



## **Media Statement**

14 July 2021

### **Hunter education boost from Jobs for Nature**

The New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA) and the Game Animal Council (GAC) are welcoming a \$700,000 boost for hunter training and education delivered through the Jobs for Nature Community Conservation Fund.

"Hunting is increasing in popularity and with a lot of new people seeking to learn the skills required to feed their families, we all have an interest in assisting them to be as safe, ethical and successful as possible," says NZDA Chief Executive Gwyn Thurlow.

"Both the NZDA and Game Animal Council are committed to improving the provision of hunter education and training and we acknowledge the support of the Department of Conservation in supporting this funding application."

The Jobs for Nature funding will allow for the creation of five positions to develop and implement the National Hunter Education and Training Scheme over a 3-year period.

"In keeping with its statutory mandate, the GAC is in the process of designing an online hunter education course that will act as a bridge between gaining a firearms licence and the hands-on instruction provided by NZDA's hunter training course, known as HUNTS," says General Manager Tim Gale. "This funding will allow us to employ someone fulltime to get on with the complex development and delivery of the online course."

"The HUNTS course has been incredibly successful since being launched in 1987 and has seen thousands of hunters gain the skills to safely hunt big game in New Zealand," Thurlow says. "Currently it is run by qualified volunteers, which has limited our ability to meet the high demand of aspiring hunters applying for training. The extra resource through Jobs for Nature will allow us to professionalise the coordination and instructor assessment roles and mean more people than ever can access this practical training."

“The reality is that there are so many facets to being a good hunter,” Gale says. “A lot of people get fixated on firearms training and while that is important, most hunting accidents don’t involve firearms at all and are instead the usual outdoor incidents – rolled ankles, falls and being caught out in bad weather.”

“Teaching new hunters the necessary safety skills also needs to be combined with teaching them how to be successful. This can comprise of what to hunt, where and when, practical field shooting techniques, good game animal management practices, hunting ethics and animal butchery.”

“The importance of hunting to New Zealand cannot be undervalued,” says Thurlow. “Estimates are that recreational and meat hunters harvest around 135,000 deer, 132,000 other game animals and 230,000 pest goats each year in New Zealand.<sup>i</sup> This is a significant contribution, not only to conservation, but in the provision of mahinga kai for many communities.”

“The bottom line is the more new and inexperienced hunters we can reach through this scheme the better the outcomes will be for hunter safety and enjoyment and the greater the hunting sector’s contribution will be to game animal management and the wellbeing of our communities,” says Gale.

## **Contacts**

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## **Background**

The National Hunter Education and Training Scheme has two key parts delivered in partnership:

1. An online education course delivered by the Game Animal Council that will provide foundational knowledge to new and inexperienced hunters.
2. Expansion of the classroom and practical/field training programme delivered nationwide by NZDA through the HUNTS Course.

The approval of the application to the Jobs for Nature Community Conservation Fund will allow for the creation of five hunter education and training positions to deliver this over a 3-year period:

- One full-time employee to develop, facilitate and deliver hunter education through an online education course to be delivered by the Game Animal Council.
- One full-time employee to manage NZDA's HUNTS programme as a National Co-ordinator.
- One part-time employee to support the National Co-ordinator to administer HUNTS and work with iwi to develop Maori HUNTS programmes.
- One part-time employee to oversee the training and assessment of HUNTS Instructors (volunteers) in the North Island.
- One part-time employee to oversee the training and assessment of HUNTS Instructors (volunteers) in the South Island.

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<sup>i</sup> GN Kerr & W Abell (2014) Big game hunting in New Zealand: per capita effort, harvest and expenditure in 2011–2012, *New Zealand Journal of Zoology*, 41:2, 124-138.