

October 2025



We're thrilled to launch the NZDA 2025 Fundraiser Raffle, giving you the chance to win a **brand new Mitsubishi Triton GLX 2.4 Diesel + over \$9,000 of accessories**, valued at **\$61,925** – all for just **\$25 per ticket**.

This isn't just about the truck. Every ticket supports the future of recreational hunting, including our work in hunter safety training, outdoor education, and conservation across New Zealand.

Link to buy your tickets here! [NZDA Shop - Raffle Tickets](#)



Great Prizes (\$70k worth!) again this year from generous sponsors around New Zealand. Watch the Echo, your email and our Facebook page for more information. Final Open Day to measure heads and tails will be at **Fish and Game Champion Road on November 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

[NZDA Goat Competition Info Link](#) or [DOC Goat Competition Link](#)

## THIS MONTH

### EDITORIAL

Goat Competition

Range Matters - Summer Series

International Benchrest Champ Medal!

A Stalk Fifty Years in the Making

Molesworth Updates from DOC

CLUB NIGHT

Garmin Night

7 pm Weds  
29<sup>th</sup> October

Hunt & Fish  
October Deals

MEMBER BENEFITS

IMPORTANT LINKS

# Editorial

Hullo Hunters and Shooters,

There's lots happening! Please check your emails for great updates from NZDA HQ as well as The Stalk from Game Animal Council (link here [The Stalk](#) ).

Big shout out for the NZDA competition shooting reps in the international benchrest World Championships in St Louis, USA and especially local Steve Williams who took a medal (more below) and the young "next generation" shooter participating. Well done to all the team.

Obviously, the media have plenty of stories regarding Molesworth and its future, Jim Ward's departure, proposals and denials regarding tree planting and etc. NZDA are keeping closely in touch with these developments and engaging with DOC and GAC to ensure our hunting interests are recognized, maintained and hopefully enhanced. There is more information below on these matters which report ongoing commitment to managing pest goats on the Station and maintaining and improving the recreational hunting permit system.

A real saga from Eric on his "once in a lifetime" hunting trip dream finally being realized – just shows that keeping the faith and good planning pays off in the end!

Happy and Safe Hunting – **Richard Wells**



More great meat donations (109 kgs of mince, sausages and patties) to Nelson Community Foodbank – thanks Greg & Meat Solutions.



# Goat Competition Update – Patrick Savill

Alongside the national prizes ([over \\$70k up for grabs](#)) we have the good fortune of Real Meals donating 14 freeze dried meals for spot prizes, and the Committee has fronted a soft H&F Gun bag and \$65 dollar H&F voucher.

These spot prizes will be awarded as spot prizes at the open day, **Sunday 23rd of November, 11-2pm**, at the Fish and Game meeting room on Champion Road.

Go bag some goats and then bag some great prizes.



## Local Branch Prizes

# Range Matters



## Results of first Summers Series Rimfire Benchrest

### 25-26 Outdoor Summer Series

14-Sep-25	2 x		
	International		
	Targets		
	T1	T2	Total
1Warren Smith	241.07	237.05	478.12
2Graeme Smith	228.00	235.05	463.05
3John Ronaldson	228.06	221.00	449.06
4Ian Harper	216.04	215.03	431.07
5Michael Kidson	207.02	210.02	417.04
6Anne Marie Kidson	216.00	200.00	416.00
7Chris Turner	197.03	192.01	389.04

### Series Points

Warren Smith	7
Graeme Smith	6
John Ronaldson	5
Ian Harper	4
Michael Kidson	3
Anne Marie Kidson	2
Chris Turner	1



If interested in using the Range always check the calendar on our website:

[Nelson NZDA Range Info](#)

**Always** be aware of and comply with our **Ranges' Standing Orders** – they are posted at the Ranges, but you should refresh yourself from our website:

**Packers Creek – [Standing Orders](#)**

**Range Use Etiquette - [Etiquette and Golden Rules Click Here](#)**

**Murchison Community Range - [Standing Orders](#)**

## **Packers Creek Range Access Reminder:**

1. Check website for opening days and hours
2. Be at gate **before** 0900 hrs not after
3. All vehicles **must have** headlights on and conform to convoy (i.e. **follow** the duty officer in and out on Sharlands Road – these rules are set by landowner/operator and are compulsory
4. Ensure you have your membership card and hiviz & hearing protection
5. Its wet up there, avoid driving on the grass

Any competition and event queries please:

**call Graeme Smith - 03 5447138 or email [lvhvbr@gmail.com](mailto:lvhvbr@gmail.com)**

**Make Sure You Comply When Coming to the Range (and at all other times, of course)**

**Link to All Rules Here:**

**[NZDA - Te Pureke Firearms Rules - Transport and Storage](#)**

## NZDA Benchrest Team Represents New Zealand in America, Bringing Home a Medal!

Steve Williams won his medal at the 17th Benchrest World Champs, held in St Louis (USA) recently. He shot the smallest grouping in the HV-100 - an incredible effort that earned him his medal.

Four NZDA members from around NZ competed in this year's event who were among 82 competitors from 18 countries.

Elliot was the youngest ever team member and flag bearer for the opening ceremony, we look forward to watching his progress over the coming years.

You can read more about the event and the team's experience in our next competitive shooting newsletter.



Team NZ pictured with the flag, left to right: Steve Williams, Elliot Cameron, Dougall Cameron, Ian Owen.





Great work Steve!



Men in Black – looking sharp.

# A Stalk Fifty Years in the Making – by *Eric Simmons*

Since before I was old enough to hunt and pawed over hunting books of the time, one animal stood out - a Rusa deer. An elusive and secretive species from the tropics that found their home in a small area of warmer central and eastern North Island. Initially introduced from New Caledonia in 1907 by mistake under the apprehension that they were the larger relative, the Sambar deer.

Aside from private game parks, Rusa deer have a relatively small population estimated at about 1000 animals in the mid 2000's. As I have become more realistic in my older years it became quite obvious that to hunt Rusa from the South Island was going to be extremely challenging and expensive when you consider the number of trips north I would need to make just to locate an animal without getting in the position to take one.

Moving forward and a couple of stories started to merge into a plan. I was hunting with a friend in the Kaweka's for Sika when the conversation shifted to hunting Rusa and he had just returned from New Caledonia where he had shot two nice heads. New Caledonia was a regular transit point while my wife and I sailed the Pacific for a number of years and my wife had often spoke about the piles of Rusa antlers on farms as she had travelled north. Through this conversation I managed to get an introduction to a young Caledonian that was a passionate bow hunter and keen to take me for a hunt. Unfortunately, 2024 didn't work out due to civil unrest and personal illness but some late minute logistics meant the 2025 trip was on.



For those who haven't been to New Caledonia, it sits just in the tropics between Australia and New Zealand and is only a two and a half hours from Auckland. August temperatures are very comfortable ranging from 23-25celcius during the day and dropping to 14-ish over night and despite what the locals say you get showers of rain most days to break up the sunshine, all in all, it's a nice break as our winter draws to an end. The island has a complex social fabric — French-speaking locals (Caledonians), indigenous Kanaks, and a French administration often out of touch with island realities. Despite political tension, the people are welcoming, as warm as anywhere in the Pacific.





Deer on hillside, spot the thirteen deer on a typical open country hillside

We had to fly by Air Calin as Air New Zealand isn't resuming flights to New Cal until later this year and Air Calin isn't the easiest to book with, they only has one direct flight a week or you fly through Brisbane and definitely isn't cheap. Our lunchtime departure from Auckland meant that we arrived in Tontouta Airport at 3:30 (They are an hour behind us) and our accommodation was an hour and a half north, just out of the small town of La Foa so the grocery stores were closed and it was near twilight when we arrived.

After the usual stories we had an early night and a 4:00am start, a forty-minute drive south and a few back roads in the dark and we were totally disorientated. We were hunting a private farm for the next few days and not really knowing what to expect especially with the visions of 1000 deer a day that were publicised by one of the popular outfitters here. It was still dark and our new friend wanted us in position before the sun rose as the deer are quick to retreat to the scrub during the daylight hours.

In the dark it was hard to see that while we were walking through farm paddocks, we had to navigate around large cactus bushes that once the sun was up looked like a scene from a western movie in Texas. It was the end of the rut and I had always been led to believe that Rusa aren't very vocal, or at least they weren't in New Zealand. It was hard to believe the racket they made; the stags sounded like the start of a Red deer roar but finished abruptly and changed to a Sika style hee-haw gone wrong while the hinds whistled constantly and the fawns/yearling replied with their own whistles.





Cactus, the lowland country is reminiscent of something out of a western movie.

We gingerly sat down under a sprawling cactus and immediately a stag let out a roar in front of us, we could barely make him out in the dark but he was only 100 metres away, close to a hedge like scrubby area and looked like a good animal. Between the hesitation that it was so soon in the trip and the low light of the dawn breaking he slipped into the bush never to be seen again, as it turned out, it would be the largest one we saw for the trip. Soon after there was enough day light to see the lie of the land and get our eyes accustom to what these animals looked like in real life, they blend in so well to this landscape and the more you looked, the more you saw, they just seemed to materialise from where you had only minutes before looked and seen nothing. Unlike New Zealand, there were deer everywhere and it quickly became apparent that shooting a deer wasn't going to be the problem, locating the right one was.





Dave spotting, hunting is generally spot and stalk and Dave is on the look out for a stag before they return to the scrub as the sun comes up.

As a very rough ratio, for every ten hinds we saw, there was a stag and we saw well over three hundred deer for the day. The stags' antlers only grow six points and at a quick glance they are long and straight while their body is much the same size a Fallow buck. The problem comes when their bodies vary in size so much, with some being only marginally bigger than a hind while others are like small tanks and all their antler seem to remain proportionate to the bodies regardless. A small stag can deceptively look like it has huge antlers when in reality they are small and spindly and just to make it more difficult they seem to love wrapping grass and foliage in a tangled mass in their antlers which becomes very confusing as to whether they even have antlers when they are resting up. The more you looked at the antler formations the more differences you could pick up on, some hooked backed in while others remained parallel, some had a distinctive right-angle change and some were finely tapered to the tips while others had the mass continue all the way to the tip not to even get into the lengths of the tines. Obviously with so many deer there were also many non-typical variations.

The afternoon was spent sitting at around 300 metres watching the deer resting up in the network of shrubs, trees and undergrowth waiting for the sun to start setting when as if an alarm bell rang, they all got up and gravitated to a hole in the fence, in an unreal display of organisation and patience they



lined up like cows to a milking shed and filed through the fence into the waiting grasslands via some scrub. The light had now faded and it was impossible to make out the animals and our first day was over.



Deer in scrub, hunting in the waist high acacia scrub had its own challenges but there was no shortage of deer Stags are number in red, hinds in yellow.

Back at the accommodation, we sat down to a relaxing ale beside the pool and watched the deer come out on the paddocks in front under the light of the moon. The roaring and whistling continued throughout the night and was still going at our 4:00am departure time to repeat the previous day.



Deer at accommodation, relaxing beside the pool after a days hunting, just watching the deer come out of the scrub. (They are fenced out not in).



Unfortunately, our big boy didn't show, though there was no shortage of activity, just as the night turned to day, I spotted a possible animal high on the hillside, this stag was positively darker in appearance than anything else we had clearly seen. Through the spotting scope Alex confirmed that this was a shooter so we hurried to get to a location where we could possibly get a shot. After closing a couple of hundred metres it still looked good, and we could see a knoll another couple of hundred metres away that we could make it behind cover.

Crawling our way over the crest of the knoll we were now 180 metres away, it looked good but I passed up the opportunity as I was looking for something else and my mate Dave settled himself in for the shot. Just as he got behind the rifle, a Begara B14 .270" with a Hardy suppressor and bipod, the stag turned and I immediately kicked myself as I now saw that it was a great head, nice and wide with a lot of mass. The small sliver of sunlight hit the hillside and the stag immediately started moving for cover, after about 30 metres a loud hind call stopped him in his tracks, long enough for Dave to squeeze off the shot sending the 150 grain Seirra Game-king bullet high through his shoulder collapsing him on the spot before rolling down the steep hill side towards us until his antler penetrated the soil stopping his fall. Don't be fooled into thinking the island is flat! Any negative thoughts about climbing the hill again disappeared with the excitement of getting to Dave's trophy.



Dave's deer, Dave secured a nice even stag at 180 metres on Day 2, with good thick antlers.



It looked even better up close and it was a great head, Dave commented that the pressure was immense, not knowing the rifle or the animals, I guess that pressure had now shifted to me with his success. Unlike any of the deer species I have shot in New Zealand, the hair on the Rusa is awful to touch, it is waxy and more resembles porcupine quills than hair despite looking like any other hide. The hide was covered in battle scars and the battles must have been fierce as a large hole through the cheek from an encounter in a previous year which had healed but allowed you to grotesquely see his teeth and tongue through the side of it.

We dragged our prize down the slope and found a suitable tree where we butchered the animal and started salivating over the thought of fresh fillet steak for dinner.



Butchering, a large tree provided some nice shelter to process the animal

After cleaning up we proceeded to climb the hill from a different angle to take advantage of the wind. As we approached the top and settled below the skyline, we could see a mob of hinds resting in the high tussock like grasses and briar on the opposite face so we patiently glassed the area for a stag.



Our attention changed as a mob of goats made their way up the ridge towards us until they crossed our scent and confusion set in for them, they sensed that something was wrong but cautiously kept moving towards us a couple of steps at a time before seemingly debating their next move. We sat motionless wondering how long before they noticed us and bolted, nearly half an hour later they were within 15 metres of us and our patience was waning as there were more important things to chase so we moved and the goats fled in panic over the edge. Once again, we sat spotting the deer secreting themselves in the scrub until they followed the same ritual of the previous evening. We saw a few nice stags in the distance however they were very wily and knew that being first wasn't a good option.



Our attention got a little distracted as we waited to see how close a mob of goats would come to us.



Day three and a new hunting location, a local seaside reserve, with a gentle slope towards the mangroves that separated the waterways from the land covered in acacia shrubs about chest height with trails randomly winding throughout. After a few aborted approaches due to the sea breeze being a little late kicking in, we manoeuvred ourselves amongst the scrub into a position we could watch the flats below. Within ten minutes of settling ourselves in a mob of hinds and a couple of stags had surrounded us and were within twenty metres milling around us. We decided that we should back out rather than risk an accidental encounter which would blow any chance of success. As we slowly slid backwards, we could see a couple of black shapes a kilometre from us and after a quick look through the binoculars they looked promising. By the time we had extricated ourselves and relocated there was no sign of our targets, and we crept into a new hiding hole.

There were deer everywhere and by now we were becoming accustomed to seeing three hundred plus deer a day, even so they seem to appear and disappear in a moment and with that a large black beast appeared on the edge of the mangroves lumbering his way through a mob of hinds. He was considerably bigger than anything that we had seen barring the first one, the other stags just moved away as he moved, he clearly dominated this turf. At four hundred metres he was a little further away than I liked so we cautiously stalked and picked our way through the brush and deer until we found a clearing with a flat rest and a view at 250 metres to take a shot, and with that he was gone!

Ten more minutes and magically he reappeared close to where we had previously seen him but now, I couldn't get a bead on him with a bush in front of me... a little patience and he took a couple of steps forward and presented a perfect shot and the Begara did its job. The bullet hit perfectly and the stag hesitated and winced wondering what had happened before trotting a short distance and collapsing in a mud pan. This was an old stag way passed its best but the mass of the timber was huge disguising the length. It didn't matter I had my Rusa that I dreamt about fifty years earlier.

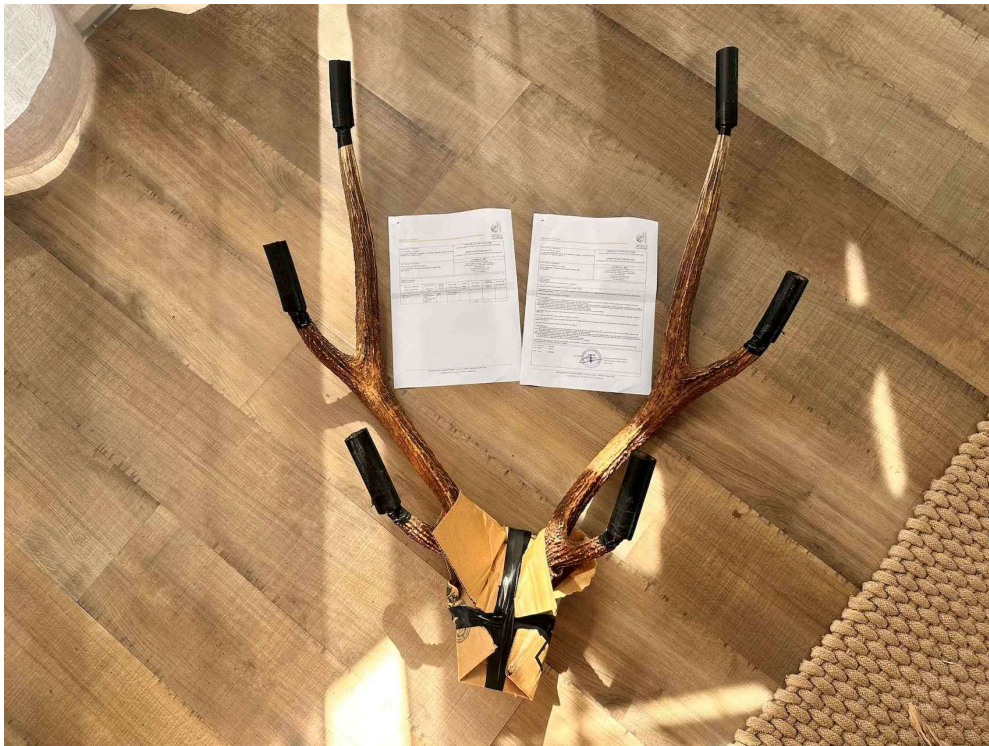


Eric and his stag - a great old animal downed at 240 m on the salt pan.





Antlers cleaned, both sets of antlers cleaned up and ready to go to Biosecurity for a vet's certificate.



Antlers ready, Antlers pack and ready to bring back to New Zealand with all the paperwork to ensure an easy entry back into New Zealand

Some closing thoughts,

- New Caledonia is a great option for a winter hunting trip but the hunting is a long way from the capital of Noumea and its tourism, my wife went hiking and there were a lot of tracks with great facilities to explore but that's not everyone's cup of tea.
- There are literally thousands of deer, they have deer fencing to keep the deer out, but there aren't a lot of trophies and you need someone that knows what they are looking at. Its worth a trip just to see how many there are.
- The locals hammer the deer, particularly the stags as there is more meat, they don't care about antler size or if they have permission to be on the property. At one point a shot went off near us when no one was supposed to be there.
- Give yourself plenty of time to work out what is good or average. Black bodies and black antlers seem to be a great indicator.
- Rusa deer meat tastes good but is exceptionally chewy, the locals tell me you have to hang it for at least five days before eating it, I don't rank it at all.
- If you bring a set of antlers back to New Zealand, get a vet certificate from Bio-security at the airport before returning to New Zealand
- It was one of the best holidays I have ever had.



You know that there are a few deer around when the road signs warn you.



# Molesworth Updates from DOC



## Rangitahi/Molesworth update from DOC

There's a bit happening with the Rangitahi/Molesworth Recreation Reserve (in South Marlborough) which may be of interest to hunters, so we've asked DOC to provide a quick update:

The Rangitahi/Molesworth restricted hunting blocks will be moving onto DOC's new online permit system in November. This is the same easy system used now for getting an open hunting permit, or for booking Rakiura Stewart Island restricted blocks. There will be more info added to DOC's webpages for these blocks in the coming weeks. Any existing block bookings will automatically transfer across to the new system.

You may have seen Rangitahi/Molesworth Recreation Reserve in the news recently. The current farming lease with Pāmu Farms of New Zealand expires in June next year and DOC will be running a [competitive allocation process](#) to determine the next farming operator. DOC's currently defining the scope of the commercial opportunity to be offered – which will involve farming but may include other opportunities like guiding or accommodation alongside it.

We know Rangitahi/Molesworth is an important area for recreational hunters, offering an amazing high country experience in a vast landscape of rugged mountains and wide river valleys. Recreational hunting will continue to be a key part of the reserve.

Through the scoping work, DOC will take a look at how hunting can best fit alongside the farming operations, and whether we can allow for better public access generally without affecting the financial viability of the farm.

If you're planning a hunt in the Molesworth, please note Bovine TB has been detected in the farming operations – more info on what that means for [pig and deer hunters is here](#).

[Molesworth Recreation Reserve hunting block: South Marlborough hunting: Marlborough](#)



# Protecting Molesworth's biodiversity: Wild goat control in Turk's Head, Marlborough



📷 Lake McRae, Molesworth looking West. Credit: Patrick Crowe

Turk's Head in Molesworth is one of Marlborough's most ecologically significant landscapes—home to rare plant species and fragile ecosystems increasingly threatened by wild goats. Since 2022, we've led targeted wild goat control operations in this area.

The goal: to protect wild goat-free zones, preserve high-value ecosystems, and conserve threatened species such as *Carmichaelia kirkii* (climbing broom), which is highly palatable to goats, and *Leptinella filiformis* (slender button daisy), which is nationally critical and vulnerable to trampling and disturbance. These efforts also align with broader control work across the Tone River and Clarence Valley.

Operations are strategically planned across three key blocks - Elliott, Lake McRae, and Gloster – with teams typically spending ten days in the field to maximise coverage and impact.



## Results at a glance:

- **2022:** 1436 goats, 3.36 goats/hour
- **2023:** 1624 goats, 2.94 goats/hour
- **2024:** 1677 goats, 2.62 goats/hour

While total goat kills have increased with greater effort, the decline in goats per hunter hour suggests a reduction in goat density—especially in Lake McRae and Gloster— because the wild goats are harder to find. The Elliott block, however, has shown no change, highlighting the need for continued focus.

This year, we'll partner with the Marlborough branch of the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association to scale up efforts. Over 30 hunters will take part in a three-day management hunt, followed by a ten-day DOC-led operation. This collaborative approach boosts capacity and strengthens community involvement in conservation.

We remain committed to sustained goat control in Turk's Head, ensuring long-term protection of Molesworth's unique biodiversity and the integrity of its iconic high-country landscapes.





# Club Night – Last

Not only was it a nice evening out, Jed (on left, immediately below) created some real interest in his 3-D printer items such as bipods etc!





# Club Night – Next..... Introduction to Garmin Technology at Hunting & Fishing

Come along and learn about the great gear available from Garmin to keep track of where you are, where you've been and stay in contact!



GPSMAP® H1/GPSMAP® H1i Plus



Montana® 710/760

NEW



eTrex®



inReach® Messenger



inReach® Mini 2



**Where & When:** Hunting and Fishing Store Nelson Junction Shopping Centre off Quarantine Road Weds 7pm 29<sup>th</sup> October

# Hunting and Fishing **HOT** October Deals



## VIP OCTOBER SPECIALS



**JETBOIL MINIMO COOKER**  
(CARBON, CAMO, OR ADVENTURE COLOURWAYS)  
WAS 429.99  
**NOW \$329.99**



**\$100  
OFF**

**HUNTING & FISHING GLOVES**  
WAS \$39.99  
**NOW \$19.99**



**50%  
OFF**

**BORE TECH RANGE**  
**GUN MAINTENANCE SUPPLIES**  
**AND CLEANING KITS**



**20%  
OFF**

**BADLANDS BINO X2 APPROACH CADDY**  
**MUD LARGE**  
WAS \$269.99  
**NOW \$199.99**



**\$70  
OFF**

**BADLANDS BINO MAG 2**  
**MUD OR APPROACH COLOURWAYS**  
WAS \$299.99  
**NOW \$259.99**



**\$40  
OFF**

VIP SPECIALS ARE ONLY AVAILABLE AT NELSON HUNTING & FISHING, NO OTHER HUNTING & FISHING BRANCHES. SPECIAL PRICING APPLIES TO CURRENT IN STORE STOCK ON A FIRST IN, FIRST SERVED BASIS. TO REDEEM DISCOUNT, PLEASE SHOW STAFF YOUR RELEVANT CLUB MEMBERSHIP CARD OR WORKPLACE ID. SPECIAL PRICING ON OFFER FROM 01/10/2025-31/10/2025

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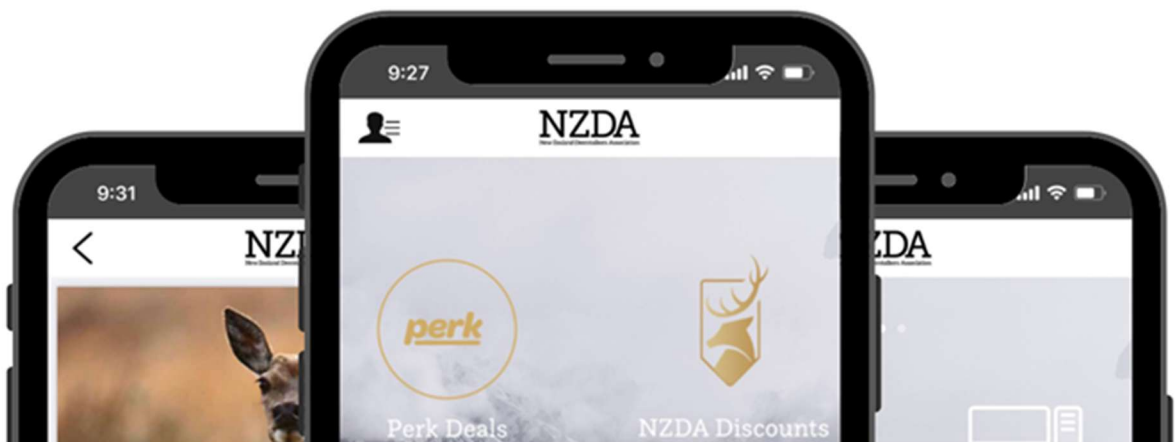


# Member Benefits – Know & Get Your Share!



## New App Update

**Download or Update the NZDA Member App to Access Your Digital Membership Card**



**Save your membership fee by using the NZDA discounts - click here:**

**[NZDA APP Discounts and More](#)**



**SUPPORTERS OF NELSON NZDA HUNTS COURSES AND KAI RESCUE [MORE INFO HERE:](#)**  
**[MEAT SOLUTIONS](#)**

# Important links

## Red Deer Lodge

- Information on costs and bookings of the Red Deer Lodge at Lake Rotoiti [Red Deer Lodge](#)
- Contact for Accom: [info@rotoitibaches.co.nz](mailto:info@rotoitibaches.co.nz)
- **Always remember to advise you are a Nelson member.**

## 2025 Branch Committee, Information & Contacts

- All details can be found on our refreshed website: [Nelson Branch Committee](#)
- Website [Nelson Branch NZDA](#)
- Facebook [Facebook Nelson NZDA](#)

## Other Key Links - **click on the orange.**

### *Advocacy and Access*

- NZDA National Association [NZDA](#)
- DOC Hunting Portal [Hunting Conservation Land](#)
- Fiordland Wapiti Foundation [Wapiti](#)
- Game Animal Council [GAC](#)
- Outdoor Access Commission [OAC](#)
- Walking Access NZ [WAMS Maps](#)
- LINZ Basemaps [MAPS Link](#)
- 141 Forest Access Information [141 Access and Permit Info](#)

### *Ballots*

- [Haast Ballot](#)
- [Wanaka Ballot](#)
- Southland [Waikaia](#) [Leithen Bush](#) [Wainakarua](#) [Catlins](#)
- Fiordland [Wapiti Foundation Ballot](#)
- Caples & Greenstone [RHA Ballot](#)

### *Firearms and Safety*

- COLFO [COLFO](#)
- NZ Firearms Safety Authority [Te Pureke](#)
- Mountain Safety Council [MSC](#)
- MSC Videos on [everything](#) safety and hunting [Watch Videos](#)
- Avalanche Advisory [Avalanche Advisory Site](#)