

## **Guide released to assist management of red deer**

The Game Animal Council (GAC) has released a guide for hunters to help them better manage New Zealand's red deer during the upcoming Roar period and beyond.

"The New Zealand Red Stag Ageing Guide has been developed, with input from professional hunters Chris McCarthy and Willie Duley, to provide hunters with easy-to-understand information on how to assess the age of red deer stags while out on the hill," says GAC General Manager Tim Gale.

Red deer are the most widespread deer species in New Zealand and are the game animal that Kiwis hunt most often. A hard-earned set of mature red stag antlers can be found mounted pride-of-place above many a fireplace around the country.

Red deer are also an important food resource for many communities and in places where increased numbers lead to over-browsing, they can present a significant management challenge.

"Hunter-led game animal management in New Zealand is basically a two-sided coin," says Gale. "On one hand it is about making sure we help manage population density by actively harvesting breeding females, while on the other, it is about being careful as to the age of the males we target."

"Being able to identify a few key characteristics will mean hunters can quickly and accurately determine the maturity of a stag and leave behind younger males that are yet to reach their full potential. In this way hunters can help act as stewards of our red deer herds."

"The old adage is, 'you can't shoot great stags, if you shoot good stags', and is why as hunters we need to have an eye on the future when we make decisions about what we harvest."

"The overall aim is to achieve high-quality, low-density game herds with a reduced number of breeding females and a higher proportion of mature trophy-aged males," says Gale. "This provides the win-win of better hunting and a healthy ecosystem."

The New Zealand Red Stag Ageing Guide is available for download at <https://nzgameanimalcouncil.org.nz/nz-red-stag-ageing-guide/> as well as through the GAC's Facebook and Instagram.

The GAC's Roar safety campaign and video, Look After Your Mates This Roar, is also available at <https://nzgameanimalcouncil.org.nz/look-after-your-mates-this-roar/>.

*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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