



Game Animal Council
NEW ZEALAND

5 Year Strategic Plan

GAC mission statement:

**“Sustainable management of game animals
and hunting for recreation, commerce and conservation.”**



The Game Animal Council is a statutory body established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 to represent the interests of the Game Animal sector.



The establishment of the New Zealand Game Animal Council reveals the determination of government (past and current), and a succession of Ministers of Conservation, to address the conflicts that have plagued the previous administration of game animals, specifically, deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs, by involving all with interests in these animals. It is an unprecedented opportunity for the Council to secure the future of game animals and hunting by embodying modern principles and attitudes whilst remaining mindful of New Zealand's unique situation with respect to game animals and conservation. The Game Animal Council's responsibilities include providing advice to the Minister of Conservation on game animals, providing information and education, promoting safety and developing Codes of Practice and certification for the hunting sector. Establishing and managing herds of special interest, improving hunting opportunities, reducing conflict and hunter safety are key to its success.

The Game Animal Council has formulated this 5 year strategic plan for 2019-2024. Arising from this plan, each year the Council will compile an annual work plan and budget that will establish the priorities and actions for the forthcoming year and will assess the success of the previous year's work plan. The annual work plan will be approved by the Council at its June meeting and published to stakeholders.

Theme One:

Enhance the Quality of game animal herds while remaining consistent with conservation values

- 1.1 Implement a National Integrated Game Animal Management Strategy that includes the full spectrum of game animal populations and addresses the needs of recreation, commerce and conservation.
- 1.2 Establish and Manage Herds of Special Interest
 - 1.2.1 Develop Criteria in order to assess the relative merits of Game Animal herds for designation as Herds of Special Interest.
 - 1.2.2 Develop directly and assist other organisations to develop proposals for herds of special interest and promote these to the Minister of Conservation.
 - 1.2.3 Establish herds of special interest as resources permit by 2024. Herds of Special Interest may be managed by the GAC, by other organisations or by joint management.
- 1.3 Establish partnerships with other organisations and individuals for managing game animals that are not herds of special interest.
 - 1.3.1 Assist other organisations and individuals to manage game animals for recreation, commerce and conservation.
 - 1.3.2 Provide advice to landowners for managing game animals on their land.
- 1.4 Improve the effectiveness of hunters in managing game animals by increasing hunter success in harvesting the appropriate animals through the provision of information on where game animals exist and how best to find and hunt them.

1.4.1 Work with other organisations (such as Walking Access NZ, DoC, Federated Farmers, NZ Forest Owners Association) to identify and facilitate hunter and management access to herds of game animals.

1.4.2 Provide information on densities and seasonal movements of game animals.

1.4.3 Provide information on how to successfully hunt game animals (see also Theme Three and integrate where practical).

- 1.5 Develop a Research Strategy. All research is undertaken in accordance with accepted scientific standards and principles. Management decisions are made taking into account available research. Game Animal Research is encouraged at all levels of education. Provide one scholarship annually for research that benefits game animals or hunting.

Quality game management is a concept well understood overseas. The word quality includes the quality of an animal as meat for private consumption, for its trophy value, or as a commercial commodity. Inextricably linked to the quality of the animal is the quality of the habitat for both game animals and indigenous species. Quality habitat must also be sustainable. To address all aspects of game management the Game Animal Council will compile a National Integrated Game Animal Management Strategy. For such a strategy to succeed, we need to work collaboratively with all stakeholders and make sound management decisions based on good information. It is important to maintain or increase the number of hunters, increase their success rates and maintain a viable commercial game animal harvest. The GAC aims to be an enabling organisation that provides the legislative backing and expertise that facilitates others undertaking game management initiatives for both those animals that are a Herd of Special Interest or those that are not. This is reflected in the modest size of the organisation. This is the most cost effective and efficient way of undertaking such management.

Theme Two:

Develop positive relationships between the Game Animal Council and stakeholders through effective communication.

- 2.1 Implement a communications strategy that;
 - Ensures that stakeholders have easy access to timely information about the work of the GAC and;
 - Ensures stakeholders have the opportunity to engage with the GAC on issues that affect them and;
 - Ensures the GAC is the “go to” organisation for all aspects of game animals and hunting and;
 - Builds the strength of the GAC brand.(See also: Theme Four. Reducing conflicts will develop positive relationships)
- 2.2 Recognise the special relationship tangata whenua have with the land and develop appropriate relationships with iwi around NZ where these intersect with hunting interests.

The Game Animal Council can only deliver better outcomes for both hunters and conservation by having the support of stakeholders. Stakeholders must know, understand and support the work of the GAC. The GAC wants stakeholders to view the GAC as an organisation that considers their views, identifies objectives relevant for them, and implements strategies and plans to advance their interests. Even though Councillors are appointed this does not mean that the Council cannot operate in a democratic way and give all stakeholders the opportunity to participate in decision making on matters that affect them.

Theme Three:

Promote hunter safety

- 3.1 Implement accredited training programs for recreational hunters that address firearms, bow and outdoor safety requirements (see also item 5.1 and integrate where appropriate).
- 3.2 Ensure that industry approved training programs are available for hunting guides that ensure clients are provided with a safe hunting experience.
- 3.3 Ensure that industry approved training programs are available for commercial hunters that address firearms, animal welfare and health and safety requirements.

The safety of those in the outdoors is paramount. This does not only apply to hunters but to the public in general. Whilst firearms safety has a high profile, the statistics show that more hunters die in the outdoors from non-firearms related incidents, so there must be a significant emphasis on outdoor safety in general, in addition to firearm safety. There needs to be a clear training pathway available to all hunters from novice to experienced that upsills or refreshes their knowledge of firearms, bows and the outdoors in general. To ensure New Zealand is a country that provides a safe, quality hunting experience we also need to ensure hunting guides are adequately trained and are aware of their industry requirements. Many countries now require paddock to plate certification for the food they eat. For the future of our game export industry and to safeguard domestic food safety we need to ensure that our animals are harvested using acceptable methods and to agreed standards.

Theme Four:

Reduce conflict among stakeholders.

- 4.1 Provide a forum and dispute resolution procedure. The makeup of the Council facilitates dispute resolution because members have broad knowledge of most of the game animal sector. Performance under Goal Two will also help in reducing disputes.
- 4.2 Develop appropriate Codes of Practice to assist in resolving conflict (such as the AATH code required in the GAC Act).

Establishing many of the initiatives set out in this plan will provide a mechanism for resolving disputes. However the Council envisages that conflict will reduce considerably as stakeholders have greater input into issues that affect their interests.

Theme Five:

Improve the acceptance of hunting as a safe and legitimate activity.

- 5.1 Educate stakeholders and the public that hunting is a safe legitimate pastime.
- 5.2 Educate stakeholders and the public that game animals are valued introduced species and are an important contributor to the health, wellbeing, prosperity and conservation of New Zealand.
- 5.3 Educate stakeholders and the public on the role of hunting and hunters in both the management of game animals and the conservation of indigenous species.
(See also Goal 6. Adherence to codes of conduct will improve the acceptance of hunting as a safe legitimate activity)

Hunting will remain as long as it is relevant to New Zealand society. New Zealand’s outdoor history is closely linked to the presence and hunting of game animals. However, there are diverse views: many New Zealanders are unwilling to accept that their support for the conservation of native species and ecosystems must necessarily come at the cost of denying any place in New Zealand’s wild lands for introduced species such as deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs, others see no place for game species. Traditionally, there has been a close connection between urban and rural New Zealand, but increased urbanisation is reducing this connection. It is vital that hunters understand their role in both the management of game animals and the conservation of indigenous species. The public also understands and supports hunting, the role it plays and the place of game animals.

Theme Six:

Promote standards for hunting and management of game animals.

- 6.1 Establish codes of conduct for recreational hunting.
- 6.2 Establish industry approved standards for guided hunting, commercial hunting and game estates.
- 6.3 In conjunction with the guided hunting and game estate industry, establish certification programs for those sectors and encourage all those in the industries to become certified.
- 6.4 Ensure all hunters understand the need to comply with all relevant standards and regulations. Ensure legislation is appropriate to reinforce the necessity for compliance.

Actions speak louder than words and the way hunters conduct themselves and how we treat game animals both on public and private land is coming under more and more scrutiny. With social media and modern technology hunters' actions can progress from the back-country to the television, computer or mobile phone in literally a split second. As the statutory body for hunting, it is up to the Game Animal Council to set out what is and is not acceptable conduct in hunting. The public and overseas tourists will judge us on what these standards are and how we adhere to them. (See also Theme 5)

Theme Seven: **Develop appropriate management and administration structures.**

- 7.1 Develop a Sound Structure for the Game Animal Council
 - 7.1.1 Establish a Head Office in Wellington with a fulltime CEO plus administration, policy and communications resources. Establish North Island and South Island Regional Offices with game management staff as necessary
 - 7.1.2 Complete all statutory requirements on time.
 - 7.1.3 Implement a funding strategy and mechanisms to ensure that the GAC is self-funding with total income from all sources of at least of \$1million pa. Commercial partnerships and the non-hunting sector contribute 10% of GAC funding. The GAC seeks external funding contributions for projects that have public good outcomes.

To function effectively the Game Animal Council needs to have a strong foundation. Starting with a completely clean slate is both a challenge and an advantage for the GAC. Sound management systems, staffing resources and funding streams will enable the Council to realise the benefits to game animals, hunting, commerce and conservation that achieving the provisions of this plan will provide.

Theme Eight: **Promote the interests of the Game Animal Sector**

- 8.1 Raise awareness of the views of the Game Animal Sector in all forums.
- 8.2 Ensure the interests of the GAC, game animals and hunting are adequately addressed in all legislation, policy and planning.
- 8.3 Ensure that the Game Animal Council Act 2013 addresses the needs of the GAC by identifying deficiencies and recommending to the Minister of Conservation appropriate amendments.

There is a plethora of statutory and non-statutory processes, plans, policies and provisions that can affect the interests of the game animal sector. It is vital that the Game Animal Council's interests are communicated to these processes and the GAC's needs are reflected in the outcomes. If not the achievement of the provisions of this plan will be significantly limited

Summary

In 2024 the Game Animal Council is a national game animal management organisation undertaking management of people and animals to the benefit of all stakeholders. It works cooperatively both within the hunting sector and, as importantly, with those outside hunting circles. In being effective, the GAC is openly communicative and democratic, with a sound structure and governance, backed by appropriate legislation and as far as practical is self-funded. It is accountable to its stakeholders and produces better outcomes for them; is respected for its balanced advocacy based on good science and research, and gives authoritative advice.

Recreational hunters are adequately trained in safe hunting practices, understand the role of hunting, and their responsibilities, together with the conservation of indigenous species. They have good information on where to hunt and how to hunt successfully. Recreational hunters are complemented by a sustainable commercial harvest of game animals. Hunting Guides and Game Estates provide clients with safe, quality hunting experiences.

