

30 September 2024

National TBfree Operations Consultation  
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## Submission on National Aerial Operations Plan 2025

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### **New Zealand Game Animal Council**

The New Zealand Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory entity with responsibilities for, *amongst other things*:

- Advising and making recommendations in relation to game animals to the Minister of Hunting and Fishing (previously Minister of Conservation).
- Raising awareness of the views of the hunting sector.
- Promoting safety initiatives for the hunting sector (including firearms safety).
- Liaising on and managing aspects of game animal hunting.
- Improving hunting opportunities.

### **Game animals and the New Zealand hunting sector**

Game animals are defined under the Game Animal Council Act 2013 as wild pigs, chamois, tahr, and all species of deer. Game animals are also recognised as valued introduced species in Te Mana o te Taiao – the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020, which states:

*Reaching a balance to ensure that valued introduced species continue to provide the benefits they are valued for, while also ensuring that indigenous biodiversity thrives, is a key challenge for Aotearoa New Zealand.*

Hunters play a key role in game animal management, and it is estimated that recreational hunters alone are responsible for harvesting approximately half a million game animals and pest goats each year.<sup>1</sup> All game animal species in New Zealand are harvested for food, with wild game being a significant contributor to both export and domestic consumption.

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### **GAC's position on bovine TB**

The GAC continues to support the goal of eradicating bovine TB from New Zealand. The GAC works constructively and cooperatively with many agencies, including OSPRI, to

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<sup>1</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, DOI: 10.1080/03014223.2013.870586

mitigate the impact of pest and TB control operations, and will continue with this approach. The GAC's role is at the strategic level and in assisting local organisations with expertise and coordination.

The GAC has no mandate over private land; however, we do have a statutory function to advise private landowners on hunting issues.

### **Impacts on game animals and hunting**

The GAC's statutory mandate with regards to TBfree is the direct and indirect effects of control operations on game animals and hunting. This includes significant by-kill of game animals, particularly deer and wild pigs, the significant risk that 1080 poses to hunting dogs, and the impact on hunting opportunities and the harvesting of wild game.

Meat hunting is extremely important to many communities around New Zealand, and the GAC has received many anecdotal reports of an increase in this importance over the last couple of years as cost-of-living pressures increase. This has intensified concerns regarding the use of toxins and the impact this has on a community's ability to access harvestable wild game.

Current mitigation measures include utilising ground control methods, the timing of operations, bait size, sowing rate, bait strength and the scaling up, coordination and integration with other operations to reduce the overall frequency of control operations. The most significant mitigation measure is the use of an effective deer repellent that prevents or minimises deer by-kill during control operations. We strongly recommend that these measures, particularly the use of deer repellent, are used to reduce deer by-kill in important hunting locations.

Recent studies involving the GAC have indicated that tahr are largely unaffected by aerial 1080 operations, however no formal research has yet been done on the impact on chamois.

### **GAC and OSPRI**

The GAC has a constructive working relationship with OSPRI and its staff. We value the quarterly opportunities to discuss upcoming operations and the consideration of mitigation measures to reduce conflict with the hunting sector and communities relating to TBfree operations.

We thank OSPRI for undertaking a proactive consultation approach, providing mapping, clear proposed operational details, and an appropriate consultation period.

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### **Proposed Operations for 2025**

The GAC will focus this part of our submission on the proposed 2025 operations that will impact game animals and hunters. The location of operations not discussed in this

section are still likely to be areas visited by hunters and where game animals are harvested, so we ask that mitigation measures as previously outlined, are considered during the planning of operations.

The GAC seeks to engage with OSPRI on these proposed operations to raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector and improve hunting opportunities.

#### Ahimanawa-Te Awahohonu (July 2025)

This operation is to take place on private land; therefore, the GAC trusts the necessary consultation has taken place with the relevant landowners and managers, including adjacent properties.

The land adjacent to the operation is public conservation land and OSPRI should consider what additional public information is required to ensure that users of the adjoining PCL (particularly hunters and fishers) are aware of the buffer zone.

The block is used for hunting both deer and pigs, and entry is managed through a ballot system for permits – as above, the GAC trusts that early communication has taken place to inform ballot holders and service providers for hunters and anglers in this area.

#### Southern Tararua (August 2025)

The southern Tararua area is important to hunters as it is accessible from population centres Featherston, Greytown and Carterton, and also attracts hunters from the wider Wellington region.

Within this operational area, there are popular high-usage areas of the Puffer Saddle/Dobson Loop Track/Smith Creek and into the Tauherenikau River. This catchment is a popular, highly frequented area for recreational hunters with the major hunting values being meat gathering. It is heavily hunted during the roar period due to its proximity to a large urban population base.

The GAC seeks to engage with OSPRI to raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector and improve hunting opportunities in relation to this operational area.

The GAC commends the collaborative approach that OSPRI is taking by engaging with hunting sector stakeholders such as the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association (NZDA).

The GAC is aware that NZDA has expressed the need for mitigation measures (specifically deer repellent and operational timing outside of high hunter usage periods, e.g., undertake operation during winter months) on the DOC managed public conservation land and permitted Council hunting areas due to the high value of this area to local hunters. The GAC encourages OSPRI to consider these recommendations.

Upper Wanganui (January 2026)

While the Upper Wanganui area is commonly hunted, the strong connection between hunters and local farmers has resulted in a common understanding regarding the impact of the recent TB outbreak on the local community. This common understanding means that hunters will not seek by-kill mitigation in this area. This position would likely change once TB is adequately managed or TB freedom is achieved in this area.

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The GAC looks forward to future engagement with OSPRI regarding the planning and implementation of TBfree operations.

If you have any queries relating to this submission, please contact me on 021 688 531 or at [tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz](mailto:tim.gale@nzgac.org.nz).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Gale". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Tim Gale**  
General Manager  
New Zealand Game Animal Council