

Hunters have role in managing deer herds and supporting industry

The Game Animal Council (GAC) is encouraging hunters to consider the long-term sustainability of deer herds and the environment when deciding where and what to hunt in the coming months.

“Like all game animals the quality of deer can deteriorate when herd numbers get too high,” says GAC General Manager Tim Gale. “If access to food becomes an issue then animals will struggle to maintain weight and that will impact the quality and size of the heads as well as the meat potential of the animal.”

“The good news is that hunters can play an active role in both improving the quality of deer and therefore providing a better hunting experience in the future, while also reducing numbers and contributing to the overall health of the forest. Where there are too many deer in an area and the habitat is noticeably impacted, such as parts of the Kaimanawas, priority should be given to taking mature hinds and yearling females.”

“Where deer numbers are low, like with the Wakatipu whitetail herd, hunters should be extremely selective about what animals they take and really think about what they are trying to target. Knowing how to identify old mature males from immature males and only taking the older males will support the ongoing viability of the herd.”

“While we are facing a period of considerable uncertainty with the spread of COVID-19 the roar is upon us and it is still likely to be an extremely busy period for hunting in New Zealand,” says Gale. “Safety must be of paramount importance so carefully and positively identify your targets, let others know where you are planning to hunt and make sure any inexperienced hunters are looked after and well-trained in firearms safety.”

“Finally, COVID-19 and the international travel restrictions mean that the guided hunting, game estate and hunting supplies sectors are facing some extremely tough times. If, as a local hunter, you always thought that one-day you would like to hunt with a guide or visit a particular property, now could be a great time to do it and at the same time support people’s livelihoods within the New Zealand hunting industry.”

The NZ Game Animal Council is a statutory organisation responsible for the sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, commerce and conservation.

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