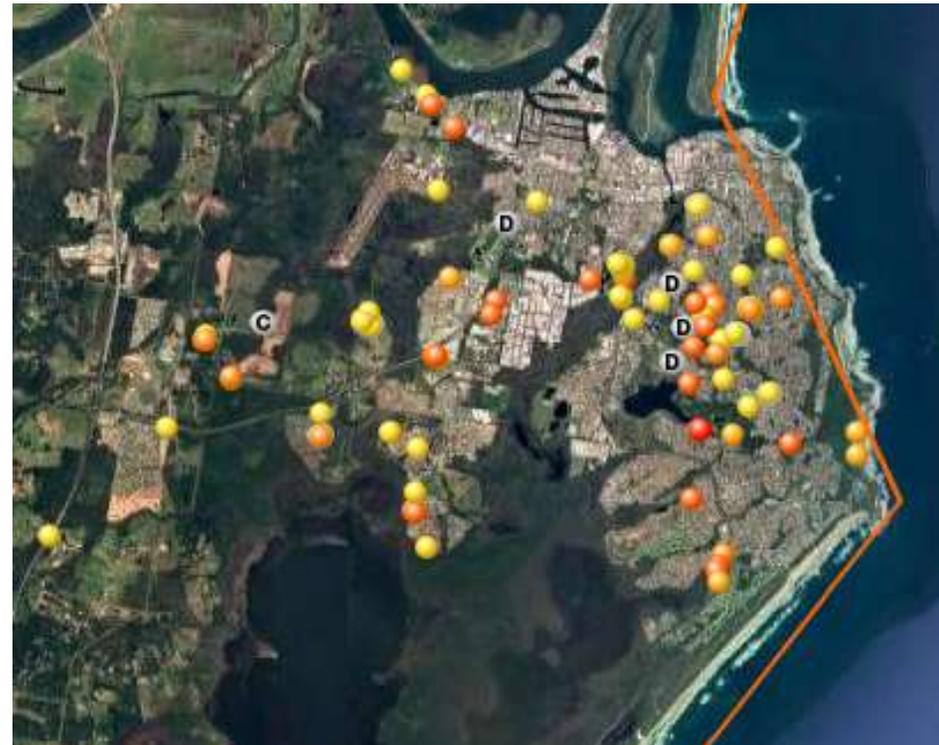
North Coast Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan 2018 - 2023



Feral deer in the urban, peri-urban environment at Port Macquarie

- Impacts

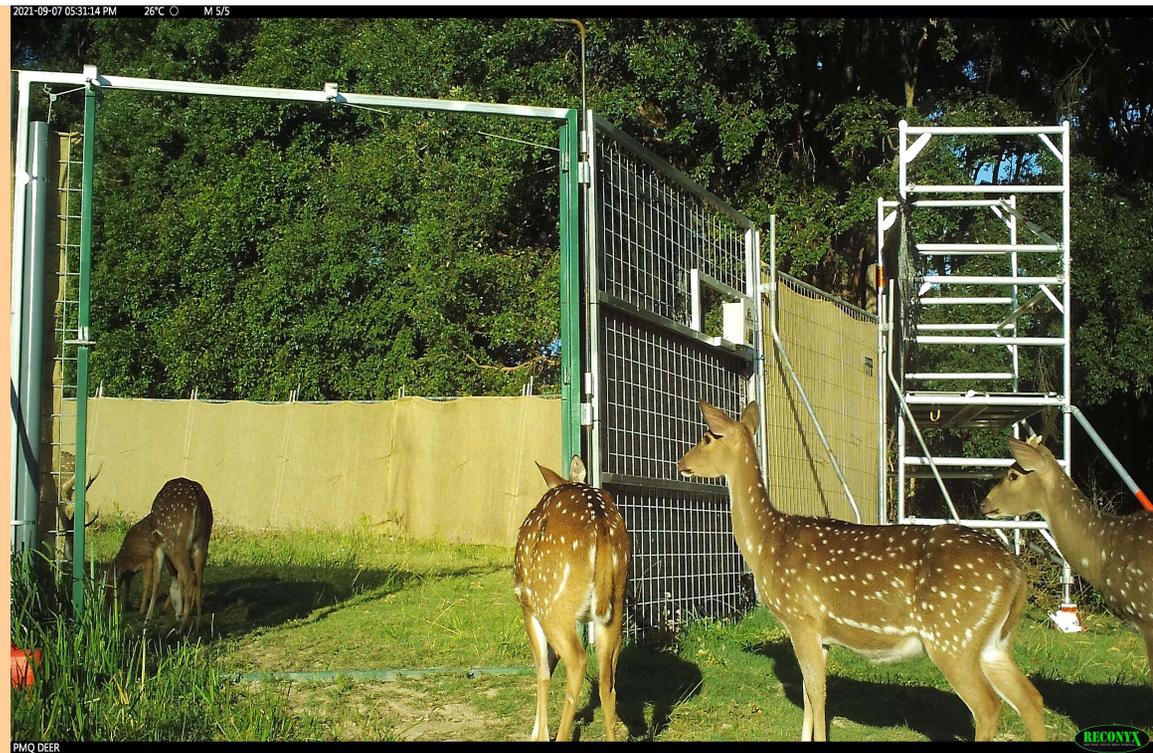
- Damage to littoral coastal rainforest
- Urban open spaces, parks
- Household gardens
- Horticulture
- Water quality
- Motor vehicle accidents
- People



Feral Scan reports Port Macquarie

- 2023 Monthly Reports

- June - 57
- July - 86
- August - 85



Options for management

- Very limited
- Aerial control and broad scale ground shooting off the table
- Trapping seemed to be the only option
 - Other areas where trapping had been attempted
 - Common theme was that trapping didn't work, deer wouldn't go in traps
 - Also noted that trapping effort appeared to be minimal
 - Those that tried seemed to give up quickly
- Decision was made that trapping was the only viable option



Trapping Considerations

1. Trapping had been tried before
2. Humaneness considerations
3. Firearm use in peri urban areas.
4. Placement of Traps
5. Staffing



Where we started. Traps

- Panels needed to be something light and easily moved
- Noted the differences in species
- Remote and phone activated drop gates
- Noticed some deer tended to look up and baulk at drop gates. Took a couple of weeks to enter trap
- Drew up plans and had larger swing gates manufactured, problem solved



How do we get them in.

- Feed
 - Steam flaked barley with molasses.
 - Tried many other feed types and licks
 - Experiment
- Trap set up time
 - Started at nearly 6 months
 - Now can set up and trap feral deer within 2 weeks



Platform

- Our view from shooting platform
- Use of Shade cloth to focus deer.



Control using thermal scopes and suppressed firearms



Warning
Video shows feral deer being culled

Control using thermal scopes and suppressed firearms



Lessons Learnt

- Feral deer do not react to feed like feral pigs, feral goats or wild horses
- Camera trap pictures suggest that feral deer move throughout their home range regardless of feed being present.
- When you think you may have them you may not, but they will be back
- Different mobs may enter the trap on different nights
- Multiple traps within the home range of the feral deer increases chances of success.



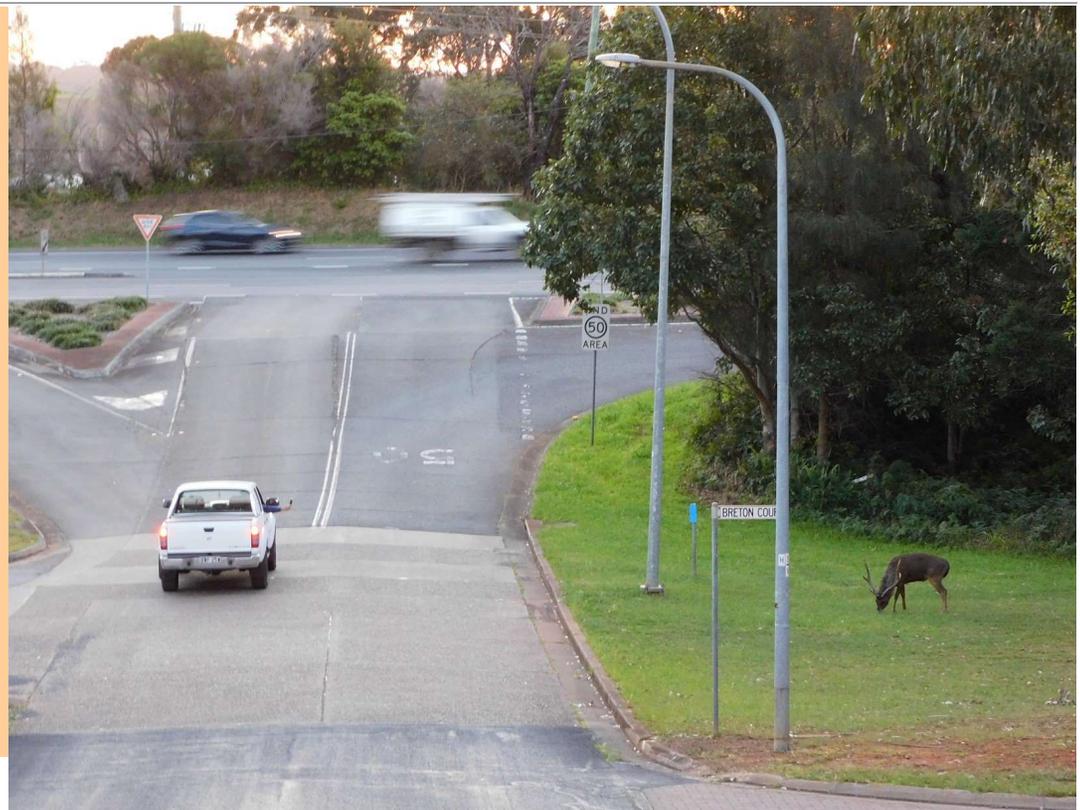
Lessons Learnt

- Traps work – with work
- Site Selection
- Be prepared to experiment
- Photos don't mean success
- Seasonal Opportunities



There is no book

- Most people are happy with 5 or 6 deer around
- Feral deer don't act like other herbivores
- They are remarkably quiet in the dark
- Take what you can get



Challenges

- Peri Urban spaces can provide unique challenges



Challenges



Key points to success

- You can get deer into traps in the peri urban space
- Put traps where the deer are happy to be
- Make sure you have enough resources
 - Think big
- Staff with the right attitude



Key points to success

- Important to have management on board
- It needs to be regarded as a long term project
- Continual adjustment to techniques will be required
- Be prepared to experiment



Thanks

Support from Management and Staff

Our team would like to thank
Louise Orr our General Manager
Lauren Wilson our Operations Manager and
Dean Chamberlain Team Leader Invasive Pests
for their support and encouragement and
also the North Coast Invasive Pest Team
who show dedication to trying things
that haven't been tried before

