

Looking after our game animals and their habitat

The Game Animal Council (GAC) has launched an online resource to help hunters implement good game animal management practices and achieve beneficial hunting and conservation outcomes.

“Looking After Our Game Animals is intended to explain in simple terms how deer, tahr and chamois herds work, how the choices we make while out hunting can have an impact on those herds and most importantly, help protect the habitat they depend on,” says GAC General Manager Tim Gale.

The resource is broken up into four key themes – Healthy Animals Require a Healthy Habitat, Hunters as Caretakers, It’s Quality over Quantity, and Measuring our Success. Each theme outlines key aspects of good game animal management such as; how the habitat is the foundation of the hunting resource; how male and female game animals have a different role in the herd and a different impact on the environment; and how, by targeting more females, hunters can achieve better quality herds in a healthier habitat.

“Hunters know there are some deer herds in certain parts of the country with too many animals,” says Gale. “What this means is a decline in the health of the ecosystem, poor quality animals and poor hunting.”

“By targeting the right animals at the right time hunters can turn this around and help to achieve better herd balance, a lower population with better-quality animals and better hunting in a healthier ecosystem.”

“From a management point of view harvesting breeding age and yearling females is extremely effective as it removes their subsequent offspring and provides a healthier habitat for the development of both trophy-class males and quality meat animals. Harvesting an immature male, on the other hand, only removes one animal from the herd and prevents it from developing to its full potential. This won’t improve the quality of the herd or the health of the ecosystem.”

“Applying these game animal management practices while out hunting is the ‘win-win’ for hunting and conservation, as ultimately looking after our game animals is about looking after their habitat,” says Gale.

The GAC is grateful for the input that wildlife ecologist Cam Speedy has had into this resource, particularly through his expertise in ecosystem health and the dynamics of game animal herds.

The full *Looking After Our Game Animals* resource is available at <https://nzgameanimalcouncil.org.nz/game-animal-management/>.

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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