

Valued introduced species require a modern management approach

Valued introduced game animal species including deer and wild pigs require a consistent and modern management approach that recognises both their environmental impacts and their value to our communities, says the Game Animal Council.

“Valued introduced species are an important part of the fabric of this country,” says Game Animal Council Chair Grant Dodson. “They are a part of the everyday lives of many New Zealanders and provide significant recreational, commercial and food gathering opportunities for our communities.”

“They do however, present environmental challenges, which is why the Game Animal Council is pushing for a much more consistent and enduring management strategy that gets away from the all-or-nothing, divisive and ultimately unsuccessful style of animal control practiced in the past.”

A successful long-term nationwide deer management programme, for example, requires a modern scientific approach that takes into account the highly variable nature of deer impacts in different parts of the country and in different environments. It also needs to be incorporated into a broader strategy that includes the role of other browsing animals such as feral goats and possums.

“There exists a common narrative amongst our opposition that hunting organisations are opposed to any kind of game animal management. This couldn’t be further from the truth and as the Game Animal Council consistently promotes, lower-density higher quality game animal herds are both better for hunting and better for the health of our forests.”

“Hunters are often maligned by conservation groups but their contribution to animal management must be acknowledged,” says Dodson. “In 2014 it was estimated that recreational and free-range meat hunters harvest around 135,000 deer, 132,000 other game animals and 230,000 pest goats each year.”ⁱ

“No current control methods can come close to achieving those numbers, however, a reduction in hunting access in many places has made it a lot harder for recreational hunters to help manage certain game animal herds

in recent years. The well-publicised case of deer incursions in the Hutt Valley is a classic case in point, with hunting in surrounding areas being severely limited to just a few weekends a year.”

“The Game Animal Council continues to work closely with the Department of Conservation on a management strategy that seeks to better manage deer around New Zealand and the impact they have on native vegetation and we are very keen to see this work progress.”

“If done right a balanced nationwide strategy backed up by local management plans that recognises the community value of game animals, the different impacts of different animals in different places and includes an improvement in recreational hunter access can provide an enduring solution that significantly improves both environmental and hunting outcomes,” says Dodson.

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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ⁱ 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.