

23rd October 2019

Review of the Trade in Endangered Species Act
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1. The Game Animal Council

The Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory organisation with responsibilities for, *inter alia*, representing game animal hunters, and advising on and managing aspects of game animal hunting. Game animals are feral pigs, chamois, tahr, and all species of deer.

2. Game animals as a resource for New Zealand

New Zealand's game animals are an important recreational, social and economic resource. The general public of New Zealand values game animals. Over 150,000 people harvest small game, large game or gamebirds at some time during each year.

All game species in New Zealand are harvested for food, and while deer farming accounts for the vast majority of game meat exports, shot wild game is significant in both export statistics and domestic consumption.

The combination of recreational hunting and aerial recovery expertise developed over the past 50 years allows privately funded control and management of New Zealand's big game populations at no cost to the government.

The deer industry has total export earnings of \$322 million (year ended 2018). New Zealand venison and velvet returns have been at record prices, assisted considerably by the perception internationally of venison as a safe food item. Consumers have traditionally perceived venison to be a hunted product and often do not differentiate between farmed and hunted sources at the point of purchase or consumption. New Zealand, as country of origin,

enjoys an unparalleled reputation for its farming, environmental and animal husbandry practices.

The guided hunting industry has earnings of approximately \$40 to \$50 million annually and has considerable potential for expansion. Internationally, New Zealand is considered to be the world's premier destination for hunted red deer stags and Himalayan tahr and is increasingly recognised for the quality of its other game species. It is considered a safe, stable, unpolluted country, and attracts a discerning, influential hunting clientele.

The total gross sales effect New Zealanders on recreational hunting has recently been calculated to be in the order of \$350 million annually. Large game species are a major focus of that hunter spend. Less easy to quantify, but probably of greater significance, is the role hunting plays in the national health statistics as a form of recreation enjoyed by tens of thousands.

3. Submission

Whilst hunting overseas is not strictly within the GAC's mandate decisions may have unintended consequences for the New Zealand hunting industry

Section 1: Why are we reviewing the Trade in Endangered Species Act 1989?

Regarding the specific questions asked for Section 1, we do not see a problem with the objectives and criteria presented.

Section 2: What is CITES?

The Act should make specific reference to the role that sustainable use, including well-regulated hunting programs, plays in wildlife conservation. Reference can be made to CITES Resolution Conf. 17.9, acknowledging the benefits of such programs.

Section 3: The trade in elephant ivory

- The proposals in this section provide alternative solutions for the alleged problem that New Zealand legislation is silent regarding the regulation of elephant ivory sales. Depending on the solution chosen, importation of elephant trophies could be restricted or prohibited.
- Recommendation: although the issue of commercial sale of ivory is not one of priority importance for the GAC we oppose arbitrary closures of ivory markets because (1) they can

and do impact the sale of some hunting-related items that contain ivory (guns and knives), Hunting trophies are sometimes caught up in the issue and/or the legislation can be so confusing that hunters and law enforcement don't know if importation of elephant trophies is legal or not, and we encourage the government to utilize resources for efforts that will have a demonstrable impact against poaching and trafficking. Whilst we expect very few imports will be undertaken, **GAC ideally prefers that none of the options be adopted and would vigorously oppose Options 4 and 5 because they would prohibit the importation of legally hunted and exported elephant trophies.** Option 2 prohibits commercial use of ivory but carves out some reasonable exemptions.

Arbitrarily shutting down New Zealand's domestic market for ivory without evidence that the market contributes to poaching or illegal trade does not align the TIES Act with CITES.

- Further, without explanation, two of the options presented would go well beyond prohibiting commercial trade of ivory and instead would prohibit or severely restrict importation of ivory, including ivory not intended for commercial purposes (options 4 and 5). Such actions would not align the TIES Act with CITES; rather, the document erroneously cites to "Decision 10.10." Resolution Conf. 10.10 is not a Decision, nor was the relevant language ever proposed in a Decision. We are somewhat surprised that DOC would make this error (and does so multiple times in the document); the difference between a Decision and Resolution is not insignificant. Regardless, the relevant language is in a CITES Resolution and thus an appropriate source for corresponding domestic legislation or regulation would contradict explicit support from CITES for the trade in elephant specimens in some instances, including hunting trophies.

- The document also alleges that all options would promote the management and conservation of elephants; however, DOC provides no evidence to support this claim.

- In total, none of the options in the document would support the objectives of CITES or promote the management or conservation of elephants. The intention of DOC is admirable—GAC supports efforts to end poaching and wildlife trafficking—but erroneously closing legal ivory markets or prohibiting the importation of legally sourced ivory will not help achieve either objective and could have the opposite effect.

Creating such a precedent might invite other countries to do likewise. This could impact the export of some trophies from New Zealand such as Himalayan tahr, one of the mainstays of the New Zealand hunting industry.

DOC also erroneously suggests that hunters might attempt to illegally import hunting trophies if a complete import ban is enacted. DOC provides no evidence for this suggestion

or any connection between hunting (i.e. not poaching) and illegal trade. It is a shame that DOC would even suggest that hunters would attempt to purposefully break the law if an import ban is enacted.

Section 5: Personal and Household Effects

DOC suggests options to address two identified problems.

- Problem A Recommendation: Option 1 would be easier to implement, easier for individuals to understand, and less expensive to implement.

The document states that most crocodilian specimens come from farmed animals (and thus are not hunting trophies), but we assume a small number of hunting trophies would benefit from the exemption.

Section 6: Technical issues with permits

The options proposed in this section would allow DOC to address minor errors in permits, rather than simply seizing the specimens without the possibility of return to the importer. Penalizing importers who have attempted to import items properly, but have an error in their permit, does not benefit conservation and is overly punitive.

- Recommendation: The GAC supports both options and encourages DOC to review permitting errors on a case-by-case basis and with as much flexibility as the circumstances dictate. Disposal or permanent seizure of a specimen, especially specimens that do not require care (i.e. are not living), should be a matter of last resort, unless DOC determines that the trade is not permitted under any circumstances.

If you have any queries relating to this submission, please contact me on 0274885940.



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