

BANNING OF FOX HOUNDS QUERIED IN PARLIAMENT

A Government proposal to ban the use of fox hounds to scent trail deer has been challenged in Parliament by local Upper House Member, Graeme Stoney.

Mr Stoney said this practice (the use of scent trailing hounds for deer) is "legitimate, traditional and licensed, and many breeds of dogs are used to scent the deer. It is rumoured that the government is planning to change the regulations and that from 2004 will allow only bloodhounds and beagles to be used. The difficulty with that is that foxhounds are regarded as by far the best scent-trailing hounds and most hunters use foxhounds in this sport." He said.

"I must point out that some of the behaviour of the hunters has not been the best. The Australian Deer Association (ADA) has deplored poor hunter behaviour and has asked many times for enforcement. The puzzling thing is that the government appears to have linked foxhounds to hunter behaviour. To my mind there is absolutely no connection between the two. The answer is better enforcement and encouraging all hunters to belong to reputable organisation like the ADA," he said.

"I must make the point that deer numbers in Victoria are exploding. Sambar deer do not herd together and are very hard to hunt successfully. Deerstalking

- that is, hunting deer without dogs - is popular but not many deer are taken. The only ecologically satisfactory way to control Sambar deer on Crown land is the use of hounds."

Mr Stoney called on the government to allow the proven types of dogs, such as foxhounds, to achieve the best results saying the present system including foxhounds is managing deer numbers well and any change will upset the balance. Mr Stoney predicted an explosion in the deer population.

He asked the Minister to repeal the proposed regulation banning foxhounds by April 2004.