



Media Statement

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Sika deer project to benefit hunting and conservation

The hunting sector is developing a proposal for a science-based management programme for sika deer in the Kaimanawa and Kaweka Forest Parks that will benefit both hunting and conservation.

The proposed programme is led by the Central North Island Sika Foundation with support from the Game Animal Council, NZ Deerstalkers Association, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, the Kaweka Liaison Group and is actively engaged with the Department of Conservation. The objective is to reduce the impact of sika in areas where forest damage has been identified and to achieve a higher-quality, lower-density hunting resource that ensures beech canopy regeneration.

“For many parts of the central North Island, where hunting has adequately managed sika densities, beech forests are regenerating following natural damage related to storms or drought. This is what we should ultimately be aiming for across the whole range,” says wildlife ecologist and science-lead for the programme, Cam Speedy.

“The Central North Island Sika Foundation values the multi-agency approach of this project,” says Foundation President John Cook. “Effective management of our game animals is in everyone’s interest and the more we can collaborate with other organisations the better the outcome will be.”

The programme will begin by focussing on areas where undesirable sika impact has been recorded and where the quality of the herd is showing signs of decline. It is proposed that a range of management tools be used including; improving access to remote zones for recreational hunters and encouraging them to target breeding females; employing professional ground-based hunters with indicating dogs to target hinds in priority areas; and where other methods are unsuitable, using helicopter-based aerial control of hinds.

“Hunters want to hunt good healthy animals in a healthy environment and that requires careful management,” says Game Animal Council General

Manager Tim Gale. "Deer density above the forests' ability to sustain them is bad for the ecosystem and results in poor quality hunting."

"The Game Animal Council supports this project as we see hunter-led management as one of the most effective means of providing long-term sustainable management of both sika and the environment."

NZ Deerstalkers Association CEO Gwyn Thurlow says, "NZDA is excited to be involved in this project and our volunteer members are looking forward to being part of the sika herd management story."

"All hunters have a role as caretakers of our game animal herds to ensure a win-win for hunting and conservation."

The Proposal for a Sika Research and Adaptive Management Model for Kaimanawa & Kaweka Forest Parks is available at <https://bit.ly/3vdR2mB>.

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