

To find out how sustainable hunting can be implemented in Queensland please read on.

The RIDGE Group has developed a workable system that can facilitate *sustainable use hunting* on private freehold, leasehold and Native Title land in Queensland. This model is called **HuntEasy**¹.

HuntEasy provides a model for sustainable use hunting as a recognised management tool for species currently classified as pests in Queensland.

HuntEasy makes compliance with existing legislation and the general biosecurity obligation simple by operating within new and existing *property-based management plans* (PBMPs)² as part of that landholder's Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) system.

HuntEasy becomes part of the Wildlife Management Plan (WMP) which would operate under the 'pest management' component of any LPA PBMP.³

Annex 1 – Property Based Management Plans. (PBMP) Livestock Production Assurance.

The term PBMP was first instigated in Australia by Biologist Brian Murphy from QDMA in the USA when he was employed by the Tasmanian Deer Advisory Committee (TDAC) in Tasmania to develop a plan for the Sustainable Management of wild Fallow Deer. Existing Biosecurity Plans used within the LPA system essentially cover all areas defined by a PBMP including:

1. OHS requirements.
2. Chemical usage.
3. Fire mitigation and control procedures.
4. Equipment operating procedures.
5. NLIS requirements.
6. Domestic livestock management.
7. Pest weed and animal control.
8. Property access, ie: tourism, hunting, fishing etc.
9. Insurance requirements.
10. Other sections as defined by the landholder.

Each section contains as much or as little information as the landholder desires. It can link with existing programs for NLIS, OHS, Fire, Vegetation management, Erosion control etc. to provide a seamless and easily accessible system for property management.

The RIDGE Group makes the following recommendations so that **HuntEasy** can be implemented effectively as part of a landholder's LPA Farm Biosecurity Plan (LPA FBP).

1. Sustainable Use (SU) management be recognised as an acceptable form of pest control within the Pest Management Plans (PMP) of State and Local authorities.
2. Existing landholder lease agreements be improved to effectively allow SU as part of the PMP strategy for that land tenure.
3. Un-tenured State Forest land be managed by the State under SU principles.

¹ See Annex 2 – HuntEasy Overview

² See Annex 1 – Property-Based Management Plan

³ See Annex 3 – HuntEasy Flow Chart

Annex 2 – *HuntEasy* Overview

This system, known as ***HuntEasy*** would include the following:

- Recreational hunter/professional shooter/pest controller name
- Property name and PIC
- An induction outlining the specific rules for each Property Based Management Plan which the recreational hunter/shooter/pest controller would be required to accept if they wished to be granted permission to access the property such as, property specific vehicle wash down procedures for pest weed control, mandatory wearing of blaze orange clothing etc.
- Insurance requirements required by the individual landholder.
- Declaration of purpose and use of animals matter (e.g meat for human/pet consumption; antler for taxidermy; skins for tanning; personal use venison.
- Destination of animal matter (eg: Game meat facility; Taxidermy name and address; home address for human consumption.)
- Declaration for animal matter to stay within any designated quarantine area (eg: tick line) unless treated.
- That there be a system whereby either:
 1. paper copies are produced and stored for a designated period of time; or
 2. a single form completed electronically, stored as a statutory declaration and emailed to a pre-determined list of email addresses nominated by the landholder upon grant of hunting/harvesting/control access.

Once entered into the system, the recreational hunter/professional shooter/pest controller would be able to:

- access property maps;
- enter data as to where any animal was taken or pest weed located;
- send messages to other land users or the landholder;
- provide proof of permission to access land if required; and/or
- legitimise the harvesting of products or the taking of personal use venison.

LPA Audit process

The inclusion of ***HuntEasy*** as the system which manages the pest animal control section of a landholders PBMP will allow it to then be easily included in the LPA audit process. This would provide a method of traceable proof when or if required from landholders under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* in the advent of a biosecurity risk or hazard being recognised or in the advent of an unlawful act or dispute.

- To maintain credibility of landholder and hunter compliance.
- To assist with proof of control of pest species to regulatory bodies. I.e: Providing jawbones for deer; scalps from Wild dogs; tails and snouts for Pigs; GPS and photo records.
- To provide critical control points for management of deer and other pest species.
- To provide a data base of numbers taken, average age, sex, and usage. (i.e how many for trophy, meat hunts or other purposes.)

Each landholder would move through his/her Property Based Management Plan to the section called Pest Management Plan (PMP). At this stage, they would either elect to follow a pest eradication plan in conjunction with State and Local authorities or they would move to accept a Wildlife Management Plan (WMP). (*NB: In some circumstances, native animals can and are regarded as pests by landholders and Govt.*)

Hunter/Shooter access permission

Once a Wildlife Management Plan is accepted, then methods are selected for each species and committed to the plan. For species such as wild deer and goats, these may be controlled as undesirable pests or they may be managed under sustainable use methods to provide certain outcomes, such as stock for farming, carcasses for human consumption, pet meat or for trophy and personal use venison through the inclusion of recreational hunters. At the same time, high impact/low value species such as feral cat, fox and dog can be controlled on a non-sustainable basis using the same hunter/shooter.

Recreational hunters/professional shooters/pest controllers can be granted access rights by the landholder onto their land through this system and the landholder can also rescind that permission immediately as required. The system would hold the list of recreational hunters/professional shooters/pest controllers given access, plus the prescribed rules and regulations for each person depending on the activity conducted. Each recreational hunter/professional shooter/pest controller could be linked via email or text to obtain updates to the system as required.

Summary of how wild deer fit into a WMP.

A WMP system would allow deer to be:

1. Trapped for deer farming or eradication purposes under permit (*Biosecurity Act 2014-18*);
2. Harvested by game or pet meat operators (*Safe Food Production Queensland accreditation*);
3. Utilised by recreational hunters and commercial tourism guides ("R" License testing and *HuntEasy* statutory declarations);
4. Inspected and/or seized by law enforcement officers or authorised regional pest control operators in the advent of a dispute between landowners and the person responsible for taking the deer.

Specific recommendations for wild deer

1. That a clear and definite distinction be made within the regulations pertaining to the *Biosecurity Act 2014* between the **Historic** herds of Red, Fallow, Chital and Rusa deer and the various recent liberations, (including all escaped herds) which are now present in other areas outside the described "Feral Areas⁴".
2. It is recommended that the principles of Sustainable Use be accepted as a suitable management method for high value species such as wild deer within their designated historic areas, under the following conditions:
 - a. Compliance is audited under the PMP section of each participating landholders PBMP, within their overall LPA program.
 - b. These herds are maintained to an acceptable level above an agreed minimum viable population level (MVP)
3. It is recommended that individual regional councils be required to recognise the Historic nature of the original wild deer herds as listed on the Deer Farming Act, Order in Council 26th September 1985 and as such accept their management under Sustainable Use principles as defined in recommendation 2.

⁴ (*Deer Farming Act 1985, Order In Council, RIDGE Discussion paper – attachment 9)

4. For landholders within areas experiencing recent introductions of wild deer, it is recommended that they also be allowed to manage herds on their freehold and leasehold land under SU principles under an agreement with their regional council.
5. If a person/s wish is to remove live deer or deer products from a holding, it is recommended:
 - a. That all movements are recorded under the LPA NVD system for that particular PIC in either a paper or electronic form.
 - b. That a “Right to Harvest” agreement is used between the landholder and any agent/hunter removing these products from the PIC.
6. For any recreational hunter harvesting products from wild deer on a PIC which has included SU as the accepted control option for certain species listed on their LPA, it is recommended that they should be suitably trained and accredited. It is recommended that the DPI Game Management Unit of NSW “R” licence test be adopted as Best Practice and hunters thus accredited be seen as acting in a humane manner under the Animal Care and Protection Act 2001.
7. It is recommended that five levels of status for deer be recognised under a LPA PBMP system, to cover all deer residing on the holdings of landowners.

A. Pest deer

This would include all deer, of any species, in any area of Queensland, which are not desired by a landowner, upon their legally held property and all deer recognised as pests by Regional Authorities.

B. Managed Feral Game

This includes all deer upon a landholders legally held property, (both freehold and leasehold) of any species, which is accepted by the relevant Regional Council authority as being able to be included and managed under SU principles under the WMP of a LPA PBMP .

C. Farmed Deer

This includes all deer held within an area fenced and husbanded to standards acceptable to that particular Regional Council and peak industry bodies.

D. Game Ranch Deer

This includes all deer held within an area fenced to standards acceptable to that particular Regional Authority as being sufficient for deer managed as rangeland herds. Special conditions may be required for particular species and particular regions and these deer will need to be managed under a LPA PBMP.

E. Displaced Farmed Deer

This includes any deer that has escaped or has been either illegally or unintentionally released from a “Farmed Deer” situation or from a “Game Ranch” environment. If such deer have a claim of ownership upon them from an entity, such deer would need to be recaptured or destroyed by the entity/claimant within an acceptable period of time.

8. It is recommended that a self-regulating and self-funded system for hunter declarations be included within a LPA PBMP to provide legal and traceable access rights for hunters/ shooters/pest controllers onto the property of landholders as well as providing traceability for all Biosecurity Matter/Material obtained from harvested “pest” animals, removed from any one holding and taken to another.

Annex 3 – HuntEasy Model Flow Chart

- Existing State Legislation
- Local Government Adopts QLD Pest Management Plan and enforces Biosecurity
- Hunt Easy Recommendation: Landholders have two options
- Property Based Management Plan Considerations
- Operational Guidelines Stated
- Management Criteria Specific to Species
- Hunt Easy Accepted within Legislation
- Management Options
- Outcomes
- Accreditation

