

Volunteers are the heart of the hunting sector

The Game Animal Council is celebrating National Volunteer Week by giving a big shout out to the hundreds of volunteers that dedicate their time and effort to making a contribution to New Zealand's hunting sector.

"Volunteers are absolutely essential to the success of organisations that make up New Zealand's hunting community," says Game Animal Council General Manager Tim Gale. "Whether it be managing and administering our clubs and foundations, undertaking game animal management and conservation projects, or running programmes that provide wild game meat for communities; none of it could be achieved without the hard work of volunteer hunters."

"As hunters we are lucky to have so many passionate people who care deeply about hunting and conservation in New Zealand. It is also these volunteers that allow hunting sector organisations to make big contributions to conservation and community support programmes."

In the 2021-22-year members of the Sika Foundation contributed 7,278 volunteer hours to game animal management, who conservation, the provision of wild venison for local foodbanks, and hut and track maintenance.

The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation relies on over 50 volunteer hunters from the small Southland community to help run their management and conservation programmes, as well as administer the annual wapiti bugle ballot process.

New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA) members contribute to a range of voluntary projects. In hunter training alone, 63 volunteer instructors each give over 200 hours a year to educate new and inexperienced hunters. This sits alongside the unpaid efforts of 521 volunteer range officers who help administer NZDA's extensive network of rifle ranges and make a significant contribution to teaching firearm safety.

Around 20 volunteers are involved in running projects and targeted harvest programmes on behalf of the New Zealand Tahr Foundation.

"In addition to the work of our clubs and foundations, a great many unaffiliated hunters are also involved in helping to fill the freezers of those struggling to make ends meet," says Gale. "This has become really

important for families impacted by this year's adverse weather events and has helped get a number of isolated communities through some extremely tough times."

"So, this week, we celebrate all the hunters who volunteer their time and effort for our communities, because it is these people that are the beating heart of New Zealand's hunting sector."

The NZ Game Animal Council is a statutory organisation working to improve the sustainable management of game animals and hunting for recreation, communities, commerce and conservation.

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