

Community Deer Management

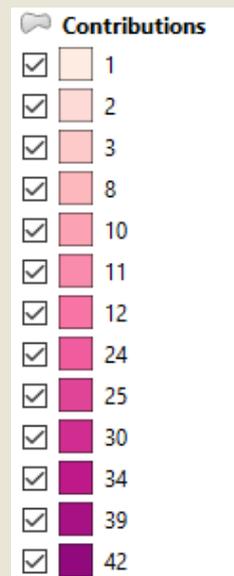
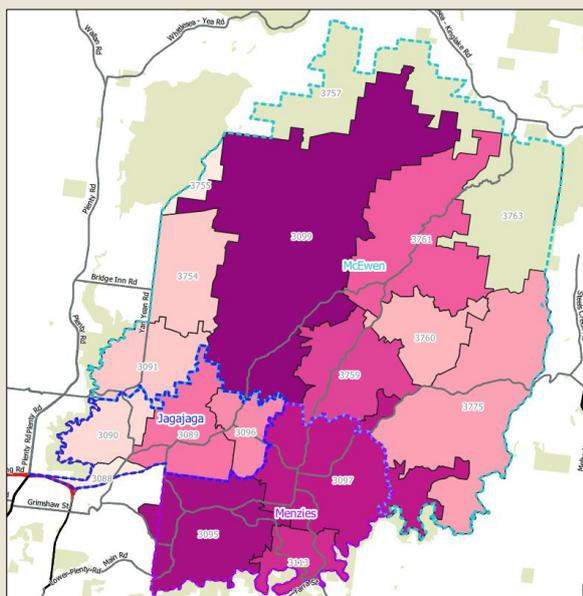
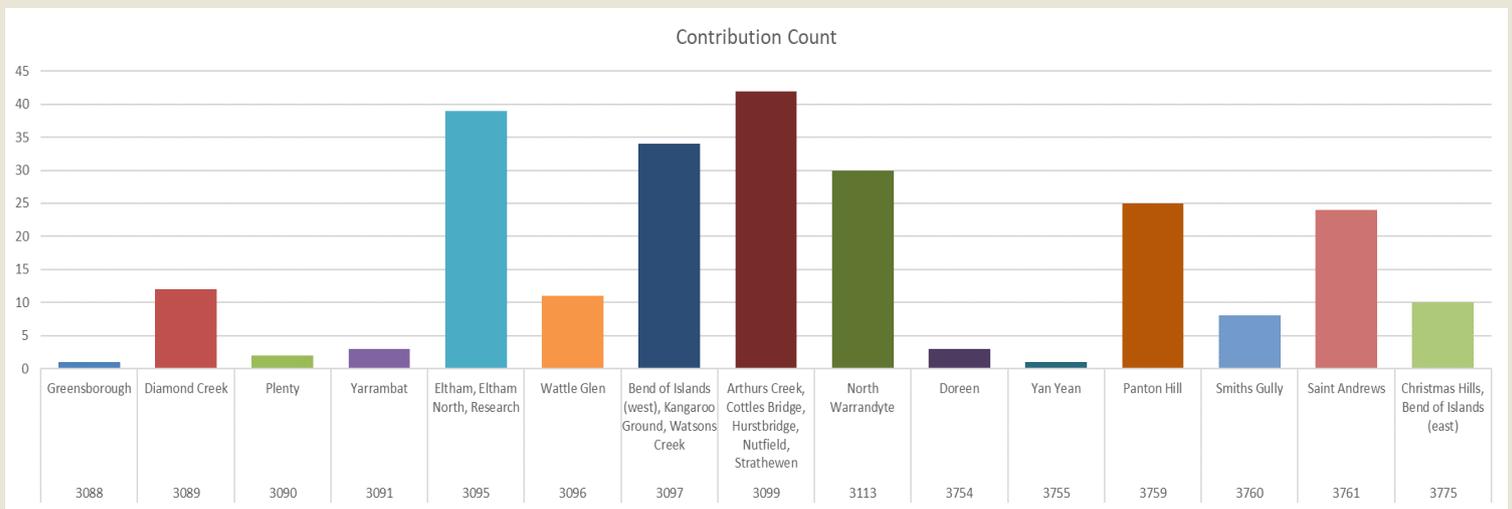
~ Knowledge to Action ~

Survey Results and Deer Education Events Program

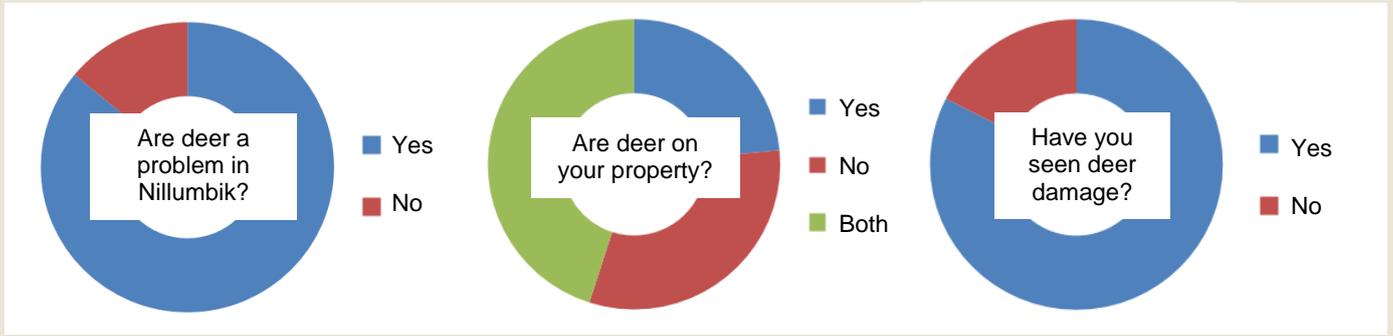


Council has been running the Participate Nillumbik's *Community Deer Management - Knowledge to Action* survey since February 2020. Results are perhaps unsurprising to those that have witnessed the rapid increase in deer sightings and damage over the last few years in Nillumbik, including more frequently in quite urban areas.

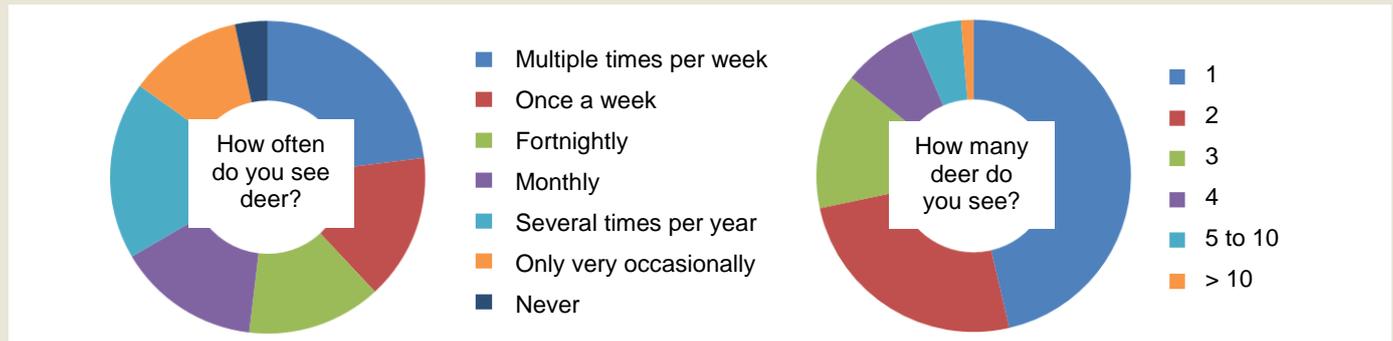
285 survey responses were received between 25 February and 19 June 2021, with 256 of these from Nillumbik residents. The following are results from the Nillumbik submissions only.



Sightings and Reports of Deer



85% think that Deer are a problem, with 72% of people seeing deer on their own property and 82% seeing damage that has been caused by deer.



Deer are frequently seen in Nillumbik. 18% of survey responses indicate that they see deer several times per year. 23% see deer multiple times per week! 8% never see deer in Nillumbik. North Warrandyte has the highest number of weekly sightings.

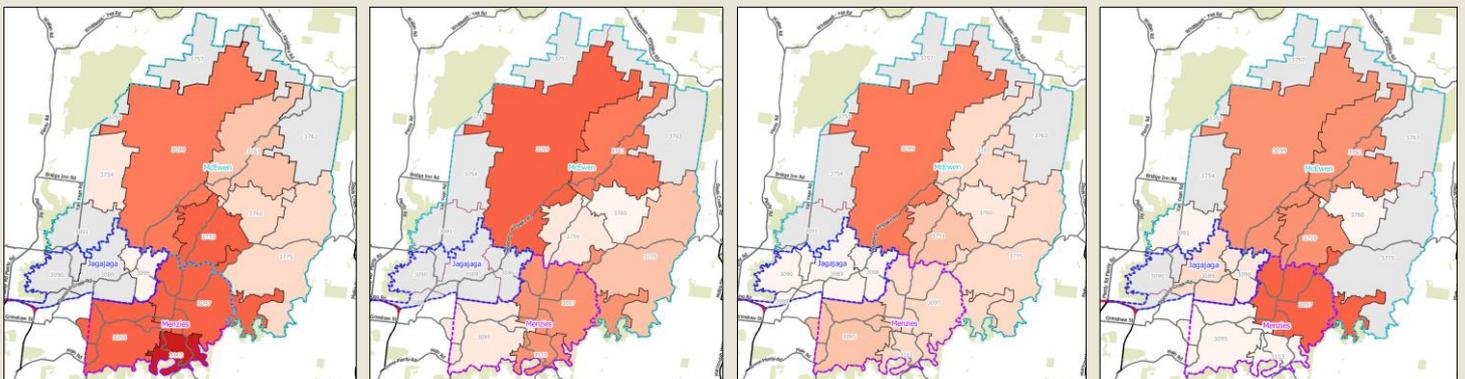
86% see between 1 - 3 deer at a time, which makes sense as Nillumbik mostly has Sambar Deer, which are solitary animals. The majority of deer are seen in bushland or rural farming areas. **How often are deer seen?**

Multiple sightings per week

Weekly

Fortnightly sightings

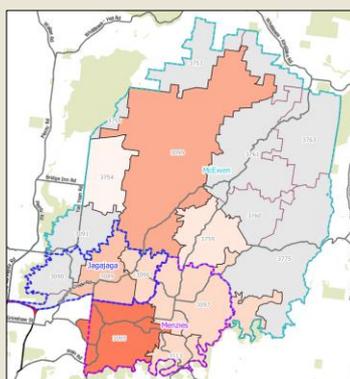
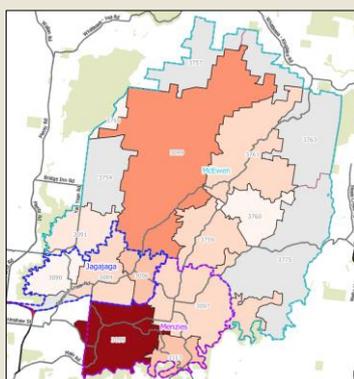
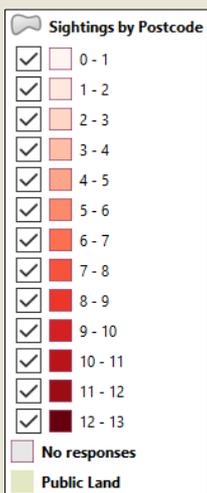
See Monthly



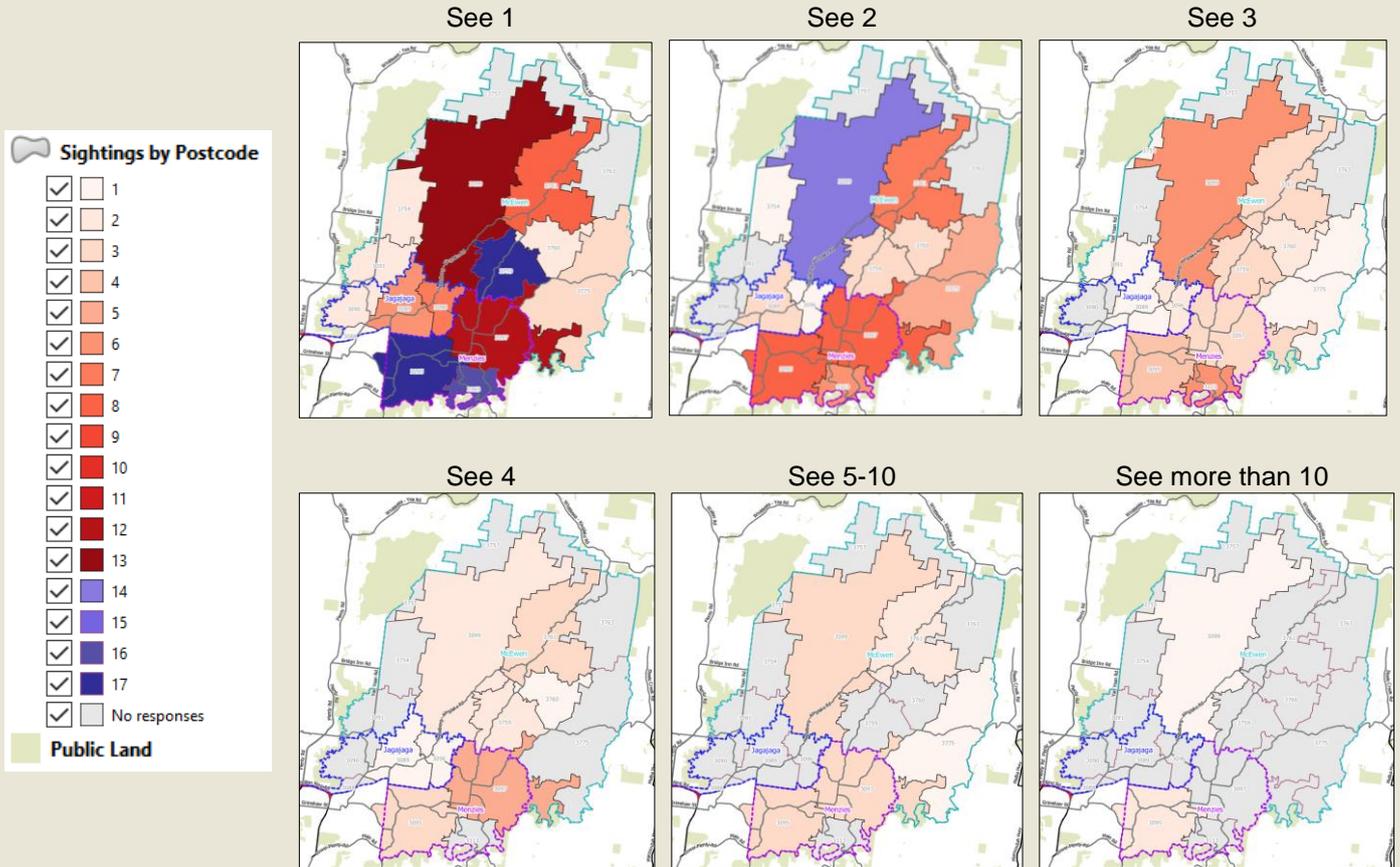
Several times per year

See occasionally

Never see



How many deer are usually seen?

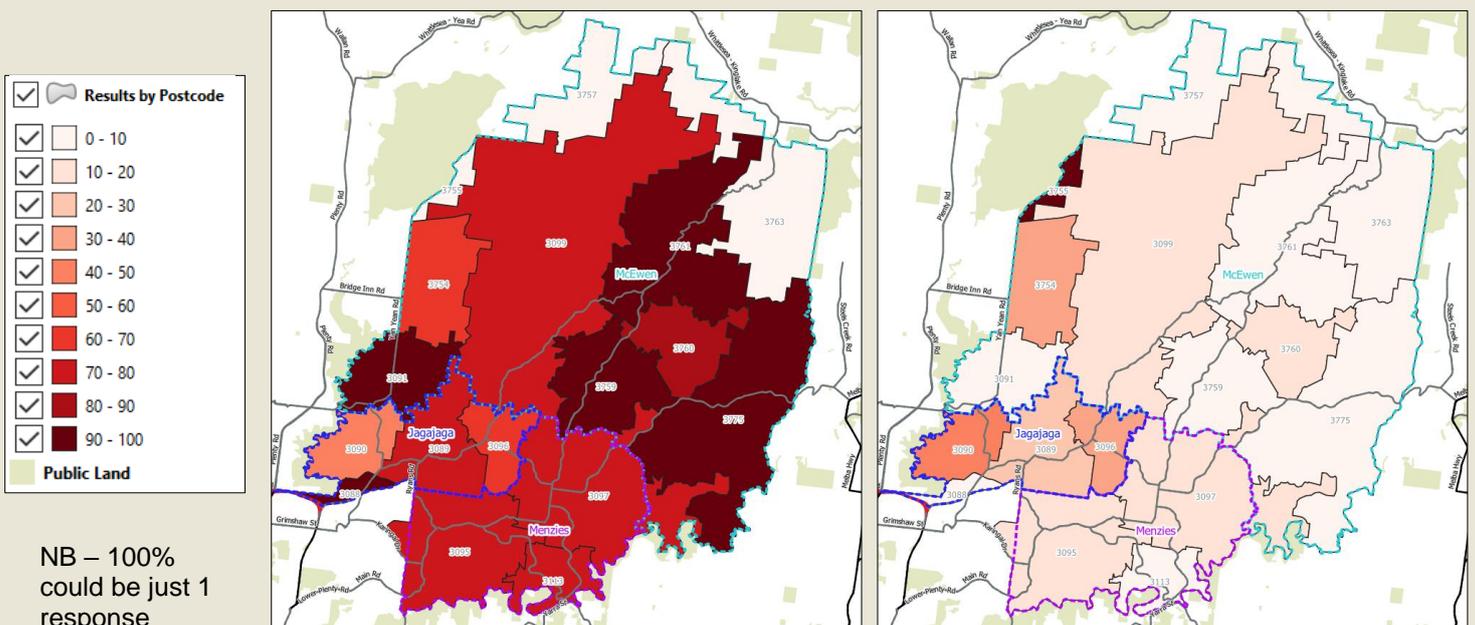


The disclaimer to the above maps is that the records of sighting these deer numbers is based on the postcode of where the respondent lives, and may not be the location where the deer numbers were seen. e.g. the sightings of more than 10 deer may have been at the Sugarloaf Reservoir, where there are more than 100 deer residing, but the areas recorded as having the largest number of deer seen together is 3095, Eltham and Research.

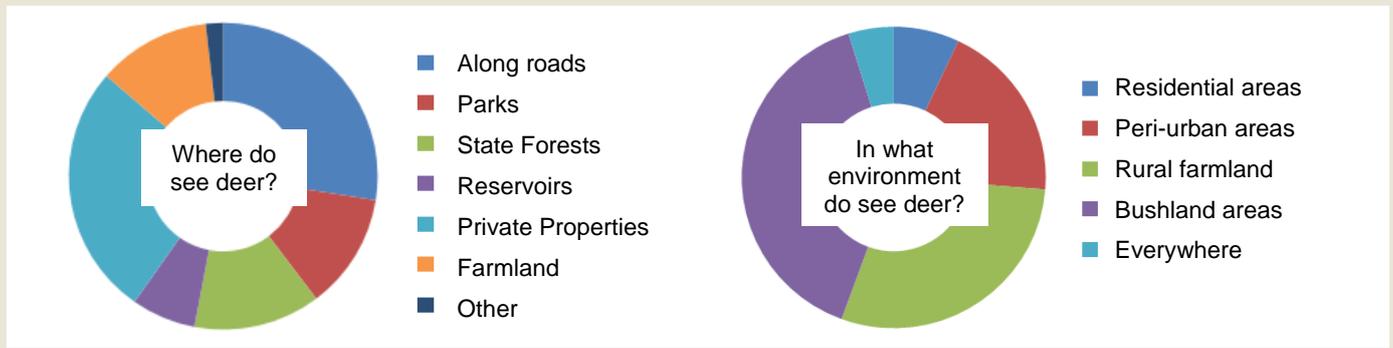
Are Deer a problem? Data by location

% of respondents who said Yes, deer are a problem

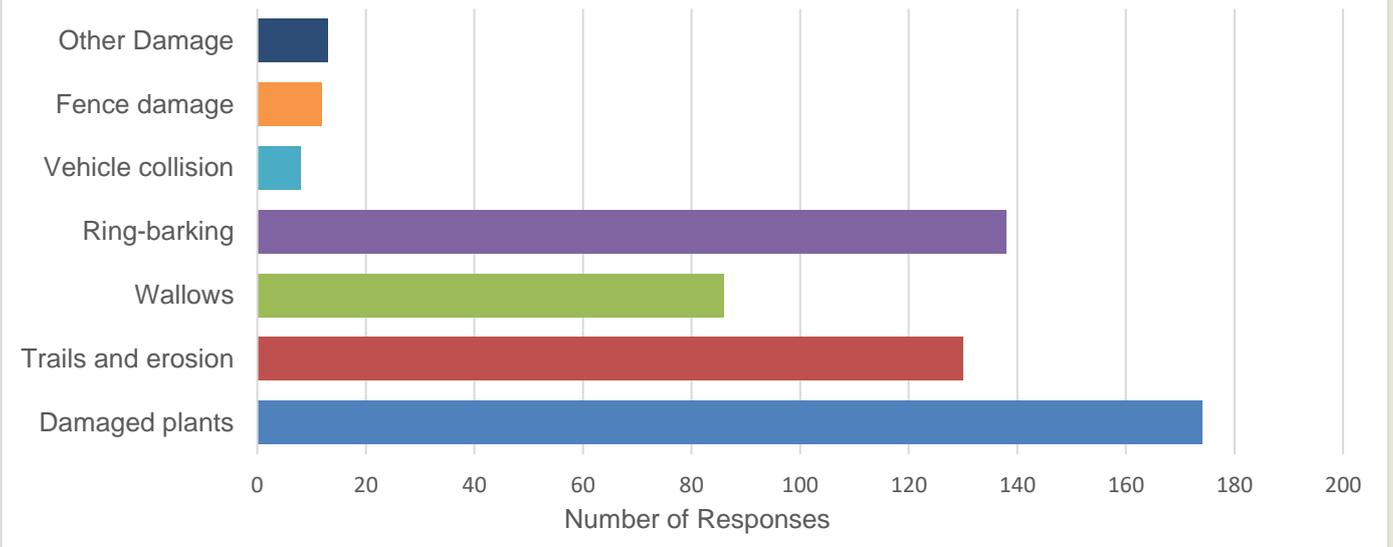
% of respondents who said No, deer are not a problem



Sightings and Reports of Deer Damage

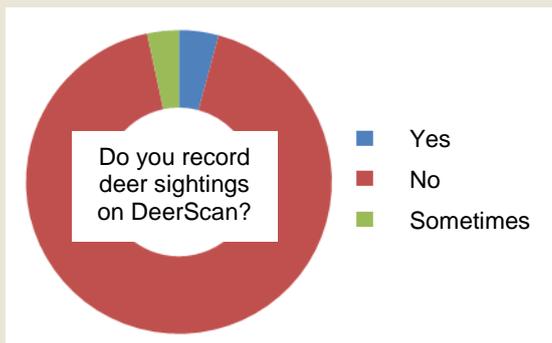


Deer Damage Types Seen



Thankfully the above chart does not indicate too many vehicle collisions or fence damage. Ring-barking is known to kill some tree species. Wallows damage habitat for frogs, and other wetland species. Deer often use kangaroo trails, but their hooves result in deeper, wider trails. Deer can decimate an urban garden in a single night by browsing and trampling.

FeralScan (DeerScan) – Monitoring

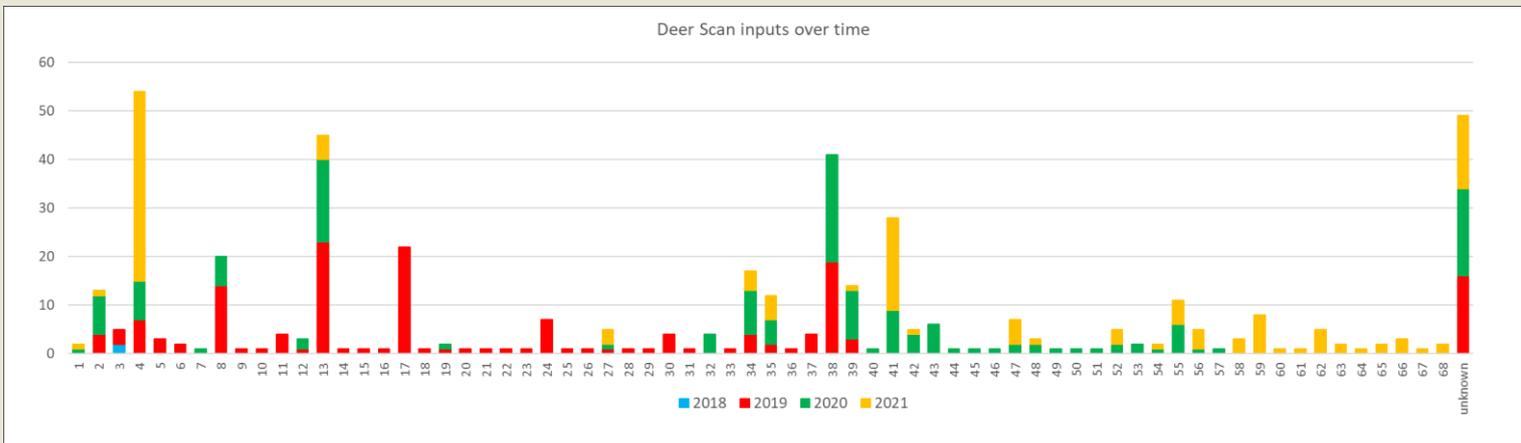


Only 7.5% of survey submitters record deer sightings using DeerScan, at least some of the time. This makes it challenging for Council to understand the scale and location of the problem. (www.feralscan.org).

461 sighting records have been recorded on DeerScan since December 2018 – 2 in 2018, 161 in 2019, 156 in 2020, and 142 so far for 2021.

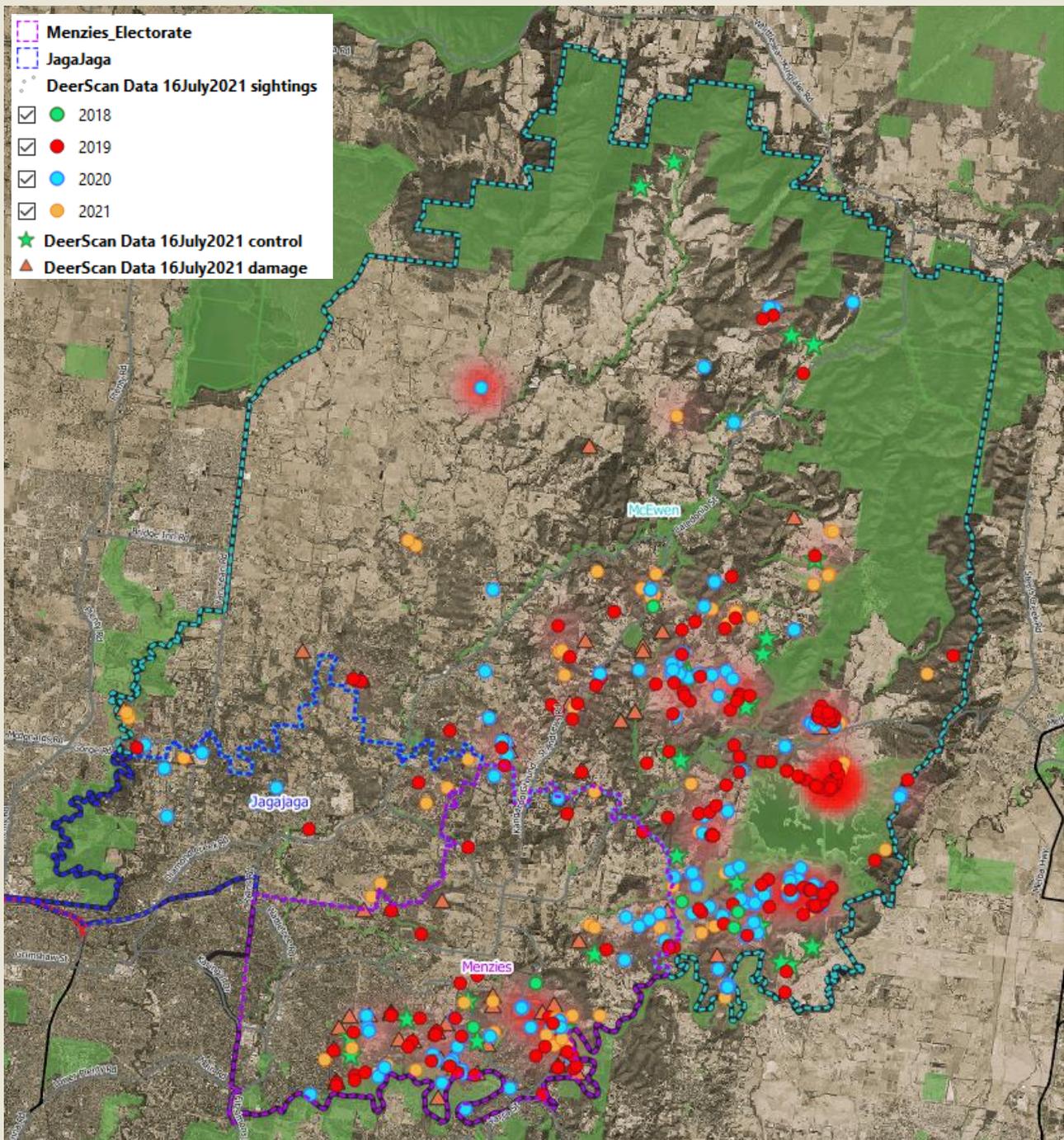
The chart below shows the number of contributors to DeerScan in Nillumbik and how many records they each have submitted. 11 contributors have submitted 10 or more sightings, and 44 contributors have submitted just 1 sighting.

Each number on the X axis is a unique contributor ('unknown' is an aggregation of those without ID numbers). 8 of the 69 contributors have submitted records every year since 2019. There were 38 new contributors in 2019 (possibly following the first webinar in September, or the launch of the survey which directed people to DeerScan), however only 12 continued to record deer sightings. Similarly, of the 21 new contributors in 2020, only 9 have contributed results in 2021. Of course this could be due to seeing no new deer since the first records, but it is more likely that they believe that recording a sighting at their property once, is all that is required. Council will continue to promote recording sightings regularly – seasonally being beneficial – in order to be able to provide data about movements and deer numbers over time as well as spatially.



The map below shows deer sighting, damage and control records from 2018 – 2021 recorded on DeerScan with an underlying heat map for sightings indicating the number of deer recorded at these locations.

Interestingly, and of concern it is clear that the more recent results (blue and orange dots) show deer appearing in areas not recorded previously, with sightings in the west and north of Nillumbik, suggesting that deer are migrating or spreading outwards. Alternatively, it could indicate that Council has been able to tap into these communities and they are now recording sightings.

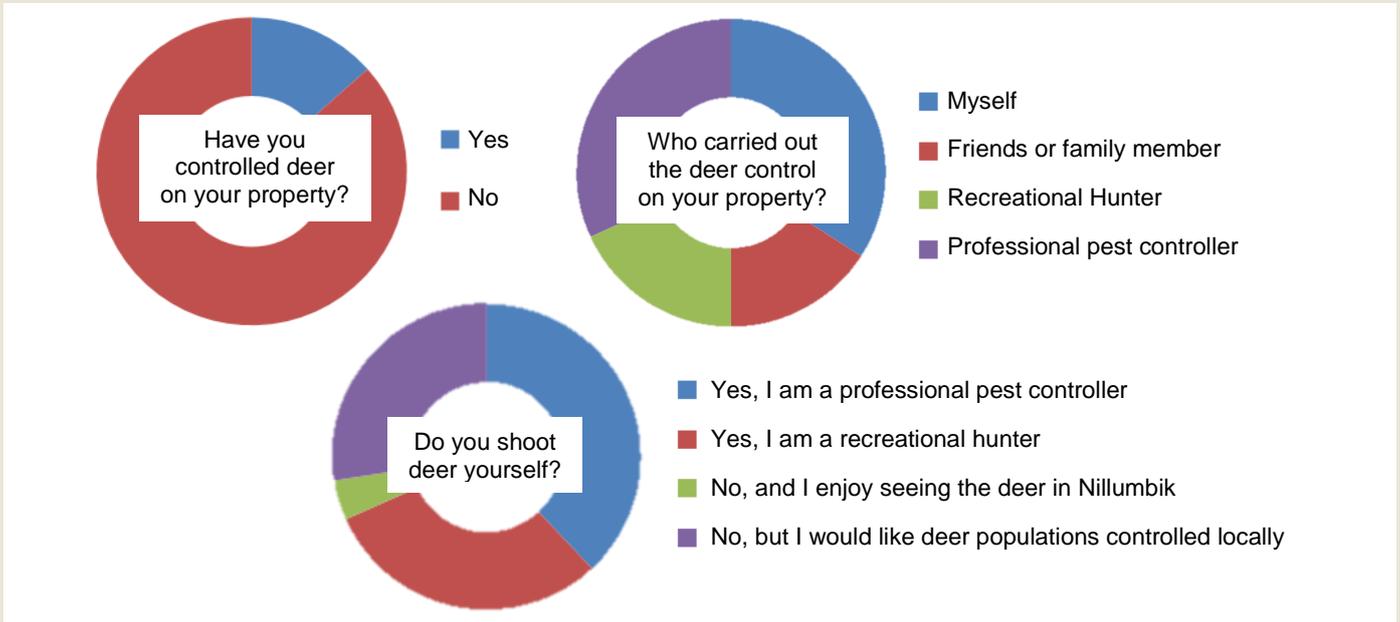


Controlling Deer numbers

Not many survey responses indicated that deer control (by shooting) had been undertaken on their own property, however it is clearly an option that many are willing to consider (based on answers to later questions).

The lack of control undertaken could be due to the following:

- There may be no deer or only a few deer on the property, or no damage seen, so control is not required.
- There may be a lack of knowledge as to how to go about arranging deer control.
- There is only 4% support for leaving deer populations alone.



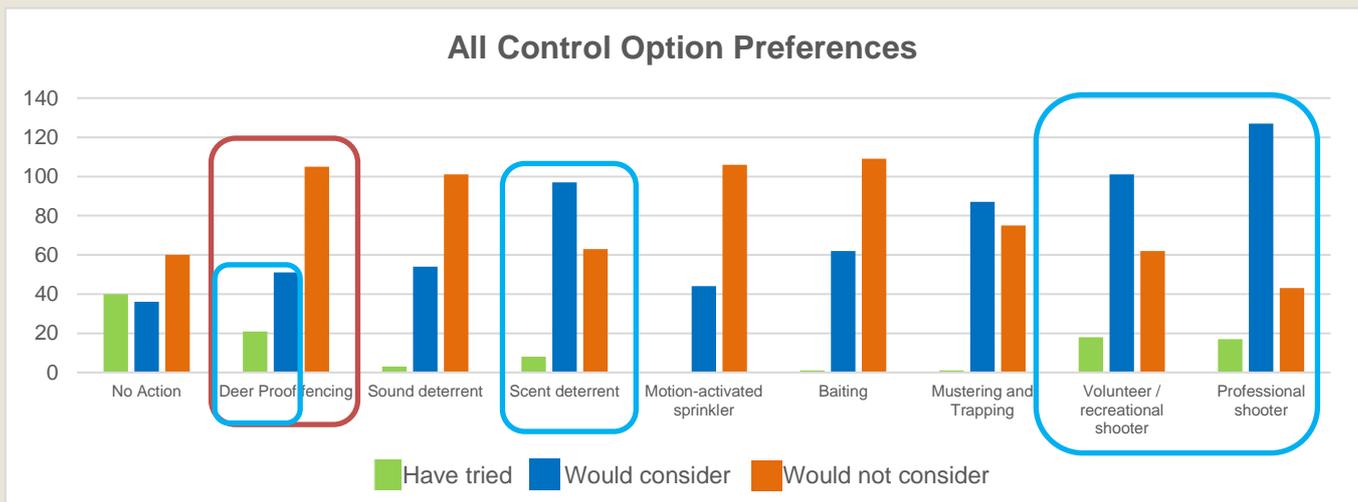
Deer management options

Whilst the majority of survey respondents have not tried any of the following deer management options, there are only a small number of respondents that would consider 'no action'.

There appears to be a preference by landholders to undertake shooting and fencing, based on actions that have been tried or would be considered (circled in blue). However, interestingly, there is also very high opposition / reluctance to undertake fencing (circled in red) despite being the most utilised deer control method recorded in the survey.

Fencing, baiting, sprinklers and sound deterrents all rate highly as options that respondents would not consider. This could indicate either an understanding that these techniques are either ineffective or only of short-term benefit (e.g. sound and light deterrents), are not currently available (e.g. baiting), or are regarded as inhumane (e.g. trapping). Opposition to fencing may be due to expense of installation, the requirements for Council permits, or a belief that the fences will impact other native fauna. Appropriate design, construction and placement of fences should result in exclusion of deer with minimal impact on movement of native animals.

Some of the techniques shown below, along with others not listed (e.g. contraception), have not been tried or tested in Australia and are not currently recommended or approved by Government agencies – e.g. baiting or trapping. Nillumbik is not advocating for these actions by listing them in the survey, nor suggesting that they are effective tools, but is merely canvassing public opinion on the ideas.



Efficacy of Control and Management Options

Respondents were asked whether they had tried any of the above options, and if so, how successful were they?

Not surprisingly, there are some that wish to protect deer, along with all living creatures. There were suggestions of the use of contraceptives, however these are not currently available, are expensive and impractical for wild animal management. There is acknowledgement that fences work but may exclude other animals, and that shooting works, but requires ongoing implementation, and can be costly. Other techniques have rightly been identified as either impractical, of limited or short-lived benefit, or could result in off-target impacts.

Support for Council-lead, professional deer control seems to be of most interest to respondents, although there still seems to be an expectation that Nillumbik was conducting the survey as our only action towards deer management, rather than conducting on-ground deer control works.

Nillumbik has now implemented 2 years of on-ground deer shooting in Kangaroo Ground – Christmas Hills area, as well as installing a number of exclusion fences to protect threatened flora. Some additional communication around these works is needed to let the community know what we have been doing.

Below are some of the responses.

Shooting

The shooting is the only thing that worked.

Our neighbour shoots and in itself it a noise pollution issue, shooting at all hours day and night with spot lights being shined into neighbours' homes.

Being a professional shooter, I have experienced great results from culling deer.

No... Can't get close enough and need larger calibre firearm.

Successful but periodic attendance necessary as vacant territory is soon filled. Not cheap.

Tried shooters, but despite emails advising people of active shooters, people still walked into shooting area. Also, hilly terrain makes shooting difficult.

Our neighbour has been shooting deer at night for about 12 months. It has made a noticeable reduction in deer numbers on our property.

So cruel.

Tried having a recreational hunter come and shoot them with no success.

Recreational shooters are a great free resource. They can account for multiple deer on any given day. I would highly recommend this as a way to control deer population numbers

Contract killing was successful. Need to organise another community-wide cull using Wild Game Resources or similar

The shooter has managed to cull about 5 deer.

There are too many deer for an occasional recreational shooter that shoots for eating the meat.

Cull is hard without adjoining properties participating

Have not tried because of the expense

Would consider council undertaking professional shooting and maybe the meat could be used commercially, rather than just wasted. The deer will multiply and when we have our next drought that will be hard on them, kangaroos and livestock. They have caused damage in our vineyard-and to our fruit trees. They also upset the native plants in our dams with wallows

I hate guns and shooting. If we allow hunters in to our area with guns, some innocent persons or children or pets will be killed "accidentally".

Recreational shooters: Provided they are 1) known and can be trusted thoroughly to adhere to property rules, and 2) members of either Australian Deer Association or the Field & Game Association with individual public liability cover as part of their membership package.

Professional Shooters: Complete waste of money when ADA members provide a superior service for free.

I thought I had one deer on the property but they have killed 6 so far. They are everywhere.

Professional and recreational hunters can specifically target the animals, but this can also be difficult in built-up areas.

Fencing

Electric fencing worked until animal dragged the wire and broke it when it got zapped. Unfortunately it affects all the other animals as well.

As a Landcare Group we now have to protect areas of plantings with coupes of wire over 1.2 metres high and with a line of white sight wire around the top. This seems to have stopped the deer from entering the coupes. Individual tree guards at 1.2 metres high are essential to protect newly planted eucalypts along the Yarra river bank. We have had to cease from planting any middle storey vegetation as the deer just trash it. The gullies in our area have been decimated by the deer wallowing. As we are in a peri-urban area, shooting or baiting are not an option.

Limited success as some deer very strong and damage fences/barriers

Council staff say a permit is required for a fence which is strong enough to keep out a pest like deer. Why such unnecessary bureaucracy? Fencing to keep out pests should be "as of right" i.e. no planning permit required.

I put a 1.8m high fence around 3ha of covenanted bushland I am restoring (\$7,000 in materials) over summer 2019-20. So far it has kept out deer, kangaroos and wallabies and many plant species are recovering from overgrazing. Wombats have dug under the fence and so let in rabbits. I have put in swing gates for wombats but they avoid them and tend to dig another hole under the fence nearby.

Deer Proof fencing: No such thing. Sambar deer will go through it, and if they can't then it'll prevent access from native animals/kangaroos. Counterproductive to maintaining native corridors.

I have personally tried and witnessed almost all manner of deer management. Deer proof fencing restricts deer movement but does nothing to control the problem. An appropriate management system needs to be put in place to reduce the impact of deer.

Deterrents

Not sure if human hair worked but it is worth trying again

I collect around 10 litres of urine each week and pour it around the bushland part of my 1 acre property and have not had damage for 6 months

No deer or damage for 6 months since poring urine around my property once weekly

Light/sound/scent: impractical and deer will get used to it. Motion activated sprinkler: only practical in urban settings and a waste of water.

I have seen sound, light and water deterrents being used (sound cannon, sensor lights, sprinklers etc) to minimal effect. They work initially but the animals become used to the noise, light and water and then it has little impact. These also do nothing to stop the population increase.

Baiting

Baiting: issues with toxin leaching (assuming 1080?) and secondary poisoning. To be avoided based on the NZ experience.

Baiting, I am strongly against this. As deer eat the same food a lot of other native Australian animals eat, there is likely to be a significant impact on the native wildlife as well. There is documentaries on YouTube about the impact of 1080 and how it kills animals with no cure. This is the least humane and indiscriminate way to control the population.

Well there is no registered bait for deer so baiting is not an option.

Trapping

Mustering and Trapping: behaviour patterns of Sambar, the environment they inhabit and just about every biological factor imaginable in these deer make this a fanciful proposition

Mustering and trapping most likely won't work either. I have witnessed a trapped (accidentally) Sambar deer almost kill itself and destroy a small fenced paddock it got trapped in while trying to escape. Sambar deer cannot be kept in captivity for this reason unless raised from young to be around Humans.

Other options

How to use the presence of beautiful wildlife to increase tourism for overseas visitors in Nillumbik.

Doing nothing has not worked!

Integrated Techniques

Fencing and lethal control = success

Yes ground shooting to reduce numbers and building new 6 strand fences has been effective.

Professional shooter killed 10 in adjacent property, and shot several in a gully on our property - numbers were reduced last year but some deer still remain. We leave a spotlight on at night to illuminate our garden and garden trees. Deer have ringbarked several eucalypts in paddocks on our property.

The final open-ended question was the "Any other comments" question. Below are some of the responses. They demonstrate some of the struggles being experienced by landholders, especially in the southern area of Nillumbik.

I have had to contact ranger to shoot deer that have been hit by cars at the end of our street (Yeomans Rd) on the main Rd I'm amazed no one has been seriously hurt or worse from large deer crossing the Rd (kangaroo Warrandyte Rd)

There has been for example enormous destruction of orchids and ground cover in bush land by deer completely altering the ecosystem in Smiths Gully parkland.

End speciesism. END HUMAN SUPREMACY.

Strongly supportive of deer control in our shire!

My garden has been eaten

I hope Shire can assist residents to get on top of this increasing problem before someone is killed

Growing numbers of deer around Reynolds Rd & Mount Pleasant Rd. Same area most nights. Several have been hit by cars & left severely injured & in need of euthanizing. No help from council/ ranger or animal welfare organisations when contacted.

Have seen numerous fallow deer near the bridge at Kurrag rd, plenty of near missed by vehicles.

I run and ride in and around the gorge for the last 5 yrs and I've only every seen 3 Deers. I'd hardly call that a problem.

I am really disappointed by the inability of state and local government to take any meaningful action on this subject over many years. This smells like another desk top exercise with a colourful report, glib comments and lack of action. Many previous reports have argued convincingly that recreational hunting is completely ineffective in controlling deer population. Yet, this vocal lobby group continue to feature heavily in proposed strategies.

Don't cull these animals they're just trying to survive and are not aggressive.

Why not use deer as a tourist attraction rather than hunt them.

Please stop killing wildlife.

It's about time someone takes action on removing these pests. So I thank Nillumbik council for showing some initiative albeit a bit late. If this is left to continue it will take far greater effort and money trying to reduce the deers numbers.

Twice they have walked out in front of me on the Heidelberg Kinglake road and nearly caused a serious accident.

They've killed all the trees in my orchard that I had planted back after Black Saturday and destroyed all the protection I'd put around those same trees.

If the Council is serious about deer control, and affordably helping landowners control deer at minimal expense to rate payers, a local accredited conservation hunter register is the one of the most effective ways of controlling deer - locals helping (and feeding) locals.

I would be interested in a control program but would like to know what I am committing to before going ahead

I'm appreciative that Nillumbik is addressing the deer, fox and weed issues. It's having a really positive impact on our environment. Next stop, rabbits!

These are feral animals with cloven hooves that do not belong in Australia. They should be eliminated before they spread and further degrade our unique landscape.

The problem is urgent - so get on with it!!!!!!!!!!

I would like to see information regarding numbers in the information that comes out regarding controls. Also, could sterilization techniques be used when numbers are back under control to keep that way?

I believe the deer are an increasing problem, and threat to the Green Wedge and biodiversity and require control or preferably eradication.

Interest in training, workshops and events

A number of suggested webinar and workshop topics were raised as survey questions to ascertain which was of most community interest. Survey responses to these questions was designed to help determine the range of educational materials and presentations that would be prepared as part of the Collaborative Community Deer Action project.

Based on responses, Council delivered 5 online webinars, 2 in-person workshops, 3 walk and talk sessions to view deer damage, and several private property visits were undertaken. A final meet and greet session to introduce landholders to hunters and other relevant businesses was postponed due to COVID lockdowns. A range of printable Fact Sheets was also prepared, and a website dedicated to deer control was designed.

Those who expressed interest in joining a collaborative group to discuss obstacles to deer control, to assist in strategically planning local deer control and help establish a Community Deer Directory were contacted via email.

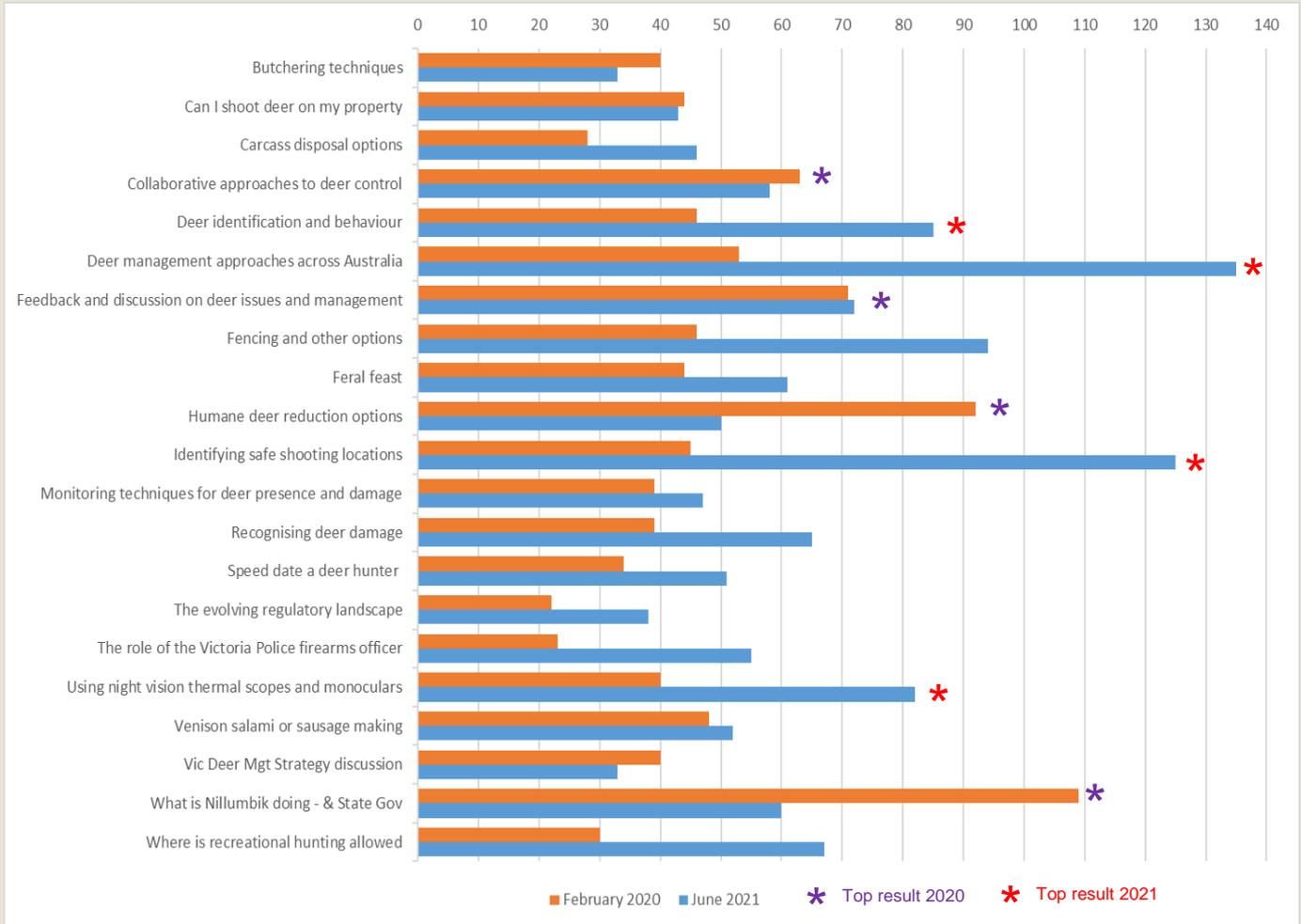
The results of the workshops, walk and talks, and site visits are yet to be fully realised. At least three Deer Action Groups formed, with the intention to implement local deer control as part a program of integrated actions. Council is currently preparing Shoot and Management Plans for these groups. Other landholders are gathering their neighbours, and investigating options for control – professionals, volunteers or harvesters.

A key outcome of the workshops was the development of strong partnerships with local volunteer and professional hunters. Council were able to provide information to these hunters on the special requirements to need Public Place Permits in populated areas, available only to professional hunters. It was evident in speaking with the volunteers that few understood the need for these permits. .

Additionally, the development of a Community Deer Directory, will greatly assist with connecting landholders with local hunters, both free and commercial.

Over time the survey preferences changed, possibly in response to a change in respondents – initially from those with no knowledge of deer management, and later from those with an interest in hunting (technologies and locations for hunting locally).

All of the top areas of interest were catered for during one or more of the information sessions.



Event	
SEP 12	 Nillumbik Deer Information Session Online event Saturday, 12 September 2020 at 2:00 PM AEST
MAR 17	 Recognising and Monitoring Deer Presence and Damage Online event Wednesday, 17 March 2021 at 7:00 PM AEST
MAR 31	 Deer Shooting in Peri-Urban Areas (for landholders) Online event Wednesday, 31 March 2021 at 7:00 PM AEST
APR 14	 Managing Deer with your neighbours Online event Wednesday, 14 April 2021 at 7:00 PM AEST
APR 28	 How to get involved as a local Deer Controller or business in Nillumbik Nillumbik Shire Council Wednesday, 28 April 2021 at 9:00 AM AEST Private
MAY 7	 Deer Control Technology - infrared scopes, thermal monoculars and others 375 Clintons Rd Friday, 7 May 2021 at 6:00 PM AEST
MAY 19	 Property management options to reduce deer damage in Nillumbik Online event Wednesday, 19 May 2021 at 7:00 PM AEST
MAY 30	 Nillumbik Deer Control 'Market' - meet local deer controllers & businesses Hurstbridge Community Hub, Frank Nankervis Room Sunday, 30 May 2021 at 2:00 PM AEST

280 people attended

92 tickets

68 tickets

38 tickets

25 tickets
Invitation only

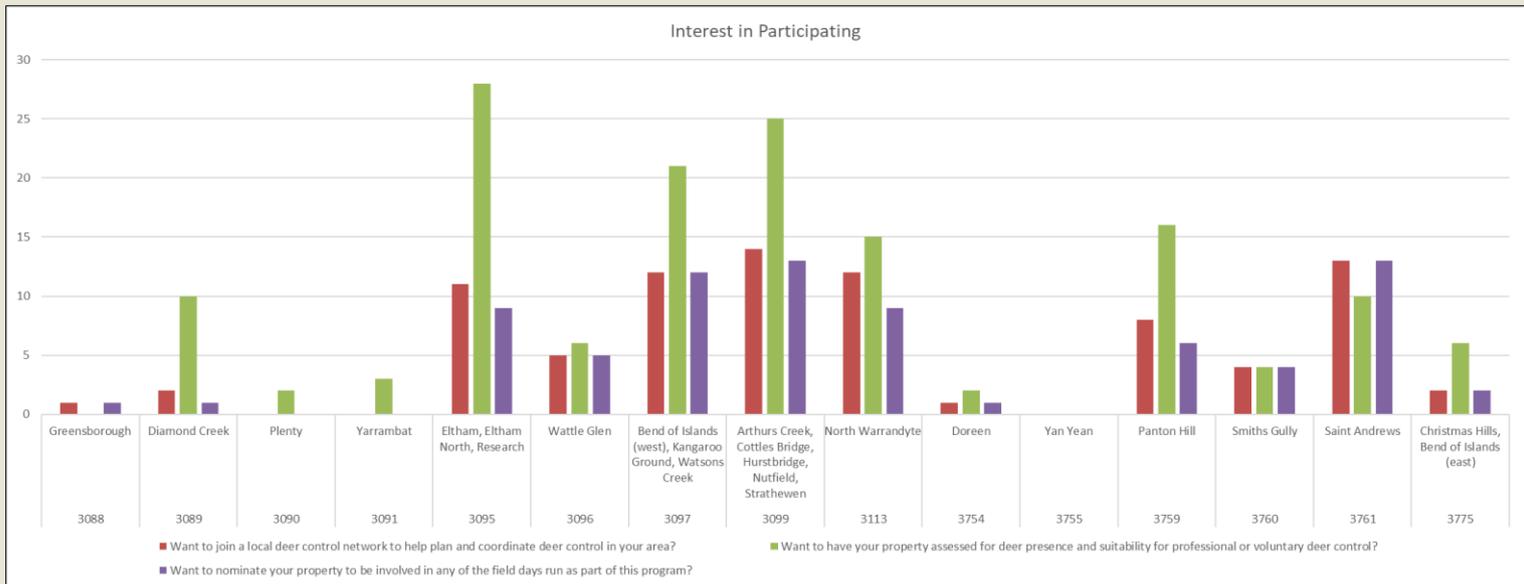
35 tickets

44 tickets

39 tickets reserved

Indication of interest to participation in Project elements

These responses enabled the project officer to contact residents to arrange site visits, and to facilitate contact with hunters in the local area. It was really wonderful to see so much interest, and indicates – particularly for those landholders wanting a property assessment or nominating their property for a field day - that there is likely deer sightings or visible damage in these postcode areas. Unfortunately, we don't have suburb data to narrow down their location and many that ticked these boxes did not leave contact details for Council to follow up. Direct emails to those indicating their interest in hosting field days only resulted in 3 properties willing to host an event.



The following pages are taken from the Participate Nillumbik webpage for the Community Deer Management project survey.

The Participate Nillumbik Survey <https://participate.nillumbik.vic.gov.au/community-deer-management> will close soon.



If you would like to know more about the Nillumbik Collaborative Community Deer Action project, check out the [webpage](#).

Please contact the Project Officer, Michelle Hanslow, for more information about joining a Nillumbik deer control network, a local deer action group, or to join in discussions at an information session. Email: environment@nillumbik.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 9433 3543

Community Deer Management - Knowledge to Action

Tell us about your experiences with deer in Nillumbik and share your ideas on possible management options



Council regularly receives questions and complaints about deer from landholders across the Shire.

We want to help landholders in their efforts to control deer.

We've received a federal *Communities Environment Program* grant to work with landholders to better understand the problem; to help the community to work together to address the problem; and to provide a **2020 program of technical support and training** (advice, property visits, information sessions, workshops and field days).

To help us to tailor this support and training to your interests and needs, we have a few questions that we'd like you to answer.

We'll use the survey comments to help plan and refine the sessions that we run.

[Click here](#) to see a preliminary summary of survey responses received between February and June 2020

The survey will be open until June 2021 and takes about 5 minutes to complete.

Community Deer Management Survey

Please tell us about yourself and share your thoughts about deer in Nillumbik.

1. What are your connections to Nillumbik?

Choose as many as apply

- Live
- Work
- Study
- Own a business
- Leisure
- Visitor
- Other (please specify)

2. What is your postcode?

Key Documents



Draft Victorian Deer Management Strategy

PDF (6.64 MB)



Collaborative Deer

PDF (754.15 KB)

Preliminary survey results- July 2020

Useful links



[Collaborative Community Deer Action](#)

3. Do you think that deer are a problem in Nillumbik?

- Yes
- No

4. How often do you see deer in Nillumbik?

- Multiple times per week
- Once a week
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Several times a year
- Only very occasionally
- Never

5. How many deer do you usually see?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 to 10
- more than 10

6. Are these deer on your property?

- Yes
- No
- Both

7. If No or Both, where do you tend to see them?

Choose as many as apply

- Along roads
- Parks
- State Forests
- Reservoirs
- Private Properties
- Farmland
- Other (please specify)

8. In what type of environment do you see deer?

Choose as many as apply

- Residential areas
- Peri-urban areas
- Rural farmland
- Bushland areas
- Everywhere

9. Do you record these sightings using DeerScan?

www.feralscan.org.au - We strongly encourage you to do this.

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

10. Have you seen signs of damage caused by deer?

- Yes
- No

11. If yes, what types of damage have you seen?

Choose as many as apply

- Damaged plants (eaten or trampled)
- Trails and erosion
- Wallows
- Ring-barking
- Other (please specify)

12. Have you undertaken any deer control (shooting) on your property?

- Yes
- No

13. If yes, who carried out this control?

Choose as many as apply

- Myself
- Friend or family member
- Professional pest controller (focussed on culling)

14. What do you do with the carcasses?

15. Which of the following options for management have you tried or would you consider using on your property?

Choose as many as apply

	Would not consider	Would consider	Have tried
No action	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Deer-proof fencing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sound deterrent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Light deterrent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scent deterrent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Motion-activated sprinkler	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Volunteer / recreational shooter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional shooter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Baiting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mustering and trapping	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you have tried any of the above techniques, were they successful?

Please comment

16. Please indicate which of the following training options or workshops/events you would be interested in attending?

Choose as many as apply

- Deer identification and behaviour
- Deer management approaches across Australia – Pest or Protected?
- What is Nillumbik Shire Council doing to help manage deer? And the State Government?
- Feedback and discussion on deer issues and management
- Deer-proof fencing and other management options
- Recognising deer damage
- Monitoring techniques for deer presence and damage
- Humane deer reduction options – hunting, culling, harvesting
- Identifying safe shooting locations (or areas requiring a Public Place Permit)
- Where is recreational hunting allowed?
- Can I shoot deer on my property?
- Collaborative approaches to deer control – working with your neighbours
- Using night vision thermal scopes and monoculars to increase hunting efficiencies
- The role of the Victoria Police firearms officer
- Butchering techniques
- Venison salami and/or sausage making
- Feral feast – community BBQ or cook-off using locally sourced venison
- Speed date a deer hunter (meet volunteer and professional shooters)
- Carcass disposal options
- The evolving regulatory landscape
- (Draft) Victorian Deer Management Strategy discussion

17. Have another idea that isn't listed above?

Tell us about it here:

18. Do you hunt deer?

- Yes, I am a professional pest animal controller
- Yes, I am a recreational hunter
- No, and I enjoy seeing deer in Nillumbik
- No, but I would like deer populations to be controlled locally

19. Are you a member of a Landcare Group or Friends Group in Nillumbik?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify.

You have 255 characters left.

20. Would you be interested in:

- joining a local deer control network to help plan and coordinate deer control in your area?
- having your property assessed for deer presence and suitability for professional or voluntary deer control?
- nominating your property to be involved in any of the field days run as part of this program?

If yes, please provide your email address.

21. Do you have any other comments?

You have 1,000 characters left.

Thank you for your time. Nillumbik looks forward to working with the community in tackling this complex issue.

Submit

Privacy notification

Nillumbik Shire Council is collecting your information for the purpose of contacting you about your interest in our community deer management program. The information collected will not be shared with third parties unless we are permitted to or required to by law. If the information requested is not provided or only provided in part, we will not be able to contact you to follow up on your interest in this program. You can access the personal information held by Council about you by contacting Council's Privacy Officer 9433 3271 or by email privacy@nillumbik.vic.gov.au