

## Common Pests

*The Adelaide Hills is home to some of Australia's most widespread and well-established pest animals: foxes, rabbits, and feral deer. These pests have become part of the landscape, but all landholders can take action to minimise the impacts they cause.*



### Fast Facts:

- The economic impact of pest animals across the nation, particularly in agricultural systems, is estimated at between \$720 million and \$1 billion every year.
- Effective and integrated pest management means working with your neighbours, the Landscape Board, and the general community.
- It is possible to take quick, practical actions on your property to minimise the impact of pests, from improving chicken yards to cleaning up areas where pests live and breed.

Foxes, rabbits, and feral deer have become common in the Adelaide Hills and they have a significant negative impact on our region's agricultural and biodiversity assets.

Feral animals typically have few natural predators or fatal diseases. Rabbits and foxes in particular have high reproductive rates and can multiply rapidly if conditions are favourable.

They impact on native species through predation or destruction of natural habitat, plus are competition for food and shelter, and carry diseases that are deadly to native animals.

With no prospect of natural eradication, it is the responsibility of landholders to manage our environment to minimise numbers and potential impact of these pests.



Image: T.Kloeden

### Feral Deer

Feral deer are common in the Adelaide Hills as a result of farm escapes going back to the 1970s. These escapees have now bred to create the present-day feral population.

The most common species of feral deer found in the Adelaide Hills is Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) and Red Deer (*Cervus elaphus*).

Feral deer create havoc by causing vehicle accidents, destroying domestic gardens, and overgrazing on native vegetation. They also impact the primary production industry through damage to infrastructure like fencing and tree crops, and pose a biosecurity risk as potential disease carriers.

Feral deer are highly mobile and, as a result, control programs are most effective when managed at the landscape scale. The large area and varied land tenure makes these programs complex and expensive.

All sightings of feral deer should be reported to the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board. Early detection is an important control measure in its own right.

## Foxes

Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) are highly adaptable animals that can be found in both rural and urban environments. They live in areas where there is plenty of food and shelter available.

Foxes are considered “opportunistic predators”, meaning that they will hunt whatever prey is available, be it native animals, small pets like guinea pigs, chickens, lambs, or small birds.

To prevent a fox attack, animals such as these need to be homed in secure, fox-proof enclosures; places that are fully contained and made from a material foxes cannot chew through, damage, or dig under.



Image: D.Mussared

Landholders on rural properties are encouraged to work with their neighbours, and engage with the Hills and Fleurieu Landscape Board and community land management groups to develop strategies for minimising stock losses.

Any landholder seeking to undertake a control program using poison baits must seek advice from their local Landscape Board before doing so.

## Lamb Losses

Loss of new lambs in the Adelaide Hills is often blamed on foxes, however landholders should keep other possible reasons in mind.

Lamb losses could be caused by:

- Poor nutrition,
- Inadequate shelter,
- Existing health problems, or
- Domestic dog attacks.

## Protect Hills Fauna

The Adelaide Hills district is home to threatened animals, including the Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus*), which are preyed upon by foxes.

The way for landholders to reduce the negative impacts of foxes on our precious biodiversity is to work over a large landscape area in conjunction with the Landscape Board and community groups in a coordinated effort.

## Rabbits

Unlike most feral animals, the impacts of rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) can be minimised within localised areas by neighbours working together to remove areas of woody weeds or timber that rabbits can hide in, and install rabbit-proof fencing.

Further rabbit control includes the fumigation of warrens, and the destruction of rabbit populations using Pindone® baits or 1080 poison, or through legal shooting. Landholders considering a baiting program should speak with their neighbours and seek advice and permission from the local Landscape Board.

Three types of disease affect both wild and domestic rabbits. Myxoma virus (Myxomatosis) and Calicivirus (Rabbit Haemorrhagic Disease) are already present in the wild rabbit population and controlled use of these diseases is another effective way to control pest rabbit populations.



## Legislation

In South Australia all persons have a statutory duty of care to act reasonably and responsibly in relation to the management of natural resources. This includes a landowner's legal responsibility to control foxes, rabbits and feral deer on their property under the *Landscapes SA Act 2019*.