

1 April 2025

Tēnā koe

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation, received on 4 March 2025, in which you asked for:

I am requesting detailed information from DOC regarding Wild Animal Recovery Operations (WARO) conducted under WARO permits on public conservation land in New Zealand since 2020.

Specifically, I seek data on the number of wild animals killed or recovered, the regions and permit areas involved, and related operational details for the financial years 2019/20 through to 2023/24 (or the most recent data available up to 31 December 2024).

For this request, "wild animals" refers to species covered by WARO concessions, such as deer (all species), pigs, goats, and chamois, but excludes tahr unless explicitly included in WARO activities during this period.

To ensure a comprehensive response, I request the following information, broken down where possible by species, financial year, region, and permit area:

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982.

For your context the reporting of data is a requirement introduced in national WARO permits that were offered to approved applicants on 26 January 2024. These signed permits were returned to the Department by WARO operators progressively through February and March 2024. Prior to this Operators were only required to submit data if undertaking WARO operations in Fiordland National Park.

This is relevant to your request as for many aspects of your request the information does not exist prior to early 2024, so our response is limited to what information is available and we have noted that where applicable.

Soon the intention is to make WARO information publicly available on the Department's website, though to avoid prejudicing the commercial position of operators not all information will be able to be included.

We have used this information to complete the answers to your questions and our responses listed below.

Number of Wild Animals Killed or Recovered:

The total number of wild animals killed or recovered under WARO permits using helicopters for each financial year from 2019/20 to 2023/24 (or the latest available data). A breakdown of these totals by species (e.g., red deer, sika deer, fallow deer, pigs, goats, chamois, etc.).

The data supplied by WARO operators record the total number of animals recovered. They do not differentiate between individual deer species, so all deer are grouped together under the term 'deer'.

Species	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Deer	1,694	1,851	2,135	1,362	2,675	9,717
Feral Pig					19	19
Total	1,694	1,851	2,135	1,362	2,694	9,736

Separate counts for animals killed (left in situ) versus carcasses recovered versus live animals captured, if such distinctions are recorded.

These distinctions have not been systematically recorded. Therefore, this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(g), as the information requested is not held.

Any notes on whether these figures represent operator-reported data or DOC-verified counts (e.g., via audits or GPS tracking).

The information provided is operator reported data as required by their concession conditions.

Regions and Permit Areas:

A list of all regions and specific permit areas (e.g., conservation parks, zones within the North and South Islands) where WARO activities occurred each year from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

The number of animals killed or recovered per region/permit area, broken down by species and year.

The table below contains the list of specific permit areas where animals were reported as part of WARO activities:

Species/Permit area	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Deer	1,694	1,851	2,135	1,362	2,675	9,717
Black Peak Conservation Area					16	16
Conservation Area - Arawhata					2	2
Conservation Area - Dean Forest					2	2
Conservation Area - Mavora Lakes					29	29
Conservation Area - Pyke Forest				3	15	18
Conservation Area - Snowdon Forest					25	25
Conservation Area - Waiatoto Valley					6	6
Fiordland National Park	1,694	1,851	2,135	1,359	2,024	9,063
Hawea Conservation Park					101	101
Mount Aspiring National Park					133	133
Mount Ida Conservation Area					7	7
Mt Alta Conservation Area					24	24
Oteake Conservation Park					122	122
Ruahine Forest Park					77	77
Scenic Reserve - Mid Dome					87	87
Takitimu Conservation Area					5	5
Feral Pig					19	19
Conservation Area Killermont					2	2
Lindis Conservation Area					9	9
Ruataniwha Conservation Park					8	8
Total	1,694	1,851	2,135	1,362	2,694	9,736

Operational Details:

The number of WARO concessionaires (operators) active each year from 2019/20 to 2023/24, including a list of their names or company names if not commercially sensitive.

Attached are lists of interim national WARO concessions issued from 2018 under the 2015 land schedule/permit, which were able to roll on until the new 2023 permits or remain active, and the current 2023 permits issued in January 2024 under the 2023 land schedule. Individuals' names have been withheld for privacy reasons and permits greyed out have been cancelled since being issued. The information broken down by year is not available.

The total number of helicopter hours logged for WARO activities per year, if recorded, and a breakdown by region or permit area where possible.

Under the 2023 permit, WARO concessioners are required to submit track data, however no collation or analysis has yet been undertaken on these data. Therefore, as this information is not readily available to us, and it is not possible to obtain it without substantial collation or research, the specifics of this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f).

Any data on the number of individual WARO flights conducted annually, including average animals killed/recovered per mission, if available.

From the data submitted by WARO operators it is possible to determine that there were 78 days individual operators submitted returns from January to June 2024 (noting each day could contain multiple flights). Beyond this information no collation or analysis has been undertaken on the WARO data submitted that would answer this question in more detail. Therefore, as this information is not readily available to us, and it is not possible to obtain it without substantial collation or research, the specifics of this aspect of your request is refused under section 18(f).

A summary of monitoring or compliance measures (e.g., GPS tracking, operator reporting requirements) used by DOC to verify WARO data since 2020, including any audits or reviews conducted.

A search report on breaches in the permissions database for the specified time period provided no results. While there are occasional complaints, they are typically found not to be a breach or minor and resolved via phone or email without further action. Under the 2023 contract (conditions 23 and 25a), operators are now required to record flight paths and submit them along with their kill data. Previously, compliance checks were conducted upon request (conditions 14 and 15).

Costs and Funding:

By year, a breakdown of DOC WARO subsidies to operators.

The Department has not provided any subsidies directly to WARO operators. However, in 2024, an incentive approach was tested with meat processing companies and their elected WARO operators in a defined area of Fiordland National Park. The contractual arrangement and incentive were with the meat processor companies. This test aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of this harvest approach compared to a DOC-led search and leave approach in an adjoining block. The goal was to achieve effective conservation and social/economic benefits for Fiordland National Park while expanding the tools available for Wild Animals Management. The total incentive paid was \$29,200 for 365 incentivised deer. A memo summarising the work is attached.

The total cost to DOC of administering the WARO program (e.g., issuing permits, monitoring compliance) for each year from 2019/20 to 2023/24.

Information on the total time spent administering WARO is not available. There is a fixed fee for processing permits, which serves as a cost recovery method, with applications around 2018 charged \$1540 + GST and more recent permits charged \$2065 + GST.

The cost of the recent WARO sector engagement, and related report.

In 2023, the Department commissioned an external investigation to advise the Department of Conservation on systemic problems with Wild Animal Recovery Operations. This cost \$32,158.28 including GST (not including staff time which was not tracked).

Any revenue generated by DOC from WARO concessions (e.g., permit fees) or from the sale of recovered carcasses/materials, if applicable, per year.

When the new WARO permits were issued in 2024 the total processing fees charged to Operators was approximately \$70,420 + GST. This amount is not annual but recurs when applicants renew their permit so will occur again in 2028. There is no revenue generated for the Department from the sale of carcasses and there is no annual activity fee levied due to the public/conservation benefit.

A breakdown of funding sources for WARO-related activities (e.g. government budget, external contributions), if this can be isolated from broader pest control funding.

The 2024 WARO incentivisation was funded from the government budget allocated in Budget 22.

Additional Context:

Any reports, studies, or evaluations held by DOC since 2020 that assess the effectiveness of WARO in controlling wild animal populations, including kill/recovery rates or ecological outcomes.

Five reports (attached) have been created to evaluate the effectiveness of WARO deer removal rates and their ability to achieve ecological outcomes. These reports aim to understand the industry's drivers, removal rates over time, and the ecological benefits in alpine and forested landscapes.

Details of any significant policy changes, reviews, or updates to the WARO concession framework since 2020 (e.g., the systems analysis initiated pre-2023 or subsequent reforms).

In 2023, the Department commissioned an external investigation to advise the Department of Conservation on systemic problems with Wild Animal Recovery Operations. A copy of the Wild Animal Recovery Operations Problem statement is attached and there is a programme of work underway looking at addressing the recommendations.

Copies of the North and South Island 2015 and 2023 permit templates are attached for reference, allowing for comparison between the 2015 and 2023 WARO permits. Key changes to the National WARO Permit from the 2015 version include:

- Updates to Schedule 1 descriptions of Land and Concession Activity.
- Addition of standard Monitoring Cost wording, and revisions to general conditions in Schedule 2.
- New requirements for environmental protection and adoption of new technology have been added, along with amendments to dispute resolution and compliance monitoring.
- Concession Activity has been moved to Schedule 3, which now includes provisions for night prohibition, use of thermal imaging, and additional training requirements.
- Temporary rezoning provisions and updated information requirements for compliance and conservation management have also been introduced.
- Revised standard closure dates and place-specific restrictions are included in Schedules 4 and 5.

Any recorded complaints, incidents, or disputes related to WARO operations (e.g., conflicts with recreational hunters) and their resolution, if not withheld for privacy reasons.

A search report on breaches in the permissions database for the specified time period showed no results. Occasional complaints are typically resolved via phone or email without further action, if unsubstantiated or minor.

For clarity, this request pertains solely to WARO activities conducted under DOC-issued permits active since 2020, focusing on kill/recovery counts, regional/permit area breakdowns, and operational specifics.

I am not seeking data on recreational hunting, Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting (AATH), or DOC-led control operations outside the WARO framework unless they overlap with WARO concessions.

If certain data is unavailable (e.g., held by operators rather than DOC), please advise me of this and, where possible, redirect my request to the appropriate entity under section 14 of the OIA.

I request that the information be provided in electronic format (e.g., PDF or Excel spreadsheet) where practicable, with data presented in clear, tabulated form (e.g., by year, species, region, and permit area) to facilitate understanding.

You have asked that if certain data is unavailable or held by another agency, that we should redirect your request to the appropriate entity under section 14 of the OIA. The Department is

not aware of any other Government agencies which may hold the information to the level of detail you seek for redirection of this request.

I have decided to release the relevant parts of the documents listed above, and itemised in Schedule One below, subject to information being withheld under one or more of the following sections of the Official Information Act, as applicable:

- personal contact details of officials, under section 9(2)(a) – to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

In making my decision, I have considered the public interest considerations in section 9(1) of the Official Information Act and determined there are no public interests that outweigh the grounds for withholding.

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 (with your personal details removed) and any attachments may be published on the Department's website.

If you would like to discuss this response with us, please contact Mike Perry, Wild Animals Manager by email to mperry@doc.govt.nz

Nāku noa, nā



Ben Reddiex
Director National Programmes
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Schedule One: Documents for release

Item	Date	Document description	Decision
1	28-Nov-23	OIAD-4977 Wild Animal Recovery Operations Problem Statement 28-Nov-23	Released in part
2	Oct-24	OIAD-4977 Fiordland NP Seedling Ratio Index - Methods & Results Oct-24	Released in full
3	Sep-24	OIAD-4977 south-island-war-o-concession-permit 2023 (amended Sept 2024)	Released in full
4	2015	OIAD-4977 south-island-war-o-concession-permit 2015	Released in full
5	2023	OIAD-4977 north-island-war-o-concession-permit 2023	Released in full
6	2015	OIAD-4977 north-island-war-o-concession-permit 2015	Released in full
7	21-Jul-23	OIAD-4977 National WARO Concessions Issued 1 January 2018 to 21 July 2023	Released in part
8	Oct-24	OIAD-4977 Effects of deer control on alpine plant browse in Fiordland NP Oct-24	Released in part
9	Feb-25	OIAD-4977 Analysis of Fiordland WARO Incentivisation Trail draft Feb-25	Released in full
10	Oct-24	OIAD-4977 Summary of Fiordland WARO Trial 2023-2024 Preliminary Findings Memo Oct-24	Released in full
11	16-Jul-23	OIAD-4977 Deer recovery predictive model 16-Jul-23	Released in part
12	30-Oct-23	OIAD-4977 Effect of Fiordland deer management on browsing rates 30-Oct-23	Released in part
13	2023	OIAD-4977 2023 WARO SI Concessionaires for OIA	Released in part
14	2023	OIAD-4977 2023 WARO NI Concessionaires for OIA	Released in part