



Minister/Maker Statement of Reasons: Game Animal Council Act (Sika Herd of Special Interest Designation) Notice 2026.

This document fulfils the requirements of section 14 of the Regulatory Standards Act 2025 to briefly explain the Government’s reasons for any inconsistency with the principles of responsible regulation identified in The Department of Conservation’s Consistency Accountability Statement.

Minister/maker name and title	Hon James Meager, Minister for Hunting and Fishing
Portfolio	Hunting and Fishing
Date finalised	2 July 2026
Identification Number	Not applicable

Statement of Reasons

The Department’s assessment does not definitively demonstrate that expected benefits outweigh expected costs. This reflects the difficulty of quantifying and evaluating both tangible and intangible benefits, rather than an indication that costs are likely to exceed benefits.

Nevertheless, the designation of a herd of special interest for sika deer is expected to deliver benefits for recreational hunters who will be able to enjoy high-quality hunting experiences, as well as conservation benefits associated with more active management of the herd.

The Central North Island sika herd is unique, with its value to hunters arising from a combination of the animals’ biology and their integration into the history, economy, and community fabric of the region. As part of the only wild herd of sika deer in the Southern Hemisphere, the population represents a recreational hunting resource of both national and international significance.

The designation of a herd of special interest enables, for the first time, recreational hunters to formally lead the management of a valued resource on public conservation land. This is expected to foster increased enthusiasm and buy-in from recreational hunters, who may be more willing to contribute voluntary time to herd management when confident that their efforts benefit both their hunting interests and conservation outcomes in the area.

In terms of conservation outcomes, the herd management plan includes key objectives to support forest canopy regeneration, which can otherwise be threatened by an overabundance of sika deer

Sika deer, unlike other deer species, browse on dominant canopy tree species such as mountain beech, consuming seedlings. Unless the sika population is managed, this risks a situation where, over time, the tall forest will disappear and be replaced by low scrubland. By actively managing and reducing the sika population, sufficient seedlings will be able to grow beyond the browsing height of sika deer to restore and maintain the forest canopy.

The intended overall outcome is a smaller, healthier herd, with an improved ratio of males to females, inhabiting an environment under reduced pressure as a result of active management.

Designation of a sika herd of special interest is a top priority for the Government's Hunting and Fishing portfolio, supporting our aims to enable Kiwis to hunt and providing quality opportunities.

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James Rawiri Meager

Minister for Hunting and Fishing