# Hunting

in conservation areas

**New Zealand** 









Department of Conservation *Te Papa Atawhai* 

### Introduction

Hunting is a popular activity in New Zealand. There are countless places to choose from in Department of Conservation (DOC) managed areas, and plenty of different species to hunt including deer, pigs, tahr, goats, chamois, wallabies, and game birds.

DOC actively encourages recreational hunting on conservation land. It supplies hunting permits, has an extensive hut and track network and has a wide range of hunting information available at DOC offices and on the website www.doc.govt.nz/hunting

This brochure provides general information about recreational hunting in conservation areas, including which species you can hunt, what permits you need, and safety information for when you're out in the bush. Join a club, talk to some experienced hunters, or just get out there and find your own piece of hunting paradise.

When hunting always do everything you can to protect New Zealand's unique environment.

#### Native species

The Wildlife Act (1953) protects most native species from hunting. However, pūkeko and some other bird species can be hunted at certain times of the year. The maximum penalty for killing protected wildlife is a \$100,000 fine and up to two years in jail. Make sure you are aware of what species are protected to avoid mistakenly hunting these animals.

#### Overseas visitors

If you are an overseas visitor you must declare all firearms to New Zealand Customs Officials and the New Zealand Police, and complete a Visitors Firearms Licence and Permit to Import application. This can be done online or when you arrive in New Zealand. For more information visit www.police.govt.nz

What species can you hunt?

Introduced animals are a major threat to New Zealand's native wildlife, and programmes to manage or remove them are essential for the survival of our native species. All non-native animals impact the New Zealand environment in varying degrees.

A Himalayan tahr control plan is used to help limit the population.

Deer: Imported and liberated for sport from 1851 onwards, wild deer are found throughout New Zealand except Northland, the Coromandel and Taranaki. Red deer, the most widespread, along with fallow deer occur in both the North and South Islands. Sika deer live in the Kaweka and Kaimanawa Ranges, rusa deer in the



Red deer, on Fiordland tussock tops. Photo: Rob Suisted

Ikawhenua Range, and sambar deer in Manawatu and Bay of Plenty. Down south, white-tailed deer live on Stewart Island and near Lake Wakatipu, and wapiti are found in northern Fiordland



Wild sow on farmland. Photo: Rob Suisted

Pigs: First introduced by Captain Cook and later by sealers, feral pigs have become well established throughout the main islands and on several outlying islands. Their distribution is limited by the existing supply of food and cover; pigs are more numerous in the North Island than in the South.

Tahr and chamois: Tahr and chamois were introduced to New Zealand by European settlers for hunting. Tahr are found in the Rakaia and Whitcombe valleys in the north to the Young Range of Otago, and chamois are found throughout the South Island high country. Tahr and chamois in New Zealand are highly sought-after trophies for recreational and tourist hunters.



Goats: Like pigs, goats were released by Captain Cook as early as 1773. Early explorers, whalers, sealers, and settlers bought them for food, and they were also used to barter with Māori. Goats were also used in an attempt to control weeds. Goats have built up large populations in both islands. They range from sea level to the alpine zone, living in introduced and native grasslands, scrub and forest.



Wild goat, a great target for beginners. *Photo: Rob Suisted* 



Red necked wallaby. Quick, agile — a novelty to hunt.

Wallabies: Introduced mainly for sport hunting and their skins, wallabies have established themselves in New Zealand since the mid 1850s. Species available for hunting include red necked (or Bennett's) found near Waimate, and dama wallabies centred around Lake Tarawera. Dama, parma, blacktailed, rock and swamp wallabies inhabit Kawau Island.

#### Game birds:

Waterfowl including paradise shelduck, mallard, grey and shoveler duck, and black swan can be hunted in some DOC-managed areas. Upland game such as pheasant and quail can also be hunted.



Mallard duck hen.

Photo: andrewwalmsleyphotography.com

As well as a DOC hunting permit you will need a licence from Fish & Game NZ. For more information:

www.fishandgame.org.nz.



# Plan and prepare

#### Getting there

Walk in from road ends, or use a helicopter to reach isolated areas. Each region will have rules about where helicopters can land, so make sure you approach the local DOC visitor centre or office and talk to staff about helicopter landing regulations.

Be aware that many areas are surrounded by private land, and access is only at the permission of those landowners. It is the hunter's responsibility to arrange access **each and every time** with private landowners before setting out.



Joining a hunting club is a great way to pick up tips and skills from experienced hunters. Clubs provide an easy way to join an organised hunt and see what it's all about. Find out about local hunting clubs via the New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association (NZDA).

The NZDA promotes hunting through the Hunter National Training Scheme (HUNTS). This course is run with assistance from the Mountain Safety Council (MSC) and covers training in things such as equipment, clothing, navigation, firearms, hunting techniques, photography, first aid, and bush craft.

Visit the website www.deerstalkers.org.nz for information about the course and how to sign up.



A successful chamois hunt. Photo: Tim Whittake

#### What gear do you need?

This basic gear list is a great start when planning a hunting trip. The Mountain Safety Council (MSC) provides a comprehensive hunting gear list on their website, so make sure you head to www.mountainsafety.org.nz for more information.

#### Gear for a two-day hunting trip:

Pack and sleeping
Pack and pack liner

Tent/tent fly and ground sheet

Bed roll/inflatable mattress

Sleeping bag

Clothing

2 wool or polypropylene tops

2 wool or polypropylene

long johns

2 pairs of shorts

2 pairs of socks

2 pairs of underpants

Warm jersey

Waterproof jacket

Sturdy boots

Gaiters

Warm hat

Gloves

Over trousers

Spare camp footwear

Sunglasses

Toiletries

Soap, toothbrush, toothpaste

Small towel
Toilet paper
Sunscreen

 $Food\ and\ drink$ 

High energy food and snacks

for two days Water bottle(s)

Cooking stove and fuel

Billy/fry pan

Plate, cup and cutlery

Hunting and navigation

Map and compass

Skinning knife

Rifle and sling

Ammunition

Rifle cleaning kit

Mesh bag(s) for hanging meat

Small shovel

Small shovel

Hunting permit

Personal locator beacon (PLB)

Torch/head light

Binoculars (optional)

GPS (optional)

Safety and personal Personal first aid kit

Survival kit

Camera

Spare batteries



Hopkins River above Lake Ohau Photo: Tim Whittaker

## Permits and licences

#### Hunting permits

To go hunting on public conservation land you require a DOC hunting permit.

This is a requirement of the Conservation Act and depending on the area and species hunted, these can either be obtained online or from DOC visitor centres or offices. Each person in a hunting party must have their own permit, whether hunting with a firearm, bow or knife.



Getting a hunting permit is quick and easy. *Photo: N. Fisentzidis* 

Permits cannot be transferred to or be used by anyone else. All permit conditions (e.g. not shooting at night) must be strictly adhered to.

**Note:** Permit conditions vary between different locations, and a DOC hunting permit does not confer the right to cross any private land. Permission must be obtained from the landowner.

#### Firearms licence

To get a DOC Hunting Permit, you must have a valid New Zealand Firearms Licence.

Log on to www.police.govt.nz/ service/firearms to renew or buy a New Zealand Firearms Licence.



Australian brush-tailed possum. Photo: Rob Suisted

# DOC hunting permits required for:

(get online or at DOC office)

- Deer
- Goats
- Tahr
- $\boldsymbol{\cdot} \, \mathsf{Chamois}$
- Pigs
- Wallabies

### Separate permits required for:

(contact your local DOC office)

- Small game: Rabbits, hares, Canada geese.
- Possums
- Game birds (also require game bird licence from Fish & Game NZ)

#### Game bird licence

Licences for hunting game birds are issued from Fish & Game NZ. The Game bird Hunting Guide covers both the North and South islands, and provides information about each species hunting season plus bag limits for each species.

#### Hunting with dogs

If you wish to hunt with dogs (with or without a firearm), you will need to get a dog permit and find out about the dog restrictions

for the area. Dogs must be kept under control and not used for hunting until well within the hunting area. Poorly trained dogs can injure or kill native birds.

If your dog injures or kills a protected species, this can lead to a fine and imprisonment.

Some areas run kiwi aversion training that has been developed to try and reduce the number of kiwi killed by dogs. This helps to make sure that hunters and their dogs are well trained and target hunted animals only. Hunters are encouraged to undergo kiwi aversion training, and it is a requirement in some regions.

Aversion training can be arranged through DOC and if regularly reinforced is an effective method of training dogs to avoid kiwi and other native species.



Hunting with man's best friend. Ruahine Forest Park. Photo: Rob Suisted



# Pest control using pesticides

New Zealand's native plants and animals are under constant threat from introduced species. In isolation, New Zealand's natural inhabitants had adapted to a life free of mammalian predators, but now natural born killers such as possums, stoats, weasels and ferrets cause significant damage to our native wildlife and forests.

DOC carries out control operations using pesticides, which may affect some hunting opportunities. Other agencies such as regional councils and the Animal Health Board also control pests on public land using pesticides. Pesticide summaries indicating where poisons have been applied are revised every four months and are available with your hunting permit, from your local DOC visitor centre or office, and the DOC website at www.doc.govt.nz/hunting

#### Pesticides

Photo: P. Little

DOC uses aerial and ground pesticide control, depending on the site. Aerial operations generally take place in large, remote areas where ground control is impractical. This frequently includes hunting areas, so take precautions when hunting in treated areas. Do not touch bait, watch children at all times,



and do not eat animals from this area.

Areas treated with pesticides are listed on the latest pesticide summary, and major park or reserve entrances will be clearly signposted. Also consider the possibility of pesticide-contaminated animals travelling out of the treated area.

Some animals are more susceptible to poisons than others. Remember, poison baits and carcasses are deadly to dogs, which are ten times more vulnerable to 1080 than possums and other pests. Dogs must be kept away from areas treated with 1080. If in doubt contact DOC.

For more information on the Department's use of pesticides, visit www.doc.govt.nz/hunting



# Introducing others to hunting

#### Hunting can be a family affair

Hunting is an excellent way to get into the outdoors with your family, it teaches kids about being responsible in the outdoors and how to be safe with firearms.

Age or gender should not be a barrier, what you should look for in a hunting partner or partners should always be the same: people you trust and people who trust you.



#### Hunting with beginners

- If you can, plan a trip for forecasted fine weather
- Start with a single night trip
- Consider flying in/out
- Educate on all aspects of hunting

#### Just for the kids

- Make sure to involve all the kids in the group
- Keep them warm and properly equipped
- · Make the trip length age-appropriate
- Don't leave out the girls!



# Look after the backcountry

#### Hut users' code

- Keep huts clean and tidy as you would like to find them. Leave muddy boots outside.
- Take care using wood burners. Only use dead wood, keep fire contained, never leave it unattended - it can burn the hut down. Make sure fire is extinguished before leaving. Conserve gas when using gas heaters and cookers.
- Share huts with others. Be considerate, make room for late comers and keep quiet if others are sleeping.
- · Carry it in, carry it out take all your rubbish with you. Pick up rubbish you come across. Recycle your rubbish.
- · No smoking in huts.
- Follow the Arms Code always unload firearms before reaching a hut and never leave firearms unattended.
- · Dogs not allowed in huts.
- · Always pay hut fees.
- · Before leaving a hut, close doors and windows securely.
- Tramping clubs and other groups do regular hut maintenance work. Think about volunteering some of your time and effort. It's a great way to meet people and you're sure to have fun!



Leave huts clean and tidy. Photo: J. Johnson





- Plan ahead and prepare
- · Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others

#### Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests

Freshwater pests can invade and clog waterways, badly affecting water quality. crowding out native species and ruining the aesthetic value of our backcountry rivers.



Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all footwear, bicycles, vehicles, fishing equipment and other items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

To report a suspected find of didymo or any other freshwater pests call **0800 80 99 66**.

For more information and cleaning guidelines go to www.biosecurity.govt.nz or www.doc.govt.nz/stopthespread

#### Kauri dieback

Kauri dieback is a soil-borne disease that spreads through the movement of contaminated soil or water. It can kill kauri trees of all ages and sizes.



By following hygiene protocols you are helping to stop the spread of kauri dieback.

- · Make sure shoes, tyres and hunting equipment are clean and free of dirt before and after visiting kauri forest.
- Keep away from kauri tree roots. Any movement of soil around the roots of trees has the potential to spread the disease.
- · Remove all soil from dogs' paws and horses' coats and hooves.

For more information or to report suspected sightings of diseased kauri phone the kauri dieback hotline 0800 NZ Kauri (695 2874) or visit www.kauridieback.co.nz



#### **Firearms**

The use of shotguns, shotgun-rifle combinations, .22 calibre, and rim fire firearms is prohibited on public conservation land unless stated otherwise. Only high powered firearms are allowed, although hunters can apply at a DOC office to use low calibre rifles such as .17 and .22 calibre rifles with a one-off permit.

#### Bows and crossbows

Only non-barbed hunting arrows are permitted. Arrows with any poison, explosive or other chemical substance are prohibited.

Criteria for the use of bows and crossbows on public conservation land:



Hunting trips can take place in all sorts of weather. Photo: Rob Suisted



#### Bow hunting minimum criteria

- Minimum Drawing Weight 35lb (15kg)
- Minimum diameter of two opposing blades is 7/8 inch (22mm)
- Only non-barbed hunting arrows are permitted
- Arrows with any poison, explosive or other chemical substance on or in the head or shaft are not permitted

#### Crossbow minimum criteria

- · Minimum drawing weight factor 68kg/150lb
- Minimum diameter of multi-bladed head is 7/8 inch (22mm)
- Minimum length of complete arrow is 16 inch (400mm)
- Only non-barbed hunting arrows are permitted
- Hunting arrows must not be placed into a loaded crossbow under anv circumstances unless target is confirmed. Crossbow must have a positive mechanical safety device in working order.
- Arrows with any poison, explosive or other chemical substance on or in the head or shaft are not permitted.



As a requirement of your firearms licence, you must know and abide the Firearms Safety Code.

- 1. Treat every firearm as loaded. Check every firearm yourself. Pass or accept only an open or unloaded firearm.
- 2. Always point firearms in a safe direction. Loaded or unloaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction. Beware - firearms can go off unintentionally.



- 4. Identify your target beyond all doubt. Do not fire at movement, colour, sound or shape. They can all deceive you. Assume colour, sound and shape to be human until proven otherwise.
- 5. Check your firing zone. THINK! What may happen if you miss your target? What might you hit between you and the target or beyond? It is unsafe to shoot at the skyline. Do not fire knowing others are in your firing zone. Use extra care when shooting at a moving target as your firing zone will change rapidly. Be aware of ricochets.
- 6. Store firearms and ammunition safely. When not in use, lock away the bolt, firearm and ammunition separately. Never leave firearms in a vehicle that is unattended. A young child must not be able to gain ready access to firearms.
- 7. Avoid alcohol and drugs when handling firearms. Alcohol and drugs must never be taken before you go shooting or while you are shooting. Do not shoot with others who are, or have been drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

For more information log on to www.police.govt.nz and check out 'safe hunting practices', and also www.mountainsafety.org.nz for information on the Firearms Safety Code.

# Being visible

#### Hunters should wear clothing that contrasts with the environment they are hunting in.

There is no evidence that suggests deer can or cannot see any one colour better than another (New Zealand Police, 2003). Deer will spot a hunters movement rather than the colour of their clothing.



Wise hunters wear clothing that differs from their surroundings. Photo: Rob Suisted

# Food safety

A condition of a DOC hunting permit is that all rubbish should be removed, and that offal and carcasses must not be left in or near visitor facilities (including tracks and huts) or waterways. Burying animal waste is generally accepted as the best method of disposal, so remember to take a small shovel.

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority (NZFSA) provides information about how to keep your catch safe for eating, and the regulations on trading homekill and recreational catch. Check out www.nzfsa.govt.nz for more information.



Field dressed venison and skin from whitetail deer buck. Photo: Rob Suisted

# Backcountry accommodation

New Zealand has more than 900 backcountry huts and more than 80 backcountry campsites, offering a range of facilities for accommodation. Many hunters take advantage of basic huts or bivvies which are free to stay in, some of which have a meat safe and/or dog kennels located away from the hut. To pay for hut accommodation you need to buy a Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets from your local DOC visitor centre or office.



A standard hut – Crow Hut, Ruahine Forest Park. Photo: N. Fisentzidis



High above the Douglas River, on the lookout for tahr. Photo: Rob Suisted



#### Hut categories

**Basic huts/bivvies** Provide very basic shelter with limited facilities. (Free)

**Standard huts** Provide mattresses, water supply and toilets. Wood heaters are provided in huts below the bush line. (Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Ticket)

**Serviced huts** provide mattresses, water supply, toilets, hand washing facilities, and heating with fuel available. They may have cooking facilities with fuel and a warden. (Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Ticket)

#### **Backcountry Hut Passes**

Available for either 6 or 12 months, these can be used for most Serviced and Standard huts. Cost for 6 months is \$92.00 for adults (18 and over) and \$46.00 youth (11-17 years).



Cost for 12 months is \$122.00 for adults and \$61.00 for youth. Children 0-10 years old are free.

**Backcountry Hut Tickets** are sold in units of \$5.00 for adults and \$2.50 for youth.

Check conditions for the Backcountry Hut Pass on the DOC website or in the Backcountry Huts brochure.

There are also recreation club lodges open for public use throughout New Zealand with different fees and facilities.

**Note:** Backcountry Hut Tickets and the Backcountry Hut Pass can not be used for lodges, cabins, New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) huts or other booked accommodation.



# Plan and prepare

#### Safety is your responsibility

When hunting in the New Zealand backcountry, always have warm and waterproof clothing, first



aid and survival kits, water and high energy food, a map and a compass or a GPS – and know how to use them. Emergency communication equipment such as a locator beacon or a mountain radio is highly recommended. Check your



local DOC visitor centre or office for the latest information about changes to tracks, huts and other facilities, and to pick up Mountain Safety Council brochures.

If things go wrong, use the STAR Model for making decisions:

**Stop:** Take a breath, sit down and remain calm. **Think:** Look around, listen, brainstorm options.

Assess: Evaluate options and potential consequences.

Respond: Take the best alternative.

**Remember:** Water, shelter, warmth and the will to survive

are essential to your survival.

#### Weather

New Zealand's weather is fast changing and unpredictable; always be well prepared for all conditions. Make sure you know about local weather patterns and natural hazards, and how to deal with them.

Get the latest weather information from the Metservice: Ph 0900 999 + the local area code, or visit www.metservice.co.nz



#### Hazards

Hunting locations are usually in remote areas, meaning help is far away. Hunting usually takes place off tracks and hunters can get lost and injured. Know about hazards you are likely to encounter and how to deal with them.



#### Getting lost

Even if you are well prepared, you can still become lost in the bush. Take note of where you have walked by looking back every now and then, areas can look much different from the opposite direction and this may help you find your way. If you feel you are completely lost then assess your circumstances, you may be able to retrace your steps. Keep warm, drink plenty of water, ration your food, conserve your energy, and above all else: be determined to survive.



#### Injuries

Accidents and injuries can happen when you least expect them. Make sure you have some outdoor first aid skills before you head off into the backcountry. Attend a first aid course, carry a first aid kit or read a first aid manual and carry it with you.

You may decide to seek help if someone in your group is seriously injured. When making contact with emergency services, tell them:

- · What has happened, when and where
- Details of injuries/illness
- Relevant resources: clothing, equipment and experience
- Action taken and immediate plans

#### Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a major threat. It happens when the body cannot make up for heat loss due to exposure. The body goes into survival mode and shuts down non-essential functions.

Unless checked, hypothermia quickly leads to loss of coordination, unconsciousness, failure of breathing and circulation, and even death. Body heat is lost due to wet clothing, wind, cold, lack of food, fatigue, injury, and anxiety. If you think someone in your group is suffering from hypothermia stop and find shelter. Get the victim out of wet gear, into a sleeping bag and monitor any changes in their condition; then seek help. Know how to recognise symptoms and how to treat hypothermia.



#### Personal locator beacons (PLBs)

PLBs are designed mainly for trampers and hunters, so are small enough to fit in your pocket. Once activated, the signal is picked up by satellite and/or aircraft, then the message is relayed and the beacon's position calculated. PLBs use the UHF 406MHz

frequency, and a PLB that is GPS equipped will cut down the time it takes for you to be found.

Keep your PLB in a place you remember and where it is easily accessible. Talk to your local visitor centre about where to rent or buy a PLB for your next trip.



#### Communications

The Mountain Radio Service (MRS) is one of the most reliable forms of two-way communication in the backcountry, as cell phone coverage can be minimal.

The MRS has lightweight radios that are ideal for hunters. You cannot buy a mountain radio – it is a hired service. The radios function in both the North and South Islands. Satellite phones can provide near global phone coverage by connecting to orbiting satellites rather than land-based sites. Using either geosynchronous or low earth orbit systems, they can almost guarantee contact with the outside world when you are out in the hills. As with PLBs and the MRS, check at the local DOC visitor centre for the best place to rent a satellite phone.

#### Other people

There are likely to be other hunters and recreational users in the area you are hunting. Always take extreme care to identify your target and consider your firing zone.

Hunters can minimise the likelihood of shooting, or being shot by another hunter in a number of ways. **Never** shoot at shape, sound, movement or colour without confirming your target, and wear clothing that contrasts with the surrounding environment. When hunting in groups, stop hunting if visual contact with a group member is lost, and do not resume hunting until visual contact is made.

There have been more than 30 deaths since 1979 where hunters have accidently mistaken people for deer (New Zealand Police, 2003).

Safe and smart hunting techniques can prevent further unnecessary deaths.

## Best time to hunt

#### Hunting in different seasons

While there are year-round opportunities to get out and enjoy the outdoors, certain times of the year may influence your hunting. Summer means warmer and more settled weather, but there are also more trampers and other recreation activities to taking place.

#### The roar

The most popular time for deer hunting is during 'the roar' (or rut). This is when the stags are most vocal, calling to attract the attention of mates and to protect their territory. The roar lasts around four weeks, with the middle two weeks when the stags are most vocal. For red deer it is from the 20th of March to the 20th of April, fallow and whitetail are later than this. As this is such a popular time for hunters some areas will have further restrictions, such as block allocations and ballots.

**Remember:** Because the roar is the most popular time for hunting, it's also when most hunting accidents occur.

Always identify your target.



#### Game bird seasons

Most game bird seasons start in May, although dates vary depending on the species of bird, and the Fish & Game region you are hunting in. Fish & Game's Game Bird Hunting Guide book is provided free with every game bird hunting licence.





### Further information

For further information about hunting in conservation areas, check the DOC website

### www.doc.govt.nz/hunting

or contact the nearest visitor centre or office.

#### **Contacts**

Fish & Game NZ www.fishandgame.org.nz

NZ Deerstalkers' Association www.deerstalkers.org.nz

Mountain Safety Council www.mountainsafety.org.nz

Mountain Radio www.mountainradio.co.nz www.wmrs.org.nz

New Zealand Police www.police.govt.nz

Land Search and Rescue NZ www.landsar.org.nz

Locator Beacons NZ www.beacons.org.nz

NZ Alpine Club www.alpineclub.org.nz

Federated Mountain Clubs of NZ www.fmc.org.nz

NZ Bow Hunters www.nzbowhunters.co.nz New Zealand Food Safety Authority www.nzfsa.govt.nz

Metservice www.metservice.co.nz



Meat safe, Roaring Stag Lodge, Tararua Forest Park.

Photo: N. Fisentzidis

Published by: Department of Conservation Manawatu Base

Private Bag 11010 Palmerston North 4442

New Zealand June 2015

Editing and design:

Publishing Team, DOC National Office

All photos, unless otherwise credited, are copyright DOC.  $\,$ 

This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.

New Zealand Government





Cover image: Trophy wapiti bull, red deer stag cross, Fiordland National Park valley. Rob Suisted: www.naturespic.com