



**Crown pastoral land consultation**  
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**New Zealand Game Animal Council - Submission on the discussion document:**

## **Enduring Stewardship of Crown Pastoral Land**

The Game Animal Council (GAC), established under the Game Animal Council Act 2013, is a statutory agency with responsibilities for, *inter alia*, representing game animal hunters, and advising on and managing aspects of game animal hunting. Game animals are feral pigs, chamois, tahr, and all species of deer.

### **1.0 Background**

Deer, Tahr, Chamois and feral pigs have had a long association with Crown Pastoral Land (CPL). For example, prior to the tenure review process approximately 38% of the Himalayan tahr population was located on CPL/Private land at the time the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan came into force. Game animals have undergone a transformation from unwanted animals to be culled to a valuable asset that are now farmed and hunted as significant income earners for some CPL Lessees. To quote one lessee:

“I make more money out of the so-called pests than I do out of the rest of my stock put together”

This increase in the value of deer, tahr and chamois has influenced attitudes of CPL lessees to allowing access for recreational hunting. Free access for recreational hunters has reduced over time as the development of the guided hunting industry has enabled CPL lessees to charge fees for hunting. (with the appropriate consents/permissions)

### **2.0 Ending Tenure Review**

Leaseholders of Crown pastoral land have exclusive possession of the land within their lease, providing them with the ability to deny public access (like any private landowner), and to trespass persons who cross their land without permission.

On one hand, the previous tenure review process provided benefits for hunters by turning leasehold land into public conservation land which resulted in access for hunting purposes and also created access ways through CPL to this new and also to existing public conservation land. On the other hand, hunting interests were poorly represented in this process and this meant that some of the access ways created were unusable by hunters due the carriage of firearms being excluded from those access provisions. Correcting this now is proving problematic

The cessation of tenure review puts an end to more land coming back into public conservation land and being made available for hunting purposes. It is important therefore, that whatever shape the final management regime for CPL takes, hunting access ways to public conservation land should be established and they need to be in a form suitable for hunters carrying firearms and accompanied by dogs (where dogs are permitted on the land the access is provided for). Access provisions should be made certain and enduring through the use of legal instruments such as easements. Where access is provided it should be the crown's responsibility to manage any negative effects that the access has on farming operations on that land. The cost of creating and maintaining access should be borne by the crown.

### 3.0 Management of Game Animals on Crown Pastoral Land

The Game Animal Council has no direct mandate over private land however:

(1) The Council has the following functions in relation to game animals that can apply to CPL:

- (a) to advise and make recommendations to the Minister:
- (b) to provide information and education to the hunting sector:
- (c) to promote safety initiatives for the hunting sector, including firearms safety:
- (d) to advise private landowners on hunting:
- (e) to develop, on its own initiative or at the direction of the Minister, voluntary codes of practice for hunting:
- (f) to raise awareness of the views of the hunting sector:
- (g) to liaise with hunters, hunting organisations, representatives of tangata whenua, local authorities, landowners, the New Zealand Conservation Authority, conservation boards, and the Department of Conservation to improve hunting opportunities:
- (j) to operate voluntary certification schemes for professional hunting guides and game estates:
- (k) to promote minimum standards and codes of conduct for certified hunting guides and game estates:
- (l) to investigate complaints and take disciplinary action in relation to certified hunting guides and game estates:

The Game Animal Council acknowledges that lessees of Crown pastoral land have exclusive possession of the land within their lease and they may choose to have game animals or not. The GAC does have an advisory role if requested and also wants to work with lessees to improve hunting opportunities where possible.

One of the key functions of the GAC is the establishment of Herds of Special Interest. These herds require that a herd management plan be made. At least two of the herds currently

under consideration by hunters will have CPL adjacent to them and it is likely that the animals that make up that herd will use both public conservation land and CPL. It will be difficult to manage such a herd without managing the herd in its entirety and in particular cross boundary issues.

The GAC favours farm plans as the way to enable the long-term stewardship of Crown pastoral land, providing an accessible framework by which leaseholders can consider how cross-boundary issues are managed (such as landscape scale management of game animals). Farm plans will also provide certainty of availability by securing any consents or permissions up front and identifying any conditions imposed as part of those permissions. This will allow long-term plans to be made for managing game animals and provide transparency of roles, responsibilities and monitoring of the proposed management regime.

Such plans would allow integration with any herd management plans compiled pursuant to the establishment of herds of special interest.

The Game Animal Council is aware that permissions for using game animals as an income stream on CPL attract a fee and percentage payment to the Crown. As the statutory agency that has some responsibility for these operations, it is more appropriate that this revenue should come to the GAC

#### **4.0 Role of the Game Animal Council Post Tenure Review**

The Game Animal Council has considerable expertise on game animal management and hunting both amongst Council members and within the wider hunting sector. The GAC offers its expertise and advice to the Commissioner on any aspects of access across CPL, policy formulation, consents for managing game animals or other hunting related matters.

The GAC is available to discuss or clarify any aspects of this submission.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of the Game Animal Council

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