



19-E-0464/ docCM6046580

23 August 2019

s9(2)(a)

Dear s9(2)(a)

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, dated 12 July. You asked:

Now that the case of blackmail letters to DOC staff in the Taranaki has been resolved could you now please answer some of the questions posed in my original OIA request of December 2017 for information regarding the release of Sika deer in the Taranaki.

You provided a list of questions that were similar to your 2017 request. On 5 August we extended our response to 2 September, due to the need for consultation about the ongoing investigation into the release of these deer.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. Where were these deer released and do you know who by.

Sika deer were found in and adjacent to the Taramoukou Conservation Area, Taranaki. The Department does not know who released the deer, but the investigation is continuing. Information relating to that investigation is refused under section 6(c) of the OIA as the release of that information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

2. How many deer were released and how many have been shot and what attempts have been made to contain the deer.

DOC staff and contract hunters estimated around 50 deer had been released, based on their observations early in the Department's field response. Ongoing monitoring is in place at the location and to date 36 sika deer have been shot. We are providing a table of the locations and dates of deer shot in Taranaki between October 2017 – April 2018.

3. What proof do you have that these were Sika deer and can you provide images.

Department staff and contract hunters identified them as sika deer. We are providing the images of sika and fallow deer shot in Taranaki, October 2017 – April 2018.

4. Is the department aware of any game / safari parks operating in the Taranaki region and could you please provide information.

The Department is not aware of any game or safari parks operating in the Taranaki region.

5. On Oct 26th the Director General claimed that 50 Sika Deer had been released, can you please explain how you estimate that number from a herd of animals free ranging in the bush.

The estimation was based on initial observation, as explained in our answer to your question five.

6. Has any other person or persons been interviewed regarding the release of Sika deer.

We are refusing this question under section 6(c) of the OIA, as the release of that information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

7. In press releases and in the court summary your department stated that Greg Buchanan had threatened to release Sika deer. Do you have any evidence that he did in fact release Sika deer.

The Department has not claimed that sika deer were released by Greg Buchanan and has no evidence that he did. The statement that Mr Buchanan threatened to do so is, however, correct.

The following documents fall within the scope of your request and are attached:

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	Oct 2017 – Apr 2018.	Photographs of sika and fallow deer shot in Taranaki, October 2017 – April 2018.	Released in full
2	August 2019	Table of deer shot in Taranaki	Released in full.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the Official Information Act.

Please note that this letter and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.

Yours sincerely,

s9(2)(a)

Hilary Aikman
Director, National Operations
For Director General