

February 2026



Hope all you hunters are managing to convert a few dopey spikers (see the blank look?) and yearlings (as per the pic above) into some meat for the larder.



Six deer and three pigs (courtesy of Greg and Carina) converted into mince by MeatSolutions which is happily received by Anna, at the Nelson Community Foodbank, and will go to those in need.

THIS MONTH

EDITORIAL

Arms Bill Submissions

Range Matters - Summer Series & Standing Orders

Otago Fallow Hunt

The Good Old Days (That Were Not So Good)

Trapped:

A-Maizing Results

CLUB NIGHT

Social Night at McCashins

**6.30 pm
Weds 25th
February**

MEMBER BENEFITS

IMPORTANT LINKS

Editorial

Hullo Hunters and Shooters,

Welcome back to the Echo and a Happy New Year to all! Hopefully most people have had a chance to rest, relax and get some recreation in.... despite what has been a pretty difficult period in terms of wind and rain. One benefit has been for our Range access which apart from a closure due to wind damage, a fire ban in the forest seems a fair way off yet. The information and stories below will be used to highlight some important matters for all hunters and shooters.



Firstly, the Arms Bill is under review and everybody has the right to their say on these important matters. Obviously, those who wish even stricter controls will be exercising their right, it is up to us to provide our arguments and support. So, please look at the information below from COLFO who provide a template and guidance to make it easier. Don't copy other submissions, personalize yours and speak to your real concerns, and what you support. Every submission does matter.

Over the break I did a day as Duty officer at our Packers Creek Range and one new member admitted not being familiar with the Standing Orders (I always ask before shooting starts!). So in discussion with Greg we have added a reminder about refreshing ourselves on the Standing orders for both our ranges (if you use both). This is a requirement for new members and something that everybody else should also brush up on annually. The Standing Orders are purposeful, a legal requirement and underpin everybody's safety. As a Duty Officer, it also removes a bit of the weight knowing everybody is totally familiar with how the range operates and what can and cannot be done there. No-one expects you to remember the coordinates of the range and such technical detail, but you must know the rules that support operational safety and what to do in the event of an incident. This protects the Range users, the public and the Range itself. Please have a refresh.

Eric Hall has provided another epic hunting story which leaves one more than a tad envious.....the lesson here? Get organised, plan and get out there!

Our second Eric has given a veteran's view of where we have been, what we have now and what we stand to lose if we don't play a part in herd size management. His story is on point as we struggle to get to grips with a need to focus on reducing numbers rather than cherry picking a trophy, and I thank Eric for speaking plainly about it. There were more pictures provided to support his point but those below paint the picture. While its "patchy" where deer numbers are deemed "high" vs "low" it is apparent in some areas and especially on private land (with feed) adjacent to public land (with a place to hide. NZDA and GAC are working to try and get access and deer/and other ungulate management issues into a more sensible space. See here from GAC [Hunters' Role in Game Mgt](#)

Eric's photos do raise two important issues though:

1. While more deer may be visible especially on private land, don't just hop the fence, always get landowner's permission (same with your DOC permit – don't be without one)
2. The thermal pictures highlight how these are in very common use; they are great but do raise risks when out at night noting that obviously hunting at night is illegal on public (DOC) land and tempting on private land without permission. Just don't. Sorry to sermonize but.....

Happy and Safe Hunting – **Richard Wells**

Arms Bill Submissions – Feb 16th Deadline!

Have your say or suck it up!



Click the button below or here <https://www.colfo.org/armsactconsultation> to get your Arms Bill Consultation guide.

The first page contains everything you need to make your contribution, including links to the submission page and background information.

The guide itself is long, however, it is designed so that you can easily copy it, add your own insights, and customise the text using any tools you find easy. If you do not customise this guide into different words or with your own experiences, it will not be counted as an individual submission.

If you need technical help, please email hugh@colfo.org.nz

This Consultation will shape the future of all shooting and hunting sports in New Zealand. Let's make it count.

[Arms Bill Guide .PDF Version](#)

[Arms Bill Guide DOCX Version](#)



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Range Matters – Summer Series Results

Results of the second Summer Series Rimfire Benchrest shoots in December and January.

16-Nov-25

5 x Group Targets 50mTargets

	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	Total
G Smith	0.290	0.258	0.379	0.615	0.500	0.4084
Graeme Vallance	0.376	0.676	0.319	0.519	0.328	0.4436
John Ronaldson	0.632	0.569	0.472	0.759	0.336	0.5536
S Cotton	0.634	0.550	0.637	0.387	0.604	0.5624
Ian Harper	0.675	0.548	0.634	0.484	0.663	0.6020
Anne Marie Kidson	0.789	0.522	0.624	0.809	0.312	0.6108
Michael Kidson	0.546	0.814	0.949	0.556	0.802	0.7334
D Jaffray	1.001	2.184	0.561	1.685	0.800	1.2460

18-Jan-26

5x Hunter Targets 100mTargets

	T1	T2	T3	Total
1 Chris Shelton	45	94	93	232
2 Graeme Smith	41	95.1	91	227.1
3 Jim Love	45	89.1	91	225.1
4 Graeme Vallance	46	84	94	224
5 Michael Kidson	37	93.1	89	219.1
6 Simon Cotton	32	92.1	86	210.1
7 Warren Kidson	47	86	73	206
8 John Ronaldson	43	77	85	205
9 I Harper	26	86.1	91	203.1
10 Anne Marie Kidson	37	74	92	203

**Series Points at
End of January
2026**

						Series Aggregate
Graeme Smith	6	10	9	8	9	42
Graeme Vallance		7	8	7	7	29
John Ronaldson	5	5	7	6	3	26
Simon Cotton		8	5	5	5	23
Michael Kidson	3	6	3	2	6	20
I Harper	4	3	2	4	2	15
Anne Marie Kidson	2	2	4	3	1	12
Greg Couper		11				11
David Hill		4	6			10
Chris Shelton					10	10
Carina Jackson		9				9
Jim Love					8	8
Warren Smith	7					7
Warren Kidson					4	4
C Turner	1					1
D Quick		1				1
John Mitchell			1			1
Donald Jaffray				1		1

Range Standing Orders



1 Shooting range/multi-range site (complex) name
NZDA Packers Creek Range Complex.
2 Names of individual ranges (if applicable)
200m Range, 50m Range.
3 RSOs date (date RSOs were authorised)
27 August 2024.
4 Introduction
Information about the range
The Range Complex at Packers Creek contains two ranges. A 200m Gallery Range (Gallery is not currently use) with firing Lines at 100 and 200m, as well as target lines at 100 yards, 100m, 200yd and 200m. A 50m range with firing lines at 25 and 50m, as well as a target line at 50m.

When is the last time you refreshed yourself with our Ranges' Standing Orders?

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](#)

Murchison Community Range - [Standing Orders](#)

[Friendly reminder regarding the bringing of guests to use the Packers Creek Range.](#)

You are welcome to bring along a friend/family member to be introduced to and use the Range. **But this should be on a “one-off” basis.** If your friend enjoyed it then they need to be encouraged to join our Branch and thereby properly support our Range. They should as it's a very good range! Constantly using Packers Creek Range as a non-member by “slipstreaming” is not allowed.

If intending to using the Range always check the calendar on our website (or follow our Facebook page):

[Nelson NZDA Range Info](#)

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

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 (fill in the logbook) and hiviz & hearing protection
5. When it's wet up there, avoid driving on the grass as it makes the mower's job that much harder.

Make Sure You Comply with Carriage of Firearms Law 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](#)

Any competition and event queries please:

call Graeme Smith - 03 5447138 or email lvhvbr@gmail.com



Otago Fallow Hunt – *by Eric Hall*

I have always had soft spot for the beautiful fallow deer. In the early days of my hunting trips, I use to hunt the Hackett for fallow with Warren Plum. We did manage to shoot a few fallow by a bit of luck and stealth. As we became more proficient hunters we travelled to the Greenstone and Caples valleys on numerous occasions with moderate success. The best head was a pretty fourteen pointer taken in the mid Greenstone River flats in 1993 as I walked back to the hut on our last day. The buck was out in the open lying in sun 30m out from the bush edge. The buck jumped up five metres from me and ran flat out down the flats giving me time to get off two accurate shots. Other than a chamois, that was my best trophy I had taken up to that time. Carrying the fallow trophy back to the hut I was on cloud nine. That buck still has great memories for me.

Fast forward to late April 2025, the fallow rut is in full swing. Right on time Lee arrived at Antos to pick me up. We had a chopper flight booked for 10.00am. After a quick yarn to the pilot who had flown us in for the last four years to our fallow block the Squirrel was loaded up and we were off flying high above Lake Wakatipu. A week's fine weather was the forecast so we had big expectations on seeing a lot of fallow especially bucks. Over the last four years the bucks we had taken all measured between 170DS to around 200DS. Not monsters but this fallow herd had not been influenced by the new blood lines that had been introduced to most of the fallow herds in the South Island.



By midday we had Anto's MIA all set up on the river flats we off for an evening hunt. 2hrs later we were in position above the valley floor to glass a lot of great fallow country. I shot a good buck last year after spotting it from the same position. As the evening shadows creep across the valley floor the fallow seemed to pop out of nowhere. These small deer can hide away in the tall tussock so easy. We both heard the fallow buck grunt at the same time. For ten minutes we failed to spot the buck which sounded very close. Then looking down onto the river flats a good-looking buck was walking upriver in our direction. Lee said shoot it, it's a shooter, I didn't need any encouragement. "169 metres...." was all Eric heard from Lee. A quick dial on the scope and the 270 knocked the buck over in its tracks. A great start to the trip. By the time we retrieved the head and meat and walked back to camp it was getting pretty cold but as anyone who has used a MIA with the fire it was going to be very comfortable night despite the heavy frost outside.



I had been on this hunting block for the last four years so I had got to know the terrain very well and where the fallow preferred to live. Knowing the terrain can be huge advantage and saves a lot wasted energy hunting areas that do not hold animals. Next morning we decided to try our luck downstream and stalk some truly awesome fallow country. Knowing where go through the high manuka saved us a heap of time. No longer had we got out of the manuka and into the clear when a fallow buck started croaking. It's amazing how much noise the fallow bucks can make and how far the sound can travel. Within minutes the buck stepped out of an island of native bush charging around and making a hell of noise. As Lee quickly got into a good shooting position, I ranged the buck at 320m. At the shot the buck crumpled and rolled down the hill. I congratulated Lee on a great shot. An hour later Lee arrived back after removing the head. The buck had nice palmation's and plenty of points. We reckon that it was just a bit smaller than the good trophy he shot two years ago.



Leaving the trophy under a bush we carried on down river to one our favourite glassing spots from where we had seen many fallow deer from in the past. By the time we had got back to camp that evening we had seen a lot of fallow but no bucks bigger than we had already taken.



Next morning we headed towards the end of the valley up pass where I shot my trophy on the first evening. I have hunted some magic spots over the years but the head waters of this valley would have the most picturesque and amazing hunting location I have ever hunted. Beautiful river flats, large benches above the river covered on heavy tussock with islands of native bush. Everything a hunter could wish for and good numbers of fallow that haven't been hammered by hunters and choppers. After 2hrs quietly stalking up river into the wind we got to the first big river flat. While we were now watching a number does and a couple of smaller bucks the wind was in our favour as we tried to get pass the does without spooking them. Out of the blue a massive buck croak was heard. Within seconds I located the buck through my binos standing on a tussock knob 300m away surrounded by 6 does. He was letting everyone know he was the boss fallow buck in the area. We climbed up out of the river flat onto the edge of the bench he was on. I stayed back as Lee took up the stalk. Lee had only made 100m metres when I felt the wind on the back of my neck. The stag took

off leaving the does behind no doubt it had got our wind. Lee carried on to get back an hour later emptied handed and a little frustrated. The buck looked like a good trophy. Over the knob the does were still there with not a worry in the world. Instead of carrying on up to the head of the valley we decided to hold up for a couple of hours and enjoy the warm sun and scenery and get some glassing in.

Two hours had passed when two relaxed hunters were back in full hunting mode when a buck grunted out loud from the same spot as this morning. On the knob the buck was back, we couldn't believe our eyes. The lure of the does was too strong so back he came. I said to Lee we will not be stuffing up this stalk. The wind was good so without too much being said we made our way towards the stag via a dry watercourse amongst the waste high tussock. The anticipation was very intense. I really enjoy hunting in these situations. The buck was out of sight, but his croaking could be heard clearly as we approach the knob. I commented to Lee he's moved over to the other side chasing the does. Ever so carefully we peered over the knob. Got him, don't move he's amongst the does Lee commented. The buck was croaking and making a lot of noise. A very exciting moment and what all hunters dream about. Lee quietly lined up the buck as it stood up. The buck dropped as the 270 did its thing. Two more shots rang out as two does were taken for meat.



The buck was a big body animal with good palmation's and plenty of points. By the time we had sorted out the buck and the two does it was getting late. Lee was keen to check out the head of the

main valley. Before Lee departed I warned him to be alert when crossing a long tussock strip leading down into the bush as there was a heap of buck sign there last year. No sooner had Lee crossed the tussock strip when a buck grunted. The buck was on the prowl looking for does croaking loudly as he crossed the slip just below him. An easy shot secured a really nice trophy. The walk back to camp in the fading light was easy following the very well-worn game trail beside the river. A buck croaked up on the hill side hidden in a small island of bush and we spooked many fallow on the river flats, some very close. The buck would keep for another day.



The next morning, we decided to have a sleep in and have an afternoon hunt. After a big feed of bacon and eggs and hash browns for lunch we parted company. Lee went down stream looking for a couple of does for meat and I returned upstream to see if I could get onto the buck we heard last evening. Around 6pm after a lot of glassing high up above a bush filled gut I finally spied a dark coated chamois. Through the binos I could tell it was definitely a buck with reasonable size horns. I have never been one to turn down a crack at a buck chamois. With the evening drawing to a close I had to make a move or miss out. After working out a stalk I was off crossing the river flats then a steep climb up in the tussock beside the bush edge staying out of sight. An hour later I was searching for the chamois buck but he had moved. I eventually spotted him laying down behind a big rock above a bluff at 120m. The rock had a split in it and through the binos I could see a small portion of his shoulder. I thought to myself this is going to be interesting. Setting my Leupold on to 15 power I found a good rest on a big rock. It was starting to get dark so it was now or never. At the shot the buck

slumped and wriggled off its perch and crashed down into the bush. Half an hour later after some tricky climbing I found the buck hung up in a beech tree. I was feeling pretty happy with myself as I had never shot a fallow and a chamois before on the same trip. After some quick photos and head removal I was keen to get back down onto the river flats as darkness was not far away. As I made my way back to camp I could smell the smoke from the MIA fireplace. Lee was already back preparing a good feed for tonight's dinner.

The next morning, we headed down stream looking for Mr Big but came up short. Nothing was spotted any bigger than the trophies we had already taken. Hunting in such amazing country we got back to camp feeling very happy with five good trophies and experiencing six days of fine weather. Lee confirmed our chopper pick up with his Garmin for the next morning over a cold beer and feed of back steaks that evening. We decided that we would not go back in 2026 as we had had four years of great hunting and some very memorable stalks and had taken some very nice fallow trophies.



Three weeks' time we would be in Tahr country.

The Good Old Days (That Were Not so Good)

by **Eric Simmons**

I must be getting old. Like most people of my generation, I sometimes catch myself reminiscing about the “good old days” of hunting—days that, if I’m honest, weren’t actually that good at all.

To put things into perspective, I started hunting in 1976. I completed the equivalent of today’s HUNTS course through NZDA Otago, held on a wet, miserable weekend in the Blue Mountains at the Beaumont facility. From there I left school and went straight into the Forest Service, working in Rotorua and Taupō in pest management, before moving south to Central Otago with the Agricultural Pest Destruction Council. My work placed me in some of New Zealand’s best hunting country, and I hunted hard outside of work hours whenever I could.

The reality of hunting in the late seventies and eighties, however, was far removed from the romantic notion people sometimes imagine today. It was less *hunting* and more *armed walking*. Animals were scarce. Seeing a deer was an event; shooting one was rare. By the late eighties, it wasn’t unusual for me to go two years between animals. The hours spent per deer were enormous, and by the nineties—thanks to life choices, work, and unproductive hunting opportunities—I had largely stepped away from hunting altogether.

Normally, older people talk about how much better things were “back then.” But when it comes to deer numbers in New Zealand, the opposite is true. Today, we have more deer than I have ever seen in my lifetime—and that should concern every single hunter.

To reflect on the contrast: in the late eighties, I remember the deep frustration of endless trips with nothing to show for it. Now, if I don’t see a dozen deer in a day—or fail to get one—I consider it a slow hunt. That isn’t nostalgia speaking; that’s a shifting baseline. Deer numbers are rising, deer are officially regarded as a pest, and if hunters don’t actively control those numbers, the government will.

Back in the eighties, environmental activists had little credibility. They were dismissed as a radical fringe, and no one really listened. Today, rightly or wrongly, they are organised, vocal, politically influential, and media-savvy. They seize every opportunity to push their message, and they are far better at it than we are. As hunters, we like to believe we can do the job of professionals and manage the resource ourselves—but experience tells me otherwise.

The uncomfortable truth is that most shooters are lazy. If a vehicle can’t take them close enough, or the terrain gets hard, they simply won’t go there. That doesn’t make them hunters; it makes them opportunists. And it means vast areas remain effectively untouched, while deer numbers continue to climb.

In recent years we’ve also seen a boom in high-quality hunting content—slick local YouTube channels and excellent television programmes like *NZ Hunter* and *Red Stag Timber Hunters Club*. These shows present New Zealand hunting in a glowing light: beautiful country, successful hunts, and impressive animals. I enjoy them as much as anyone. But there’s a recurring problem I can’t ignore.

The message of “leave the good young stag to mature” is repeatedly promoted—and I don’t disagree with it in principle. The counter-argument is always that “management animals” are being taken instead. Yet viewers rarely see that reality. Perhaps cull animals are taken off-camera, and I suspect many are. But to the uninitiated—and more importantly, to the anti-hunting lobby—all they see is hunters walking past deer and letting numbers grow unchecked. That does the hunting fraternity no favours and hands ammunition to spin doctors eager to prove that we can’t be trusted to manage wildlife.

The solution is simple. If a video shows a stag being left to mature, it should also show more management animals being taken—three, for argument's sake. Make it obvious. Make it normal. The audience will still be impressed, and the message will be clear: hunters are part of the solution, not the problem.

Over the Christmas period, I spent a few days hunting on the West Coast for the first time. A long-time friend told me, "Hunting on the Coast is easy—walk up any river flat and you'll get a deer. No one has to go more than 100 metres off the road." I assumed it was exaggeration. It couldn't possibly be that easy. It was.



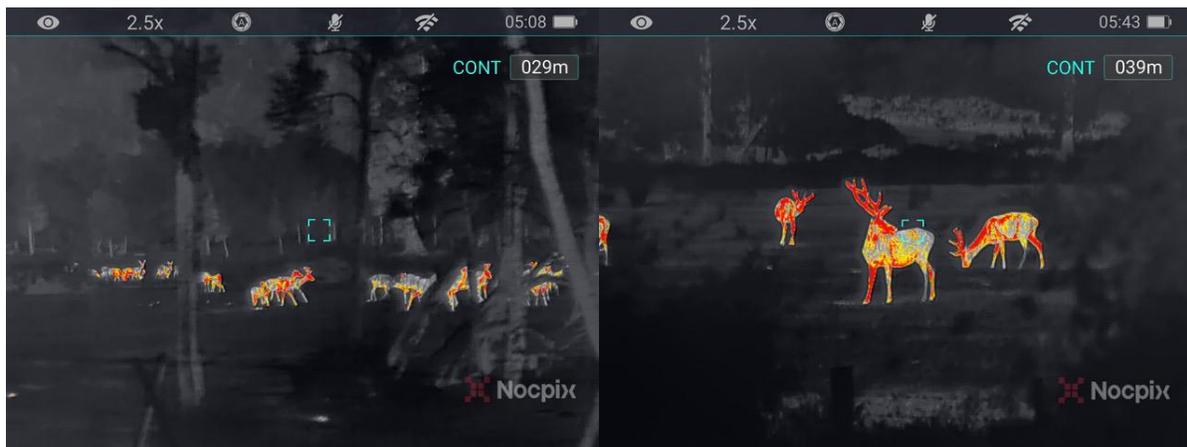
Deer on private land next to public land bush

I was only after meat animals—stags were still in velvet—so expectations were modest. But what I saw should send a shiver down the spine of any responsible hunter. The valleys were full of deer. Not just present—abundant. It was like deer farming without fences. Grass cropped down like a sheep paddock. Healthy animals everywhere.



Deer on private land and a hind for the freezer

Deer fed freely on public land and neighbouring farmland at night, then retreated to private, no-hunting land during daylight. There they stood—safe, visible from the road, blatantly advertising their existence—just waiting for the inevitable complaint from a well-meaning passer-by. When that happens, helicopters, professional cullers and poison won't be far behind. History says that they won't leave much for the recreational hunter.



I'm realistic enough to know that my hunting days are numbered. But I would hate to see future hunters forced to endure the drought of opportunity we lived through in the eighties and nineties simply because we failed to act when the numbers were there to be managed.

So, here's the message: get out hunting. It has never been easier. Take as many meat animals as you reasonably can. And if you're creating content for the public to see, promote management animals at least as strongly—if not more so—than trophies. Your viewers will be just as impressed by the numbers, and the future of hunting in New Zealand may well depend on it.

The good old days weren't so good. Let's not create bad ones for the next generation.

Trapped!



Caught in the act! Maize is a great attractant for mice and rats in a trap box which in turn attracts stoats and weasels.

December & Jan pest numbers trapped at Packers Creek Range, totals since trapping began in brackets

1 Weasel (43)

8 Rats (480)

22 Mice (601)

32 Possums (275)

1 Feral Cat (14)

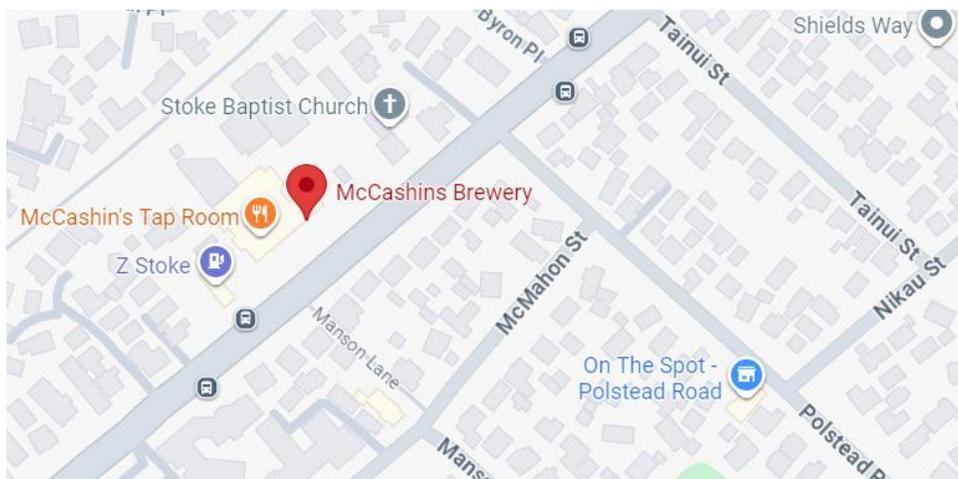
1 Hedgehog (3)

Club Night –

Catch up with your hunting mates and have pizza or fries (or both!) at McCashins



Where & When: McCashins Wednesday 6.30 pm 25th February

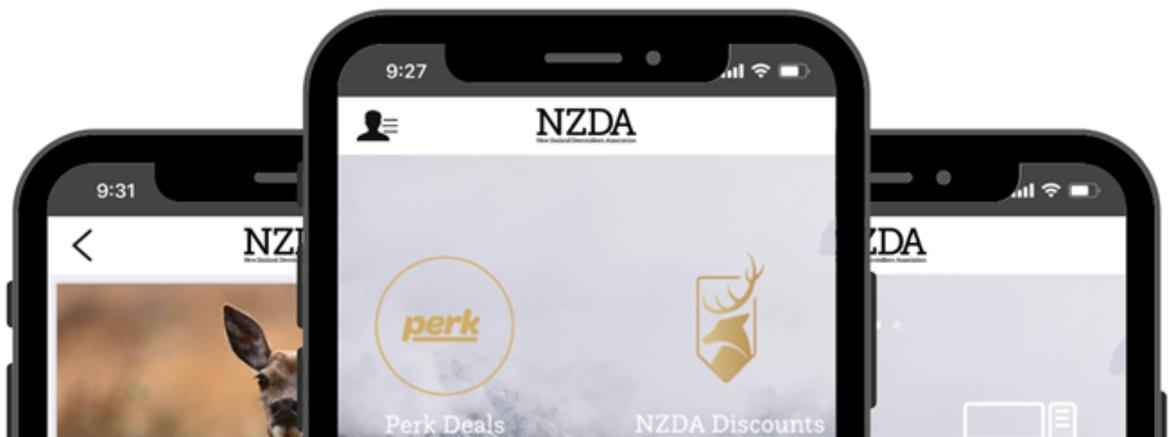


Member Benefits – Know & Get Your Share!



New App Update

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[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
- **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](#)