

# Firearms SOP

## About this document

Disclaimer	This document has been written for Department of Conservation (DOC) staff. As a result, it includes DOC-specific terms and refers to internal documents that are only accessible to DOC staff. It is being made available to external groups and organisations to demonstrate departmental best practice. As these procedures have been prepared for the use of DOC staff, other users may require authorisation or caveats may apply. Any use by members of the public is at their own risk and DOC disclaims all liability for any risk.
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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this SOP is to explain the procedures for DOC staff working with firearms in the course of DOC work.

## 1.2 Scope

This SOP applies to any work that requires procuring, maintaining, storing, transporting, using, or disposing of any firearm or ammunition by a staff member in the course of DOC work, and some matters relating to private firearms and third party firearms when related to DOC work. It does not cover use or holding of firearms on public conservation land by the public or concessionaires.

This document is intended to ensure that any DOC work involving firearms or ammunition is performed consistently to meet current regulations and legislation and ensure staff and public safety.

The SOP will be updated as necessary to reflect any changes to the Arms Act 1983 or other legislative requirements. Any legislative requirements take precedence over the requirements in this SOP.

## 1.3 Context

Following the terrorist attack in Christchurch on 15 March 2019, the Government amended the [Arms Act 1983](#) to ban all semi-automatic firearms except those used by particular persons for tightly defined categories of use.

The Department of Conservation was granted an exemption for some of its staff, or those it engages, to continue using semi-automatic firearms for the purpose of controlling wild animal or animal pests in accordance with a specified Act. Several other categories of persons working in the wild animal and pest control space were also covered for specific activities.

As a direct result of the terrorist attack an external audit was done on the Department's firearm management systems to give assurance to Senior Managers that the system was appropriate and fit for purpose.

One of the recommendations from the audit was to create a standard operating procedure addressing all aspects of firearms and ammunition purchase, storage, site security, use and disposal.

An interim directive has been operating since the amendments to the Arms Act 1983 came into force and is now replaced by this SOP.

## 1.4 Compliance

This SOP outlines processes with some requiring approvals relating to the use of firearms. The purpose of these approvals is to confirm that practices meet high standards and have approval from relevant managers or directors. The following are a summary of the approvals in this SOP:

Request	Firearms Category	Decision maker	SOP Section
1. Temporary off-PCL storage of DOC A-category firearms	A	Manager	<a href="#">5.5</a>
2. Taking private firearms for private use on a DOC work trip	A	Manager	<a href="#">8.2</a>
3. Exchanging or selling firearms	A	Manager	<a href="#">7.5</a>
4. Use of private firearms for DOC work	A	Director	<a href="#">8.1</a>
5. Storage of private firearms, temporarily, in a DOC safe	A	Director	<a href="#">8.3</a>
6. Purchase of A-category firearms	A	Director	<a href="#">7.1.1</a>
7. Purchase of prohibited category firearms, parts, or magazines	P	<a href="#">Director National Programmes</a>	<a href="#">7.2</a>
8. Application for P-endorsement	P	<a href="#">Director National Programmes</a>	<a href="#">4.2.1</a>

Managers, or higher levels of management, may in exceptional circumstances approve variations from this SOP and are accountable for those decisions. Except in an emergency where it is not practicable to do so, legal advice should be sought before departing from this SOP. No variation may be approved where it would result in the legal requirements related to firearms not being complied with, or an increase in health and safety risk. Common sense should prevail in the case of exceptional or emergency situations. All decisions must be documented, and a copy of the decision provided to the [Director National Programmes](#).

## 1.5 Prerequisites

The relevant training, certification and authorisation processes for activities covered by this SOP are set out in the relevant sections.

## 1.6 Terms and definitions

Firearms that were made illegal by changes to the Arms Act 1983 are now called prohibited (P-category) firearms, prohibited magazines and prohibited parts, collectively known as “prohibited items”. New offences involving prohibited items carry tougher penalties than A-category firearms. There is no longer a category of firearm known as a military style semi-automatic firearm (or MSSA) and the old “E” endorsement is now obsolete.

The full legal definitions of various firearm categories and related parts are set out in the Arms Act 1983. The definitions below are a summary only.

Term	Definition
A-category firearms	<p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any rimfire bolt action, lever action or semi-automatic with a magazine of no greater than 10 rounds of ammunition</li> <li>- Any centrefire bolt action, pump-action, or lever-action with a magazine no greater than 10 rounds of ammunition</li> <li>- Any bolt action, lever-action, semi-automatic or pump-action shotgun with a magazine capacity no greater than 5 rounds of ammunition.</li> </ul> <p>For the purposes of this SOP, an airgun is classified as an A-category firearm and must meet the same requirements of an A-category firearm, unless otherwise specified. Airgun ammunition is also classified as A-category ammunition and must meet the same requirements of A-category ammunition, unless otherwise specified.</p>
Prohibited firearms	<p>Are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All semi-automatic firearms (including semi-automatic shotguns) excluding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o rimfire rifles of .22 calibre or less that has a magazine (detachable or not) that holds 10 rounds or less and does not have a lower receiver that is able to be attached to a centre-fire upper receiver so as to result in a firearm that is able to function; and</li> <li>o semi-automatic shotguns with a non-detachable tubular magazine or magazines that are capable of holding no more than 5 cartridges commensurate with that firearm’s chamber size.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Pump-action shotguns that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o are capable of being used with a detachable magazine; or</li> <li>o have a non-detachable tubular magazine or magazines capable of holding more than 5 cartridges commensurate with that firearm’s chamber size.</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Centrefire pump-action rifles that:</li> </ul>

Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ are capable of being used with a detachable magazine; or</li> <li>○ that have one or more non-detachable magazines (tubular or otherwise) that are capable of holding more than 10 cartridges commensurate with that firearm's chamber size.</li> </ul> <p>Definition of prohibited firearms is from Part 1, Section 2A of the <a href="#">Arms Act 1983</a>.</p>
Airgun	<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- any air rifle; and</li> <li>- any air pistol; and</li> <li>- any weapon from which, by the use of gas or compressed air (and not by force of explosive), any shot, bullet, missile, or other projectile can be discharged</li> </ul> <p>Definition of Airgun is from Part 1, Section 2 of the <a href="#">Arms Act 1983</a>.</p> <p>For the purposes of this SOP, an airgun is classified as an A-category firearm and must meet the same requirements of an A-category firearm, unless otherwise specified. Airgun ammunition is also classified as A-category ammunition and must meet the same requirements of A-category ammunition, unless otherwise specified.</p>
Prohibited magazines	<p>Are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shotgun magazines (whether detachable or not) capable of holding more than 5 cartridges commensurate with that shotgun's chamber size.</li> <li>- Magazines for other firearms (excluding pistols) that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Detachable magazines bigger than 10 cartridges that are capable of holding 0.22 calibre or lower rimfire cartridges.</li> <li>○ Detachable magazines bigger than 10 cartridges that are capable of being used with a semi-automatic or fully automatic firearm.</li> <li>○ Other magazines, detachable or not, that are capable of holding more than 10 cartridges.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Definition of prohibited magazines is from Part 1, Section 2B of the <a href="#">Arms Act 1983</a>.</p>
Prohibited parts	<p>Are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Any part of a prohibited firearm.</li> </ul> <p>Examples include butt, stock, silencer, sight.</p>

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Term	Definition
	<p data-bbox="466 219 1366 327">– Any component that can be applied to enable, or take significant steps towards enabling, a firearm to be fired with, or near to, semi-automatic or automatic action.</p> <p data-bbox="466 353 1318 389">Examples include gas block, gas tube, sub-calibre conversion kit.</p> <p data-bbox="466 416 1362 488">Definition of prohibited parts is from Part 1, Section 2C of the <a href="#">Arms Act 1983</a>.</p>
Fit and proper person	<p data-bbox="466 515 1347 586">A fit and proper person to possess a firearm or airgun is defined in section 24A Arms Act 1983.</p> <p data-bbox="466 613 1372 721">For the purposes of this SOP, the most relevant circumstances where a person can be deemed not a fit and proper person are summarised below (a full list can be found in section 24A of the Arms Act 1983):</p> <p data-bbox="466 748 1362 896">(a) the person has inflicted, or is inflicting, family violence against another person and that other person has grounds under the Family Violence Act 2018 to apply for a protection order in respect of that violence.</p> <p data-bbox="466 922 1372 1106">(b) the person has engaged in any conduct involving non-compliance with any requirements of— (i) this Act; or (ii) any regulations made under this Act; or (iii) any conditions to which a permit, licence, or endorsement previously issued to the person under this Act was subject.</p> <p data-bbox="466 1133 1362 1240">(c) the person shows, or has recently shown, symptoms of a mental or physical illness or injury that may adversely affect their ability to safely possess firearms.</p> <p data-bbox="466 1267 1299 1339">(d) the person abuses alcohol, or is dependent on alcohol, to an extent that affects detrimentally their judgement or behaviour.</p> <p data-bbox="466 1366 1286 1438">(e) the person uses drugs (illegal or legal) in a way that affects detrimentally their judgement or behaviour.</p>

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## 2. Overview

### 2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities	Links
Director National Programmes  <a href="#">Ben Reddiex</a> (as at 16/05/2022)	<p>The Director Operations Issues and Programmes is accountable for all A-category firearms and prohibited firearms owned by DOC. For the NZ Police to issue an endorsement for DOC staff to use prohibited firearms, they require an accountable senior manager with a valid firearms licence and P-endorsement.</p> <p>Apply to import prohibited firearms, parts or magazines either directly or via a registered dealer.</p> <p>Approve the purchase of any prohibited firearm.</p> <p>Approve any substantial modification of a prohibited firearm (including the conversion of an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm).</p> <p>Approve the disposal or surrender of a prohibited firearm.</p> <p>Approve the application by a staff member for a new P-endorsement.</p>	<p><a href="#">Section 4.2</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 7.2</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 7.2.1</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 7.3</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 7.6</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 4.2.1</a></p>
Operations or Unit Director	<p>Approve an exemption to store a prohibited firearm in a non-DOC premise.</p>	<a href="#">Section 5.5</a>
Any Director who has DOC-owned firearms in their unit e.g. Regional Operations Directors	<p>Approve the purchase of any A-category firearm for DOC purposes.</p> <p>Approve any permit to possess a prohibited item for a staff member.</p> <p>Approve the exchanging or selling of an A-category firearm.</p> <p>Approve the use of a privately owned A-category firearm for DOC purposes.</p> <p>Approve the temporary storage of an A-category private firearm in a DOC firearms safe.</p> <p>Approve the possession and use of a third-party firearm or magazine/s in an aerial operation by a staff member.</p> <p>Approve the possession and use of a DOC-owned firearm or magazine/s in an aerial operation by a third-party licence holder.</p>	<p><a href="#">Section 7.1.1</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 7.2</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 7.5</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 8.1</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 8.3</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 9.1</a></p> <p><a href="#">Section 9.2.2</a></p>

Role	Responsibilities	Links
Responsible Tier 4 Manager	Accountable for their firearms register.	<a href="#">Section 3.2.2</a>
Any Manager who has DOC-owned firearms at place or where private firearms are used for DOC work or privately on DOC work trips e.g. District Operations Managers, Biodiversity Monitoring Team Manager	Complete an annual audit of the firearms setup and district firearms register.	<a href="#">Section 3.2.2.2</a>
	Accountable for ensuring their staff have a valid and current A-category firearms licence when using DOC-owned A-category firearms.	<a href="#">Section 4.1</a>
	Accountable for ensuring their staff have a valid and current P-endorsement when using DOC-owned prohibited firearms.	<a href="#">Section 4.2</a>
	Endorse a DOC staff's P-endorsement application before it is submitted to Police, if a P-endorsement is necessary for the DOC employee's work.	<a href="#">Section 4.2.1</a>
	Managers with employees who are using firearms must take the appropriate action if they have reason to believe that an employee or contractor is not a "fit and proper" person.	<a href="#">Section 4.4.1</a> <a href="#">Section 9.2.1</a>
	Ensure firearms stored on DOC premises are in an appropriate firearms safe.	<a href="#">Section 5.1</a>
	Approve any temporary off-PCL storage of DOC-owned A-category firearms, parts, or ammunition.	<a href="#">Section 5.5</a>
	Approve the storage of a prohibited firearm in a non-DOC premise for repairs and maintenance only.	<a href="#">Section 5.5</a>
	Approve any substantial modification of an A-category firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.3</a>
	Approve the disposal or surrender of an A-category firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.6</a>
Approve any use of a private A-category firearm for private use on a DOC work trip (staff or contractor).	<a href="#">Section 8.2</a>	
District or Team Firearms Lead	Day-to-day management and maintenance of the district or team firearms register.	<a href="#">Section 3.2.2.1</a>
A nominated representative for each District or Team that has firearms e.g. Senior Ranger.	Complete an annual ammunition stocktake and annual assessment of the district's A-category firearms.	<a href="#">Section 3.2.3</a>
	Hold an A-category firearms licence if their district or team has firearms.	<a href="#">Section 4.1</a>
	Manage the 5-yearly security inspection of their district's A-category firearms safe.	<a href="#">Section 5.8</a>

Role	Responsibilities	Links
Employee responsibility	Any staff member using DOC owned A-category firearms or airguns must have a valid and current A-category firearms licence and abide by the Arms Act, Arms Regulations, and this SOP.	<a href="#">Section 4.1</a>
Any DOC employee with a valid NZ firearms licence who uses firearms during DOC work or privately on DOC work trips e.g. rangers, supervisors etc.	Any staff member using DOC-owned prohibited firearms must have a current P-endorsement (renewed every 2.5 years) to use specifically identified prohibited firearms and must abide by the Arms Act, Arms Regulations, and this SOP.	<a href="#">Section 4.2</a> <a href="#">Section 4.2.2</a>
	Notify their manager of any change in the status of their firearms licence (or their fitness to use that licence) that is relevant to their work.	<a href="#">Section 4.4.2</a>
	Purchase an (director) approved A-category firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.1.1</a>
	Purchase A-category parts and magazines for an already approved A-category firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.1.2</a>
	Purchase an (DOIP Operations) approved prohibited firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.2.1</a>
	Purchase prohibited firearm parts or magazines for a prohibited firearm that is on their P-endorsement.	<a href="#">Section 7.2.2</a>
	Purchase ammunition.	<a href="#">Section 7.4</a>
	Ensure there is an engraved serial number on any prohibited magazine that is on their P-endorsement.	<a href="#">Section 7.7</a>
	Ensure contactors (who will be using firearms) they have hired have a valid and current A-category firearms licence, appropriate endorsements, and permits to possess the specific prohibited firearm/s or magazine/s they will be using.	<a href="#">Section 9.2.1</a>
	Sight the health and safety plan of contactors they have hired who will be using firearms in DOC work.	<a href="#">Section 9.2.1</a>
Issues Manager, Operations Issues and Programmes	Accountable for the national firearms register.	<a href="#">Section 3.1.2</a>
<a href="#">Pete Thomas</a> (as at 16/05/2022)	Close (signing off) the manager's annual audit actions in Risk Manager.	<a href="#">Section 3.2.2.2</a>
	Inform the Health and Safety team of any current or new firearms registers so that the annual audit action in Risk Manager can be set up.	<a href="#">Section 3.2.2.2</a>
	Recommend to the Director Operations Issues and Programmes the purchase of any prohibited firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.2.1</a>

Role	Responsibilities	Links
	Recommend to the Director Operations Issues and Programmes any substantial modification of a prohibited firearm.	<a href="#">Section 7.3</a>
National Firearms Register Coordinator	Maintain the national firearms register and have oversight of district firearms registers.	<a href="#">Section 3.1.2</a>
Contractors  All third-party licence holders engaging in DOC work where firearms will be used.	Responsible for the use, storage, and transportation of firearms during the course of DOC work.  Ensure they have a valid and current A-category firearms licence, and appropriate endorsements for the firearm they will be using.  Responsible for having a health and safety plan for the DOC project being completed by the contractor.	<a href="#">Section 9.2.1</a>  <a href="#">Section 9.2.1</a>  <a href="#">Section 9.2.1</a>
National Property Manager	Approve the storage of private firearms in staff accommodation.	<a href="#">Section 8.6</a>

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## 3. Firearms registers

### 3.1 National register of DOC owned firearms

The national firearms register provides a national record of all the firearms and related items held by DOC at any location.

#### 3.1.1 Mandatory content

The national firearms register must record:

1. All DOC-owned A-category firearms (including firearms used for euthanasia and biopsy rifles).
2. All DOC-owned prohibited firearms and magazines.
3. All DOC-owned Airguns.
4. All DOC staff who have P-endorsements.
5. Links to all district registers.
6. Names of the Firearms Lead who is responsible for maintaining the local register for each DOC Operations District or team holding firearms.

#### 3.1.2 Responsibilities

The [Issues Manager](#) is accountable for the national firearms register. A nominated person, the National Firearms Register Coordinator, is responsible for day-to-day management and maintenance of the national firearms register.

Information on the national firearms register is confidential to DOC and is to be managed appropriately, considering both privacy and security considerations. Permissions to the register is to be limited to only the DOCCM Group List "Firearms Register Lead"; members of this group are staff where it is essential they have access to the national firearms register for their work. The presumption in the Official Information Act (OIA) is that information held in the register would be released under the OIA, however, potential risks to staff and public safety would be considered before any information was released and are likely grounds for withholding information under the OIA.

### 3.2 District and team firearms registers

DOC currently has 49 firearms registers including 46 district firearms registers and 3 team firearms registers. Every district must have a firearms register, whether they hold firearms or not. Every team (not part of a district) that holds or uses firearms (DOC-owned or private) in the course of DOC work (including using private firearms for private use on a DOC work trip) must have their own firearms register. The team firearms registers ensure that the responsibility for firearms and approvals sit with the Team Manager rather than with the Operations Manager of the district the team or team member may be temporarily or permanently based in.

### 3.2.1 Mandatory content

All district and team firearms registers must record:

1. All DOC-owned A-category firearms held within the district or team (including firearms used for euthanasia and biopsy rifles).
2. All DOC-owned prohibited firearms and prohibited magazines held within the District or team.
3. All DOC-owned Airguns held within the District or team.
4. Any private A-category firearms temporarily held within the District or team and approved for use and/or storage in the DOC firearms safe.
5. An inventory of ammunition held at each DOC office in the District.
6. A description of security at each office where firearms are stored and the name and contact details of the security company who monitors the alarm.
7. The type of firearm, magazine and ammunition safes being used.
8. Names of staff with A-category firearm licences and photographs of their firearms licence.
9. Names of staff with a P-endorsement, with all P-endorsements and permits to possess prohibited firearms and magazines uploaded to the register.
10. All approvals granted using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)).
11. The date and outcome of the most recent Police inspection of the site and a copy of the inspection confirmation email uploaded to the register (see [Section 5.8](#)).
12. An inventory of any firearm that has been bought, sold, transferred, or surrendered.

### 3.2.2 Responsibilities

The following Managers are accountable for their respective firearms registers:

1. Operations Managers
2. Any team manager that has a firearms register, including:
  - i. Biodiversity Monitoring Manager
  - ii. Programme Lead (Tahr)
  - iii. Manager Threats (Nelson)

#### 3.2.2.1 Regular maintenance

The District or Team Firearms Lead must undertake day to day management of the register by setting up a maintenance plan that has the requirements in the following process - [Undertake Firearms Compliance Check and Maintain Firearms Register](#). It is preferential that the District Firearms Lead has a comprehensive understanding of firearms. Day to day management and maintenance of the register must include:

1. Updating the register by ensuring copies of all relevant documents (e.g. purchase or sale documentation, licences, endorsement letters, firearms request form approvals, etc.) are scanned, saved in docCM and a link put into the register each time:

- i. A new A-category firearm, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine, or prohibited part is purchased or obtained.
  - ii. New staff firearms licences and prohibited firearm endorsement letters are received (all current licences and endorsements of staff who use firearms must already be stored in the firearms register).
  - iii. An A-category firearm is sold or exchanged.
  - iv. An A-category firearm, prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine or prohibited part is transferred to another District for any period longer than one week.
  - v. Any DOC-owned firearm is surrendered to Police.
  - vi. An office /workshop security system or gun safe is inspected and approved by Police, with a copy of the email approval uploaded to the register (see [Section 5.8](#)).
  - vii. An approval is granted using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)).
2. Updating staff firearm licence details when a change has occurred.
  3. Updating the inventory of ammunition held by the District.
  4. Ensuring any changes to security and/or firearm safes at each office are recorded into the register at the time any changes occur.
  5. Ensuring information on the district firearms register is confidential to DOC and is to be managed appropriately. Permissions to the register and the documents linked on it are to be limited to only (i) those that require it locally and (ii) the DOCCM Group List “Firearms Register Lead” (so the [DDG Operations](#) and [Director Operations Issues and Programmes](#) can see the district register information). Where unauthorised access may have taken place, the [Director Operations Issues and Programmes](#) is to be notified immediately.
  6. Informing the [Issues Manager](#) and National Firearms Register Coordinator whenever any firearms are purchased/exchanged/sold so that the national firearms register is updated.

District firearms registers maintenance plans will be audited and reported on to the [Issues Manager](#). Registers that are not updated according to their maintenance plans will be escalated to the relevant Manager.

### 3.2.2.2 Second level of assurance

Managers are required to complete an annual audit of the firearms setup and district firearms register. This must be set up as follows:

1. The Health and Safety team will set up an annual action in Risk Manager for each Manager that has firearms in their district or team.
2. Managers must complete the annual action in Risk Manager. This will involve checking the firearms setup’s compliance, a firearm’s inventory check, and the accuracy of the district firearms register.
3. The [Issues Manager](#) will be accountable for checking each action is completed and closing each action in Risk Manager.

Where an Operations Manager’s audit finds inaccuracies, they will

1. Identify the steps to correct the inaccuracies; and



2. Work with the [Issues Manager](#) to identify the systems problems that caused those inaccuracies and steps to address those problems. Where the findings suggest that there has been non-compliance with firearms law, the [Director Operations Issues and Programmes](#) shall be notified.

### 3.2.3 A-category firearms and ammunition tracking

Every District that has A-category firearms (including airguns) must:

1. Set up a recurring action in Risk Manager to complete an annual ammunition stocktake and update the District Firearms Register with this information.
2. Set up a recurring action in Risk Manager to complete an annual assessment of their A-category firearms to assess wear and tear, and decide to keep, surrender, or sell/exchange each firearm.

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## 4. Firearm licenses for DOC staff

### 4.1 Firearm licences for A-category firearms

All DOC staff using DOC-owned A-category firearms *must* hold a valid New Zealand A-category firearms licence issued by Police. It is the responsibility of the licence holder to ensure their A-category firearms licence is current. A-category firearms licence details must be sent to the regional DOCLearn email address and added as a skill with an expiry date. Any Manager is accountable for making sure their staff person has a valid and current A-category firearms licence when using DOC-owned firearms.

The District Firearms Lead must hold an A-category firearms licence where a district or team has firearms. It is also preferential that the District Firearms Lead has a comprehensive understanding of firearms.

### 4.2 Prohibited item endorsements and permits to possess

All DOC-owned prohibited items (firearms, magazines and parts) are owned by the Director-General on behalf of DOC (not individual staff or district offices). The [Director National Programmes](#) is responsible for the oversight of prohibited items and must hold the necessary prohibited endorsement and permit to possess. The Director-General may assign that responsibility to another person if the [Director National Programmes](#) does not hold the necessary licence and endorsement.

Any DOC staff member using DOC-owned prohibited items must hold a valid New Zealand A-category firearms licence, a prohibited firearms endorsement and a permit to possess issued by Police for specific firearms or magazines. The prohibited endorsement and permit to possess must be uploaded to the firearms register.

A prohibited endorsement is granted under Arms Act 1983 section 4A(1)(f) and is valid for 30 months from date of approval (unless earlier surrendered, suspended or revoked, or a firearms licence expires). This limits DOC employees to conducting pest control activities using prohibited firearms for DOC only. DOC staff can possess and use only the DOC-owned prohibited firearms and prohibited magazines listed in their P-endorsement and permit to possess, unless an exemption to use a contractors prohibited firearm is granted (see [section 9.1](#)).

Any Manager is accountable for making sure their staff person has a valid P-endorsement when using DOC-owned prohibited firearms. It is the responsibility of the P-endorsement holder to ensure their P-endorsement is current. The holder's firearms licence and P-endorsement letter must be saved to docCM, and a link sent to the regional DOCLearn email address. When received, the Business Support Officers must follow the Firearms certification - recording in DOCLearn process ([DOC-6089042](#)).

#### 4.2.1 Applying for a P-endorsement

When a staff member is applying for a P-endorsement, the following process must be followed:

1. The Firearms Requests Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) must be filled out by the staff member and signed by the relevant Director.
2. The completed Firearms Request Form is to be sent to the [Issues Manager](#).

3. The [Issues Manager](#) must discuss the request with the [Director National Programmes](#). The P-endorsement request must be approved by the [Director National Programmes](#) and the approval must be recorded on the Firearms Request Form.
4. Once approved, the staff member must obtain a DOC pest control endorsement application form by requesting a copy of FRM021 09/21 from [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz).
5. When received, all details requested on the form are to be completed.
6. An approval email from the District or Team manager must be attached to the DOC pest control endorsement application.
7. The application fee of \$204 (GST included) is to be paid at a local NZ Post Shop. Reimbursement payments for expenses incurred in applying for a P-endorsement must be approved by the responsible Manager.
8. The completed application, an approval email from the District or Team manager, a passport style photo and a scan of your fee receipt is to be emailed to Police at [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz).
9. Police will organise face-to-face vetting interviews of both you and your referees.
10. Once the application process has been completed and a decision made, you will be notified by email, which will include the range of conditions relating to possession and use of the firearms.
11. An application form for a Police [permit to possess](#) the appropriate prohibited firearms and magazines will also be included in the email from Police. The permit to possess must first be approved by the responsible Director before being sent to NZ Police.
12. Once the [permit to possess](#) is returned and processed, you will receive a new licence card which will show your new endorsements that have been granted.
13. The district firearms register must be updated with the new firearms licence and P-endorsement letter in Section 4 along with the P-endorsement expiry date.
14. The new firearms licence and P-endorsement letter must be saved to docCM, and a link sent to the regional DOCLearn email address. When received, the Business Support Officers must follow the Firearms certification - recording in DOCLearn process ([DOC-6089042](#)).

#### 4.2.2 P-endorsement renewals

It is the responsibility of the P-endorsement holder to ensure their P-endorsement is current. P-endorsement are renewed every 30 months by NZ Police. To renew a P-endorsement, a P-endorsement holder must follow this process:

1. Six months prior to their P-endorsement expiry date, P-endorsement holders must contact NZ Police at [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz).
2. If an A-category firearms licence expires in the next 30-month period of your P-endorsement, your A-category licence should be renewed at the same time you are renewing your P-endorsement (a P-endorsement will also expire when an A-category firearms licence expires).

3. Reimbursement payments for expenses incurred in applying for a P-endorsement must be approved by the responsible Manager. The fee to renew a prohibited endorsement is the standard endorsement fee of \$204 (as at January 2022).
4. The P-endorsement holder must save the new P-endorsement letter in docCM, add it to Section 4 of the district firearms register along with the new P-endorsement expiry date, and the docCM link must be sent to the regional DOCLearn email address. When received, the Business Support Officers must follow the Firearms certification - recording in DOCLearn process ([DOC-6089042](#)).

When renewing a P-endorsement, a new firearms licence card is NOT supplied (unless you are also renewing an A-category firearms licence at the same time). Only a new P-endorsement letter with the new expiry date is supplied. The expiry date of the P-endorsement is not printed on the firearms licence card.

#### 4.2.3 P-endorsement process when staff member leaves DOC

When a staff member with a P-endorsement leaves DOC, the following process must be followed:

1. Staff member who is leaving to notify the District Firearms Lead as soon as the decision to leave is made.
2. District Firearms Lead to notify [Issues Manager](#) and Operations Manager as early as possible.
3. [Issues Manager](#) will notify the Police endorsement team and the retention of the staff member's endorsement will be reconsidered (P-endorsements must be surrendered when a staff member leaves DOC unless an alternative is agreed with Police prior).
4. If the decision is to surrender the P-endorsement, the process in [section 4.2.4](#) must be followed.
5. If the staff member leaving DOC is the only staff member that has a P-endorsement in the district, the process in [section 4.2.6](#) must be followed.

Certain situations can apply where a DOC employee may retain their P-endorsement after leaving the Department (each situation will be considered by the [Issues Manager](#) and the Police Endorsement Team):

- a. If you can supply documentation which confirms you will be employed by DOC or another pest control entity on an ongoing basis as a contractor, consideration may be given by Police as to whether your pest control endorsement may remain valid.
- b. Surrendering your P-endorsement and applying for a new P-endorsement as a business owner/self-employed contractor allows you to seek possession and use of prohibited firearms and magazines which would remain under your direct control and security.
- c. When considering changes to your employment where you are seeking continued possession and use of prohibited firearms, contact the Police endorsement team on [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz) for advice on best actions for you to follow.

#### 4.2.4 Surrendering a P-endorsement

When a staff member surrenders their P-endorsement, the following process must be followed:

1. District Firearms Lead to notify [Issues Manager](#) and Operations Manager when a DOC employee holding a P-endorsement no longer requires their P-endorsement.

2. [Issues Manager](#) will notify the Police endorsement team and the P-endorsement will be surrendered.
3. The district firearms register Section 4 must be updated.

#### 4.2.5 Adding/Removing prohibited firearms or magazines onto a P-endorsement

Where a prohibited firearm or magazine needs to be used by a staff member it must be added to their P-endorsement. Where a prohibited firearm or magazine's use is no longer needed by a staff member it must be removed from their P-endorsement. In both instances, the following process must be followed:

1. Staff member to advise [Issues Manager](#) and Operations Manager of the firearms or magazines being added or removed from their P-endorsement.
2. [Issues Manager](#) to advise the NZ Police endorsement team of these details.
3. If firearms are being added to a P-endorsement, NZ Police will issue a permit to possess for these firearms.
4. Staff member to fill out the permit to possess application form and send to [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz). The permit to possess must first be approved by the responsible Director before being sent to NZ Police.
5. If firearms are being removed from a P-endorsement, NZ Police will remove firearms from the staff members P-endorsement.
6. The district firearms register Section 4 must be updated with the new documentation.

#### 4.2.6 No staff member has a P-endorsement within a district with prohibited firearms

If the sole P-endorsement holder within a district with prohibited firearms gives notice to leave DOC or any other situation occurs which may leave no P-endorsed licence holder in a District, the following process must be followed:

1. **District Firearms Lead to notify the [Issues Manager](#) and Operations Manager immediately.**
2. If the district's prohibited firearms are no longer needed, the [Issues Manager](#) will organise to transfer the firearms to another district.
3. If the district's prohibited firearms are still needed:
  - i. An appropriate staff member should apply for a P-endorsement immediately.
  - ii. District Firearms Lead to contact the [Issues Manager](#) to discuss firearms storage options (options can include transferring firearms temporarily to another DOC office that has a P-endorsed staff member).

### 4.3 Firearm licences for Airguns

All DOC staff using DOC-owned Airguns must hold a valid New Zealand A-category firearms licence issued by Police unless approval is given by the Operations Manager to operate an Airgun without a firearms licence.

## 4.4 Fit and proper assessment

### 4.4.1 Manager responsibilities

- a. Managers with employees who are using firearms must take the appropriate action if they have reason to believe that an employee is not a “fit and proper” person in terms of the definition in section 24A Arms Act 1983 (see [“fit and proper” definition](#)).
- b. A manager must raise any concerns around an employee’s suitability to possess firearms immediately with their Director, as well as the HR or Security team if necessary.
- c. A manager must raise any concerns about an employee who has a P-endorsement and their suitability to possess firearms immediately with the [Director National Programmes](#), as well as the HR or Security team, if necessary.
- d. Where an employee will be using firearms in their work, the manager must ensure that the employee recognises their responsibility to advise them of any change in the status of their firearms licence (e.g. their firearms licence is being reviewed or has been revoked by Police), or any circumstances in which it may no longer be appropriate for them to use their firearms licence (e.g. an accident, illness, or unlawful behaviour has occurred).
- e. Managers should have firearms risk conversations with staff at their MOR.

### 4.4.2 Employee responsibilities

- a. An employee who will be using firearms in their work must notify their manager of any change in the status of their firearms licence (or their fitness to use that licence) that is relevant to their work (e.g. their firearms licence is being reviewed or has been revoked by Police).
- b. If the employee’s circumstances change, whereby their suitability to possess or use a firearm may be called into question (e.g. an accident, illness, or unlawful behaviour has occurred), in accordance with section 24A Arms Act 1983 (see [“fit and proper” definition](#)), it is the employee’s responsibility to bring this to the attention of their supervisor or manager.

## 5. Security and Storage

### 5.1 Storage requirements for all DOC firearms at main sites

Any Manager is responsible for ensuring firearms are stored in the appropriate firearms safe on DOC premises.

- a. All main DOC premises (regional and district offices) that have firearms, parts or ammunition housed in them (including district offices, workshops, and sites with mains power) must have a monitored alarm.
- b. When not in the immediate possession of an appropriate licensed and endorsed DOC employee:
  - i. All DOC firearms, ammunition and parts must be stored in appropriate firearm safes on DOC premises in accordance with [Arms Regulation 19](#) (A-category firearms) and [Arms Regulation 28](#) (Prohibited firearms); and,
  - ii. Police guidance on firearms storage must be followed ([Firearms Storage Guidance](#))

This means that:

- A-category firearms (including airguns) must be stored in A-category safes on DOC property.
  - Prohibited firearms must be stored on DOC property in a prohibited firearms standard safe.
  - Where DOC offices have both A-category firearms and prohibited firearms, these **must be stored in separate safes** that only appropriately licensed and endorsed staff have access to.
  - Prohibited magazines and prohibited parts **must** be stored in a prohibited firearms standard safe or pistol safe **separate** to the safe in which the prohibited firearms are stored. A safe certified to hold a handgun would be suitable.
- c. Prohibited firearms and magazine safes must be in a secure room.
  - d. A-category firearms and prohibited firearms safes can be in the same secure room.
  - e. Every A and E Category safe must be secured to the building (e.g. securely bolted to the wall through two surfaces).
  - f. The building security requirements in [section 5.7](#) must be followed.

### 5.2 Firearms Safe and Restricted Access

- a. A valid P-endorsement and permit to possess must be held by any person who is allowed access to or hold combination codes, keys, or other access control to prohibited firearms safes holding prohibited firearms. **No other persons are allowed access to a safe holding prohibited firearms, magazines, or parts.**
- b. Managers requiring access to prohibited firearms and/or 'A-category' safes (e.g. to inspect them) must do so in the presence of a staff member who holds an endorsement for that category of safe (unless they hold such an endorsement themselves).



- c. Only staff with a valid A-category licence may hold keys to an A-category safe (this will include staff with P-endorsements as they must also hold an A-category licence).

### 5.3 Storage of ammunition

Ammunition, whether for A and/or P Category firearms (including airguns), may be stored in one place or in separate locations, subject to the following requirements:

- a. Ammunition must not be stored with firearms. It must be stored in a separate storage container or cabinet with a locking mechanism or padlock, or a lock box in a firearm safe cabinet with a different key stored in a different place to the key for the safe/cabinet.
- b. If ammunition is bulky and difficult to store in a container then it must be stored in a locked room or storage area on the premises.
- c. All ammunition for prohibited firearms must be stored in a separate safe inside the same room with the prohibited firearm safes, i.e., they must be stored separately from the prohibited firearms and parts. Note that a separate safe may be either a lockable steel safe or a lockable steel box or a steel cabinet bolted or otherwise securely fixed to the building.
- d. Both A-category licenced, and P-endorsed staff can access the same ammunition safe/storage as ammunition could be used in either prohibited or non-prohibited firearms.

### 5.4 Storage requirements for DOC firearms in field safes

While not a requirement, field safes may be used to store firearms while working in the field. Field safes may store firearms or ammunition and can be in bivvies, huts, or homesteads. If a field safe is used the requirements are:

- a. Field safes must only be used for temporary storage of a firearm.
- b. At these sites all practicable security steps must be taken in accordance with the Arms Act and Arms Regulations.
- c. If storing only A-category firearms, the field safe must comply with [Arms Regulation 19](#), including:
  - i. a lockable cabinet, container, or receptacle of stout construction; or
  - ii. a lockable steel and concrete strongroom; or
  - iii. a display cabinet or rack in which firearms may be immobilised and locked so that none of them may be fired.
- d. If storing prohibited firearms, the field safe must comply with [Arms Regulation 28](#) (excluding the Police firearms safe approval process which does not apply to DOC field safes), including:
  - i. locked in a steel safe or steel box or steel cabinet bolted or otherwise securely fixed to the building
- e. At remote DOC facilities without mains power (such as remote staff houses, hut warden accommodation and remote huts) and where firearms, parts or ammunition are required to be stored, a monitored alarm is not required, but any other reasonable security steps to prevent the theft of firearms, must be taken.

## 5.5 Temporary off-PCL storage of DOC firearms

Temporary off-PCL storage of DOC-owned A-category firearms (including airguns), firearms parts and ammunition may occur if approved by the responsible **Manager** who must be satisfied that all conditions relating to safety, security and tracking are met including:

- a. It being necessary for the operation.
- b. The off-PCL storage meets the Arms Act and Regulations ([Arms Regulation 19](#)).
- c. The firearm is returned to the DOC firearms safe as soon as practicable after each operation.
- d. The Manager's approval on the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) is uploaded to the district firearms register.

DOC-owned prohibited firearms cannot be stored at any non-DOC premises (except for repairs and maintenance) unless an exemption has been granted by the relevant Director. A prohibited firearm can be sent for repairs and maintenance (and stored in the non-DOC premise) if approved by the relevant Manager and the police permit to possess process has been followed. Any non-DOC prohibited firearms storage must meet the [Arms Regulation 28](#) security requirements including having been inspected and approved by a member of Police.

## 5.6 Storage during operations on public conservation land or elsewhere

When using firearms on public conservation land or other locations the security of a firearm is the sole responsibility of the firearm owner/user (DOC employee or contractor). When the securing of a firearm is required because it will not always be in the immediate possession of the user, such as when using DOC huts overnight, the following *must* be observed:

- a. Where able a bolt, or other vital part must be removed from the firearm to make it inoperable and must be retained by the firearm user on their person.
- b. Where a firearm cannot be easily made inoperable, a trigger lock or something similar must be applied, and the key retained by the firearm user on their person.
- c. The firearm shall not be put in such a place that a young child has ready access to it.
- d. The firearm user shall take reasonable steps to ensure that the ammunition is not stored in such a way that a person who obtains access to the firearm also obtains access to the ammunition.
- e. The firearm user shall take reasonable steps to ensure that any firearm in the holder's possession is secured against theft.

## 5.7 Building security requirements

The minimum building security requirement for any DOC owned **A-category firearm** is the following:

- a. All DOC owned A-category firearms must be stored on DOC property – not at a private residence, unless approved otherwise.
- b. All DOC owned A-category firearms must be stored in a secure building that is lockable and secured in accordance with police guidelines ([Firearms Storage Guidance](#)).

The minimum building security requirement for any DOC-owned **prohibited firearm** is the following:

- a. All DOC owned prohibited firearms must be stored on DOC property – not at a private residence unless an exemption has been granted by the relevant director.
- b. All DOC owned prohibited firearms must be stored in a room of stout and secure construction.
- c. The secure room must be lockable and only staff who are authorised to use firearms will have unsupervised access.
- d. The secure room must be alarmed and secured in accordance with police guidelines ([Firearms Storage Guidance](#)).
- e. Any windows or skylights associated with the secure room need to be secured with bars or an equivalent level of security.
- f. No firearm will be stored until the building security has been inspected and signed off by a member of Police.

The minimum building security requirement for any DOC office that is storing both **A-category AND prohibited firearms** is the same as for prohibited firearms storage, but in addition there will be additional security as determined by a security expert or a member of Police, such as:

- a. The building housing the safe is within a secure and lockable compound.
- b. The building has security cameras.
- c. The building alarm is monitored by a security company.

## 5.8 Firearms safe inspections

A firearms safe must be inspected by NZ Police at regular intervals:

- a. Firearm safes containing only A-cat firearms must be inspected every 5 years.
  - i. The District Firearms Lead must set up in Risk Manager a 5-yearly security inspection of the firearms safe. The District Firearms Lead must contact the District Police office to conduct the inspection.
  - ii. A security inspection email confirmation is required from the district police office on security inspection completion and must be stored in the district firearms register.
- b. Firearm safes containing prohibited firearms must be inspected every 2.5yrs.
  - i. The Police Endorsement Team will manage the 2.5 yearly security inspection of the firearms safe.
  - ii. Firearms inspection periods are linked to a single licence holder's pest control endorsement period i.e. checked every 30 months.
  - iii. After every prohibited firearms safe inspection, an email from the Police National HQ will be sent to the District Firearms Lead and must be stored in the district firearms register.

## 5.9 Site risk assessments

- a. The Security team may conduct a site risk assessment (SRA) at a DOC district office where firearms are held. The SRA will follow the guidelines in the SRAs SOP ([DOC-6609410](#)). Regarding firearms, the SRA will assess the security of the building and the room containing the firearms safe.

- b. The SRA will not assess the firearms safe compliance to the Arms Act and Arms Regulations.
- c. The SRA will not assess the firearms or ammunition held at the site.
- d. The cost of upgrading security at sites (secure rooms, alarms, and alarm monitoring) is a matter for discussion with the Property and Security Teams.

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## 6. Transportation of DOC firearms

All DOC employees responsible for transporting firearms must comply with the requirements of the Arms Act 1983 and Arms Regulations 1992 for safe transportation of firearms and ammunition.

Prohibited firearms and magazines can only be possessed (including during transportation) by staff who hold a valid P-endorsement to use the specific prohibited weapons being transported.

This means that the prohibited firearm must be in the possession and immediate control of the person licensed and endorsed to use that specific firearm at all times. **There are no exceptions to this requirement** – only the individuals licensed and endorsed to handle the specific prohibited firearm may touch it.

### 6.1 Transporting firearms in vehicles

All firearms and ammunition carried in vehicles must be transported as follows:

1. All A-category firearms must be stored when transported in vehicles in one of four ways:
  - i. By being made inoperable; or
  - ii. Fitting with a trigger lock; or
  - iii. In a locked case; or
  - iv. In a locked carry bag.
2. All prohibited firearms and ammunition must be transported in a portable hard plastic lockable firearms case within a vehicle.
3. When transporting firearms and ammunition DOC employees must ensure that:
  - a. For prohibited firearms, the portable hard firearms case must be secured to the vehicle using a wire cable and lock.
  - b. The firearm should be out of sight or obscured from view by a casual observer looking into the vehicle.
  - c. Where able a bolt, bolt group or other vital part (which should be kept on the licence holder's person or stored out of sight separately from the firearms) must be removed from the firearm to make it inoperable.
  - d. Where a firearm cannot be easily made inoperable then a trigger lock must be applied.
  - e. Firearms must not be loaded with ammunition in the magazine or the breech.
  - f. Ammunition must be stored separately from firearms in a secure container concealed from view from the outside. There must be no loose ammunition anywhere in a vehicle.
  - g. Firearms are not to be left unattended in the vehicle unless for a short period of a maximum of 60 minutes where the owner is in immediate vicinity, the vehicle locked, windows closed and keys not in vehicle. Where more than one staff person is travelling, one shall stay with the vehicle at all times.
  - h. When actively engaged in hunting or pest control, the firearm must remain in the staff member's possession or in the immediate proximity to the staff member and the above requirements (a-g) are adhered to where it is reasonable to do so.

## 6.2 Transporting firearms in boats and helicopters

All firearms and ammunition travelling in boats and helicopters must be transported as follows:

### 6.2.1 Boats (including enclosed boats, closed boats, and dinghies)

1. The boat skipper must be informed of any firearms and/or ammunition to be transported.
2. A-category and prohibited firearms: If the boat has a firearms safe installed onboard, the firearm must be stored in this firearms safe. If no firearms safe is available and the boat has a room separate to the main cabin that is able to be locked, the firearm must be stored in that room inside a soft or hard case for the duration of the trip. If no separate lockable room is available, the firearm should be stored inside a soft or hard case for the duration of the trip. In all cases, bolts and magazines are to be stored separately. NOTE – For prohibited firearms with free standing pistol grip and high mounted red dot/scope that struggle to fit into a standard soft case, you will need to have a soft case made specifically for these firearms.

### 6.2.2 Helicopters

1. The pilot must be informed of any firearms and/or ammunition to be transported.
2. A-category and prohibited firearms: The firearm must be stored inside a soft or hard case for the duration of the trip. The firearm must be stored either under the back seat with Pilot approval OR inside a pod. Bolts and magazines are to be stored separately. NOTE – For prohibited firearms with free standing pistol grip and high mounted red dot/scope that struggle to fit into a standard soft case, you will need to have a soft case made specifically for these firearms.

## 6.3 Transporting prohibited firearms and magazines between districts

Prohibited firearms and magazines must be transported with NZ Couriers using the following process:

1. Prerequisites
  - a. Only a DOC employee who has a P-endorsement can courier a prohibited firearm or magazine.
  - b. The DOC employee who is couriating the prohibited firearm or magazine must inform the Issues Manager so that NZ Police can be notified, and the firearm or magazine removed from the DOC employee's P-endorsement.
  - c. The DOC employee who is receiving the firearm or magazine must have a permit to possess the prohibited firearm or magazine.
  - d. No Ammunition is to be sent by any freight company under any circumstances.
2. Prepare firearm for transport
  - a. The firearm must have a vital part removed which renders the weapon inoperable before it can be shipped. The vital part removed from the weapon MUST be shipped separately.
  - b. All bullets in the chamber of the firearm must be removed.
  - c. Magazines must travel separately from the firearm.

- d. Package item as anonymously as possible - the packaging is to be neutral to not draw attention to the fact that the item is a firearm. This includes ensuring that there are no labels or stickers on the item identifying the item as a firearm.
  - e. A firearms case is to be over packaged/boxed to not show what it is.
  - f. Address the package in full.
  - g. Apply "Signature Required/No ATL" labels. These can be obtained from the helpdesk at [dedicated.helpdesk@nzcouriers.co.nz](mailto:dedicated.helpdesk@nzcouriers.co.nz).
3. Contact NZ Couriers to book collection
    - a. You must identify to New Zealand Couriers that you are sending a firearm(s). This is to be done through the helpdesk at [dedicated.helpdesk@nzcouriers.co.nz](mailto:dedicated.helpdesk@nzcouriers.co.nz).
    - b. The account the firearm is to be sent under is xxxxxxxx (this will be set up in early 2022). This account is set up ONLY for sending firearms. The sending of firearms parts and non-prohibited magazines is to operate under the regular NZ Courier process.
    - c. Firearms can only be picked up from and delivered to/between a DOC office (district or regional). Firearms cannot be sent to a private address.
    - d. Obtain a pre-alert process form from the helpdesk. Send the completed pre-alert process form to the helpdesk at [dedicated.helpdesk@nzcouriers.co.nz](mailto:dedicated.helpdesk@nzcouriers.co.nz).

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## 7. Purchasing or selling firearms, parts or ammunition

A full list of DOC's firearm delegations can be found at [DOC-6222204](#).

### 7.1 Purchasing A-category firearms, parts, and magazines

#### 7.1.1 A-category firearms

To purchase an A-category firearm, the following process must be followed:

1. Director approval must be granted via the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) before any A-category firearm is purchased for DOC purposes.
2. Once approved, an A-category firearm can be purchased by a DOC employee with a current firearms licence.
3. Any new A-category firearm must immediately be added to the district firearms register together with scanned copies of the relevant approval paperwork.
4. Invoices are to be processed as per DOC's [Financial Instrument of Delegations](#).

#### 7.1.2 A-category Firearm parts and magazines

1. Any DOC employee with a current firearms licence can purchase A-category firearm parts or magazines for an already approved A-category firearm.

### 7.2 Purchasing prohibited firearms, parts, and magazines

#### 7.2.1 Prohibited Firearms

When DOC purchases a prohibited firearm we will consider in consultation with NZ Police whether to surrender a prohibited firearm so that the number of prohibited firearms within DOC stays the same.

The purchase of any prohibited firearm is permitted with the recommendation of the Issues Manager and final approval of the [Director National Programmes](#). To purchase a prohibited firearm the following process must be followed:

1. Requests to purchase a prohibited firearm must be made using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)). Once approved by the responsible manager and director, the form should be sent to the [Issues Manager](#).
2. The [Issues Manager](#) must get approval from the [Director National Programmes](#).
3. If the item needs to be imported, a [permit to import](#) must be completed by the [Director National Programmes](#). The importation of any prohibited items must go through the [Issues Manager](#) who will work with an importation agent to procure the prohibited items.
4. Before DOC can store or use a prohibited firearm a [permit to possess](#) must be completed by the [Director National Programmes](#).
5. After a permit to possess is received by the [Director National Programmes](#), any staff member wanting to store or use the prohibited firearm must also apply for a [permit to possess](#). The permit to possess must first be approved by the responsible Director before being sent to NZ Police.
6. Once a permit to possess is granted for a particular staff member, that staff member can purchase the prohibited firearm.

7. Once a prohibited firearm is received, the relevant documents must be emailed immediately to the [Issues Manager](#) who must update the national firearms register.
8. Any new prohibited firearms must be added immediately to the district firearms register with scanned copies of the relevant paperwork including the purchase approval and the endorsement letters allowing the employees to use the firearm.
9. Until all steps 1-8 are completed, the firearm may not be used.
10. Any non-receipt of any items by a dealer or firearms licence holder when an incomplete order is received must be notified to the [Issues Manager](#) (who will then notify NZ Police).
11. Invoices are to be processed as per DOC's [Financial Instrument of Delegations](#).

For the full Prohibited Firearms Import and Purchase Process see [DOC-6698786](#).

### 7.2.2 Prohibited parts and magazines

It is recommended that spare parts and magazines are held within a district so that any broken parts or magazines can be easily replaced. Any DOC employee with a prohibited endorsement can purchase prohibited firearm parts or magazines for a prohibited firearm that is on their prohibited endorsement. To purchase a prohibited part or magazine the following process must be followed:

1. If the prohibited parts or magazines need to be imported an application for a [permit to import](#) must be completed by the [Director National Programmes](#). The importation of any prohibited items must go through the [Issues Manager](#) who will work with an importation agent to procure the prohibited items.
2. Before DOC can store or use a prohibited magazine a [permit to possess](#) must be completed by the [Director National Programmes](#). A permit to possess from the [Director National Programmes](#) is not needed for a prohibited part.
3. Any DOC employee wanting to use or store a prohibited magazine must complete an application for a [permit to possess](#). This permit to possess must first be approved by the responsible Director before being sent to NZ Police. A prohibited part does not require a permit to possess, however, a prohibited part may only be in possession of a person with a prohibited firearm endorsement..
4. Once a prohibited magazine is received, the relevant information must be emailed immediately to the [Issues Manager](#) who must update the national firearms register. A prohibited part does not need to be recorded on the national firearms register.
5. Any new prohibited magazines must be added immediately to the district firearms register with scanned copies of the relevant paperwork including the purchase approval and the endorsement letters allowing the employees to use the magazine. Prohibited parts do not need to be added to the district firearms register.
6. Prohibited magazines must be serialised according to the requirements in [Section 7.7](#).
7. Until all steps 1-5 are completed, the prohibited magazine may not be used.
8. Any non-receipt of prohibited parts or magazines by a dealer or firearms licence holder when an incomplete order is received must be notified to the [Issues Manager](#) (who will then notify NZ Police).
9. Invoices are to be processed as per DOC's [Financial Instrument of Delegations](#).

## 7.3 Modifying firearms

Any substantial modification of an A-category firearm must be approved by the Operations Manager and completed by a gunsmith or checked by a gunsmith. Substantial modification of a firearm includes (not exclusive to) shortening barrels, adding sound moderators, and changing butts on firearms.

Any substantial modification of an prohibited firearm (including converting an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm) must be approved by the [Director National Programmes](#) and completed by a gunsmith or checked by a gunsmith.

### 7.3.1 Converting an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm

The conversion an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm is permitted with the recommendation of the Issues Manager and final approval of the [Director National Programmes](#). To convert an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm the following process must be followed:

1. Requests to convert an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm can be made using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)). Once approved by the responsible manager and director, the form should be sent to the [Issues Manager](#).
2. The [Issues Manager](#) must get approval from the [Director National Programmes](#).
3. If a new prohibited item is required to convert the A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm, the purchase process in [section 7.2.2](#) must be followed.
4. The conversion of an A-category firearm to a prohibited firearm using a prohibited item must be preceded by the [Director National Programmes](#) applying for a [permit to possess](#).
5. After a permit to possess is received by the [Director National Programmes](#), any DOC employee wanting to use or store the converted prohibited firearm must apply for a [permit to possess](#). This permit to possess must first be approved by the responsible Director before being sent to NZ Police.
6. Any new prohibited firearms must be added immediately to the district firearms register with scanned copies of the relevant paperwork including the purchase approval and the endorsement letters allowing the employees to use the firearm.
7. Until all steps 1-6 are completed, the prohibited firearm may not be used.
8. Invoices are to be processed as per DOC's [Financial Instrument of Delegations](#).

## 7.4 Purchasing ammunition

1. Any staff member with a valid New Zealand firearms licence can purchase ammunition for DOC work.
2. Any ammunition purchased for DOC work must be recorded in the district firearms register.
3. Invoices are to be processed as per DOC's [Financial Instrument of Delegations](#).

## 7.5 Exchanging or selling firearms

To exchange or sell a firearm the following process must be followed:

1. A-category firearms may be exchanged or sold. Examples of ways to exchange or sell A-category firearms include trademe, dealers, or private sales. An A-category firearm must be sold only to a person with a valid New Zealand firearms licence.

2. Prohibited firearms must not be exchanged or sold.
3. Before exchanging or selling an A-category firearm, check with all District Firearm Leads to ensure that the firearm is not needed in another district.
4. Approval from the responsible Director using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) is required to exchange or sell an A-category firearm.
5. Where a DOC staff member wants to purchase a DOC-owned A-category firearm that is being sold, the following process must be followed:
  - i. The value of the firearm must be independently assessed by a competent and reputable gun shop, and this will be the price paid for the firearm.
  - ii. A DOC Tax invoice must be raised via a [Request to Invoice – 113501](#) signed by a Tier 4 Manager. Being a second hand good, no GST needs be added.
  - iii. The request to invoice must be forwarded to [invoices@doc.govt.nz](mailto:invoices@doc.govt.nz) to enable the Accounts Receivable team to create an invoice to send back to the purchaser of the firearm.
6. Any exchanging or selling of A-category firearms must be recorded in the district firearms register (Section 7). Registers must be updated with a “strike through” of the exchanged or sold firearm in Section 1 and a comment to refer to Section 7 where a link to the completed DOC Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) must be added.

## 7.6 Disposal or surrender of DOC firearms

To dispose or surrender a DOC firearm the following process must be followed:

1. Before disposing or selling a DOC firearm, check with all District Firearm Leads to ensure that the firearm is not needed in another district.
2. Contact the [Issues Manager](#) to arrange next steps.
3. Approval from the responsible Manager is required to dispose or surrender an A-category firearm.
4. Approval from the [Director National Programmes](#) is required to surrender a prohibited firearm.

All paperwork received from Police associated with the surrender of firearms must be scanned and uploaded into docCM, relevant key words added, and a link inserted into the relevant district firearms register. Any prohibited firearm that is surrendered must have a strike-through in the district firearms register Section 3 and be recorded in Section 7.

## 7.7 Registration and serialisation of prohibited magazines

All DOC owned prohibited magazines must be held as a registered and accountable item on a P-endorsement with a permit to possess the prohibited magazine issued by Police to a DOC employee (the [Director National Programmes](#) must also have the prohibited magazine registered on their P-endorsement). To purchase a prohibited magazine, the process in [section 7.2.2](#) must be followed.

DOC employees must physically apply a serial number to each prohibited magazine.

There is a unique code for DOC’s prohibited centrefire firearms. Magazines need to be engraved with the unique DOC code as numbered in Appendix A of your permit to possess.

Existing serialisation on the magazine can remain. The unique DOC code just needs to be added.

Police guidance on how to apply the unique DOC code can be found here:

<https://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/prohibited-magazines-marking-guide.pdf>

## 7.8 Lost prohibited magazines

If a DOC employee loses a prohibited magazine, the following process must be followed:

1. DOC employee notifies [Issues Manager](#) of lost prohibited magazine and associated details.
2. [Issues Manager](#) creates incident report.
3. The NZ Police endorsement team are notified at [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz).
4. NZ Police will take over the process and strike it off the police register and remove it from the registered staff member's P-endorsement.
5. If the DOC employee requires a replacement magazine, the process in [section 7.2.2](#) must be followed.

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## 8. Use of private firearms

### 8.1 Use of private firearms for DOC work

The responsibility and safety when using a private firearm for DOC work lies solely with the firearm user.

The carrying and use of privately owned **A-category firearm** for **DOC purposes** may occur if approved by the responsible **Director** who must be satisfied that all conditions relating to safety, security and tracking are met including:

- a. Assurance by the DOC employee that the firearm being used is in good operating condition.
- b. There is no reason to believe that the DOC employee is not a “fit and proper” person to possess a firearm.
- c. The firearm is stored in the DOC firearms safe only when required to be present for the approved DOC work (or approved in accordance with [section 8.3](#)).
- d. When transported in DOC vehicles, boats, dinghies, or helicopters all security requirements are met (see [section 6](#)).
- e. Where applicable, permission has been granted by the owner of the firearm for a staff member who is not the owner to use their firearm.
- f. The Director’s approval using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) is uploaded to the district or team’s register.

### 8.2 Private firearms for private use on a DOC work trip

The responsibility and safety when using a private firearm for private use on a DOC work trip lies solely with the firearm user.

Private A-category firearm use for private use (by staff or contractors) on a DOC work trip outside of work hours may occur if approved by the responsible **Manager** who must be satisfied that all conditions relating to safety, security and tracking are met including:

- a. Assurance by the DOC employee that the firearm being used is in good operating condition.
- b. The user holds a valid firearms licence and valid hunting permit.
- c. There is no reason to believe that the DOC employee is not a “fit and proper” person to possess a firearm.
- d. When being transported in DOC vehicles, boats, dinghies, or helicopters all security requirements are met (see [section 6](#)).
- e. The requirements of this SOP can be met in relation to the storage and security of the firearm when it is not in use (including during work hours and within overnight accommodation).
- f. Where applicable, permission has been granted by the owner of the firearm if a staff member who is not the owner is using the firearm.
- g. The Manager’s approval using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) is uploaded to the district or team’s register.

### 8.3 Temporary private A-category firearm storage in DOC firearms safe

The temporary storage of an A-category private firearm in a DOC firearms safe may occur if approved by the responsible **Director** who must be satisfied that all conditions relating to safety, security and tracking are met including:

- a. Storage is temporary and there is a defined timeframe.
- b. There are no other practicable storage options, including because the staff person lives in DOC accommodation that is unsuitable for storage.
- c. The owner holds a valid firearms licence.
- d. The firearm, owner's firearms licence, and any ammunition are listed on the district firearms register and clearly identified as "privately owned firearm" and "privately owned ammunition".
- e. The Director's approval using the Firearms Request Form ([DOC-6144389](#)) is uploaded to the district or team's register.

Suitable reasons for storing a private firearm in a DOC firearms safe may include:

- a. Where staff have approval of the relevant Director to use their privately-owned firearms for departmental business.
- b. Staff visiting or on secondment at that location.
- c. Staff living in DOC accommodation and the National Property Manager and Operations Manager have agreed that storage in the DOC firearms safe is preferable to storage in the accommodation.

#### 8.4 Private use of DOC firearms

No DOC firearms or firearm parts are to be used for private purposes.

#### 8.5 Prohibited firearms

No DOC staff member will be able to use a privately-owned prohibited firearm for private use on a DOC work trip or to do any DOC work unless consistent with [section 9.1](#).

#### 8.6 Private firearms in staff accommodation

The storage of private firearms in staff accommodation must comply with DOC's Housing Policy ([DOC-6778292](#)), including:

- a. It is the Department's policy that DOC or personally owned firearms are not permitted on Residential premises unless expressly permitted in written variation within the Residential Tenancy agreement.
- b. All firearms variations will be reviewed and approved by the National Property Manager.
- c. The National Property Manager must inform the relevant Operations Manager when they approve the holding of firearms in staff housing.
- d. The National Property Manager must ensure that the staff member receiving the approval holds the necessary licence for the firearms that are the subject of the approval.

All costs associated with installation, upkeep and removal of a firearms safe in accordance with the NZ Police [firearms storage guidelines](#) will be at the cost of the tenant.



## 9. Third party firearms

### 9.1 Third party firearm usage in aerial operations

Possession and use of a third-party firearm and magazine/s in aerial operations by a suitably endorsed DOC employee licence holder can occur:

- a. Where the DOC employee has obtained a letter of approval to have possession of the firearm from the responsible **Director** and uploaded the letter to the district firearms register; and
- b. In the case of a prohibited firearm, has applied for a permit to possess to [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz); and
- c. In the case of a prohibited firearm, has been granted, from NZ Police, a permit to possess the third party's prohibited firearm and magazine/s, prior to taking possession and using the prohibited items; and
- d. In the case of a prohibited firearm, the permit to process and updated P-endorsement is uploaded to the district firearms register; and
- e. Where the DOC employee has sufficient knowledge and experience levels to safely use the particular firearm; and
- f. Where any firearm will continue to be stored overnight when not in use in the third party's Police-approved security arrangement and location.

### 9.2 Contractors

#### 9.2.1 Responsibilities

- a. The responsibility to comply with the Arms Act including the use, storage, or transportation of firearms lies solely with the contractor.
- b. Staff employing contractors must ensure that the contractor has a valid and current A-category firearms licence, and appropriate endorsements, and permits to possess the specific prohibited firearm/s or magazine/s they will be using.
- c. Managers employing contractors must take appropriate action if they have reason to believe the contractor is not 'fit and proper' to possess firearms, in accordance with Section 24A Arms Act 1983 (see ["fit and proper" definition](#)).
- d. Staff employing contractors must review and accept the contractor's health and safety plan for the DOC project being completed by the contractor.
- e. Contractors are responsible for providing their own firearms and must not use DOC-owned firearms unless the circumstances in [section 9.2.2](#) are met.
- f. Private A-category firearm use for private use on a DOC work trip outside of work hours may occur if approved by the responsible DOC **Manager** who must be satisfied that all conditions in [Section 8.2](#) are met.

## 9.2.2 Aerial operations and DOC-owned firearms usage

Possession and use of a DOC-owned firearm or magazine/s for aerial operations by a third-party licence holder can occur:

- a. Where the third-party licence holder has obtained approval to have possession of the DOC-owned firearm from the responsible **Director** and the letter is uploaded to the district firearms register; and
- b. In the case of a prohibited firearm, has applied for a permit to possess to [prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz](mailto:prohibitedfirearmendorsement@police.govt.nz); and
- c. In the case of a prohibited firearm, has been granted a permit to possess the DOC-owned particular prohibited firearm and magazine/s from NZ Police, prior to taking possession and using the prohibited items; and
- d. In the case of a prohibited firearm, the permit to process and updated P-endorsement is uploaded to the district firearms register; and
- e. Where the third-party licence holder has sufficient knowledge and experience levels to safely use the firearm; and
- f. Where the prohibited items will continue to be stored overnight when not in use, in the DOC-owned Police-approved security arrangement and location.

## 9.3 Warranted Officers firearms seizure

### 9.3.1 Firearms seizure process

- a. Any seizure of firearms by a Warranted Officer must comply with the Arms Act unless consistent with 9.3.1c.
- b. A Warranted Officer does not need to be a firearms licence holder to effect power of seizure.**
- c. During transportation of a seized firearm, if the Arms Act cannot be complied with, at a minimum a firearm must be out of sight in a made-safe state.
- d. If it is known that firearms are likely to be present and possibly subject to seizure, Police advice must be sought, along with planning for safe transport security/storage.

### 9.3.2 Firearms storage process

- a. Upon seizure of a firearm, the Warranted Officer must deliver the firearm to a DOC firearms safe or to the local police station for secure storage under evidence protocols.
- b. A seized firearm must be clearly labelled as a “piece of evidence”, as well as being labelled with the details, date, time, and place of seizure. For general advice on *Handling Physical Exhibits and Evidence*, refer [DOC-6711452](#).
- c. A seized firearm must be kept in the secure firearms safe until the case is resolved or the firearm is needed as evidence, or it is transferred to the Police.
- d. A seized prohibited firearm must be kept in an prohibited firearms safe. If the local district does not have a prohibited firearms safe, the firearm must be transferred to the local Police station or to a district with a prohibited firearms safe.

- e. Any firearm seized and stored in a DOC firearms safe must be added to the district firearms register.
- f. The [Issues Manager](#) must be notified of any firearms seizure that results in a firearm being stored in a DOC firearms safe. The [Issues Manager](#) must add the firearm to the national firearms register.

## 9.4 Volunteers

### 9.4.1 Responsibilities

- a. Where use of a firearm by volunteers is authorised via a Community Agreement, the responsibility to comply with the Arms Act including the use, storage, or transportation of firearms lies solely with the volunteer.
- b. Where work involving volunteers is managed by DOC staff (e.g. Volunteer Agreement), the responsibility to comply with the Arms Act including the use, storage, or transportation of firearms lies solely with DOC.
- c. Staff engaging volunteers in DOC work must ensure that the volunteer has a valid and current A-category firearms licence, and appropriate endorsements for the firearm they will be using.
- d. Managers engaging volunteers in DOC work must take appropriate action if they have reason to believe the volunteer is not 'fit and proper' to possess firearms, in accordance with Section 24A Arms Act 1983 (see ["fit and proper" definition](#)).
- e. Staff engaging volunteers in DOC work must provide the volunteer with the DOC health and safety plan, complete JSA and toolbox talk – this includes ensuring the volunteers have the appropriate equipment to undertake the task.
- f. Volunteers are responsible for providing their own firearms and must not use DOC-owned firearms unless the circumstances in [section 9.2.2](#) are met.

## 10. Firearms use in the field

### 10.1 Hunter safety

1. All requirements in the Hunting Safety Technical document ([DOCDM-751751](#)) must be followed by DOC employees or contractors when hunting including:
  - i. Hazard management plans required for all hunting activities.
  - ii. Wearing of high-vis vests or jerkins, (or patch back and front), colour “Blaze Orange” or “Nato Blue”.
  - iii. Briefing of all hunters prior to field trips (JSA, hazards, identifying target, knowing where other party members are, PPE, emergency procedures, etc.).
2. All requirements in the Arms Act, Arms Regulations and Arms Code 2013 must be followed including:
  - a. Rule 1: Treat every firearm as loaded.
  - b. Rule 2: Always point firearms in a safe direction.
  - c. Rule 3: Load a firearm only when ready to fire.
  - d. Rule 4: Identify your target beyond all doubt.
  - e. Rule 5: Check your firing zone.
  - f. Rule 6: Store firearms and ammunition safely.
  - g. Rule 7: Avoid alcohol and drugs when handling firearms.
3. All requirements in the Hearing Protection Strategy for Firearm Users while Hunting ([DOCDM-295938](#)) must be followed including:
  - a. Appropriate hearing protection is mandatory at all times when using a firearm.
  - b. Attaching suppressors to all firearms is strongly recommended and is mandatory where hearing protection is not used (apart from .22 calibre firearms)
  - c. Persons in the vicinity of the shooter should also wear appropriate hearing protection.
  - d. Baseline audiometry will be undertaken as follows:
    - i. As part of a pre-employment check, or prior to undertaking any hunting duties following initial recruitment.
    - ii. Prior to beginning hunting duties if transferring from one district to another.
    - iii. Regular audiometry testing must be undertaken. The regularity of testing is to be based on the frequency of firearm use and the type of firearms used.

### 10.2 Sighting-in firearms

The sighting-in of any firearm, irrespective of firearm type, should be done on a shooting range where possible. Where sighting-in on a shooting range is not possible, sighting-in on suitable land is allowed if it can be carried out safely and meets the following requirements:

1. It is done by an individual or a small group of individuals (but not a club); and
2. They are doing sighting-in at that location as a one-off or occasional activity.
3. The public (or a club) do not access and use that area for sighting-in (for example, there are no established targets, or other indications that the area is used for shooting activities).

### 10.3 Marine mammal incident response

When using firearms as part of a Marine Mammal response (euthanasia), all requirements in the [Marine Mammal Response and Readiness SOP](#) and the [Guidelines for Attending Marine Mammal Strandings](#) must be followed, including:

1. The Police should always be informed before discharging a firearm in, or close to, a built-up area.
2. The appropriate rifle calibre and ammunition for different types of Marine Mammals must be used, as specified in the [Guidelines for Attending Marine Mammal Strandings](#).

### 10.4 Remote biopsy of cetaceans

The PAXARMS biopsy rifle is a firearm, but the PAXARMS biopsy system is exempt from some sections of the Arms Act and a Firearms License is not required to use it. When using a PAXARMS biopsy rifle for a remote biopsy of cetaceans, all requirements in the [SOP for Remote Biopsy of Cetaceans](#) must be followed, including:

1. PAXARM rifles must be included in the relevant firearms register.
2. The PAXARMS rifle should still be treated as if it were a firearm and stored in a locked box or cabinet, however a firearms cabinet is not required.
3. The PAXARM biopsy rifle must be handled with the same care as a firearm and operators must be familiar with the [Seven Firearms Safety Rules](#).
4. If using a PAXARMS biopsy rifle close to an urban environment with a high degree of public visibility, then contact Police Communication –Tel 09 571 2800 (who will provide an event number).

## 11. Shooting Ranges

### 11.1 \*\*PLACEHOLDER – Changes to Regulations for shooting ranges on PCL\*\*

Legislation for shooting ranges will be enacted in June 2022. DOC will have 12 months to be compliant with the legislation. Regulations and a Shooting Range Manual are currently being drafted to support the implementation of the legislation. When the requirements for shooting ranges on Public Conservation Land become clearer, this section will be updated. The key part of the legislation is that Shooting Ranges must be certified.

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## 12. Related documents

### Internal Firearms Documents

- DOC Firearms Management Review (Burgess report) April 2019 - [DOC-6030371](#)
- Firearms Request Form [DOC-6144389](#)
- Delegations [DOC-6222204](#)
- National Firearms Register - [DOC-5950333](#)
- Task Assignment – [Undertake Firearms Compliance Check and Maintain Firearms Register](#)
- Prohibited Firearms Import and Purchase Process [DOC-6698786](#)
- Business Support Officer process for recording P-endorsements in DOCLearn [DOC-6089042](#)

### Internal Related Documents

- Site Risk Assessment SOP [DOC-6609410](#)
- Housing Policy [DOC-6778292](#)
- [Financial Instrument of Delegations](#)
- Hunting Safety Technical document [DOCDM-751751](#)
- Hearing Protection Strategy for Firearm Users while Hunting [DOCDM-295938](#)
- [Marine Mammal Response and Readiness SOP](#)
- [Guidelines for Attending Marine Mammal Strandings](#)

### External Documents

- NZ Police form to possess a prohibited firearm or magazine - [permit to possess](#)
- NZ Police form to import a prohibited firearm or magazine - [permit to import](#)
- Firearms Storage Guidance - <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/firearms-and-safety/firearms-safety/firearms-storage>
- [Arms Code 2013](#)

### Legislation

- [Arms Act 1983](#)
- [Arms Regulations 1992](#)

### 13. Document history

Date	Details	Document ID and version	Amended by
14/06/2019	DRAFT first version	doc-5960893 revision 1	Sarah McRae
24/11/2021	DRAFT second version	doc-5960893 revision 2	Michael Sparrow

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## 14. Documents replaced

This SOP replaces the following documents which have been revoked:

- Interim Directive [DOC-6061787](#)

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DOC



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# Firearm and ammunition supplement to the Aerial Hunting SOP (docCM-6262530)

Version: April 2022  
docCM-6989561

Wild Animal Management Team  
Department of Conservation

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DISCLAIMER AND RESTRICTION OF USE: This document has not been externally peer-reviewed or approved for formal publication. The Department of Conservation takes no responsibility for the accuracy of the document and the opinions expressed therein. The document is intended for internal use within the Department of Conservation.

This document was first released in April 2022. Subsequent amendments are noted in this table:

[date] [what was changed]	[date] [what was changed]	[date] [what was changed]

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide best practice and reference information about the use of firearms and ammunition for helicopter aerial hunting. It is a supplementary document to the Aerial Hunting SOP ([docCM-6262530](#)), and to any individual best practice document for ungulate control.

The WAM team thanks and credits Norm MacDonald for contributing to the content in this supplement.

Diagram credits for Figures 1 and 2 are to Target Dynamics NZ Ltd [targetdynamics.co.nz](http://targetdynamics.co.nz)

## **Firearms SOP** (as per *Aerial Hunting SOP, Section 3.2*)

Since the 2020 release of the Aerial Hunting SOP, DOC's Interim Firearms Directive has been revoked and replaced by the Firearms SOP (docCM-5960893).

## Firearm and optic selection and preparation

The firearm must be accurate, be rapid fire and have adequate killing power. The hunter also needs to have a comprehensive awareness of common malfunctions – e.g. jams – and know how to resolve these.

**Shotgun:** A 12-gauge semi-automatic shotgun with a large magazine capacity is recommended. Shotguns must only be used within their effective killing range, see Table 2. Shotguns can be used with just the bead on the barrel or a ventilated rib bead. The hunter may wish to use an open sight or red-dot optic however, it is important to ensure that it has a good quality mount and that the mounting base is securely attached to the receiver.

**Choke:** For ungulate control, generally a half/modified-choke is considered appropriate. Tighter chokes risk barrel damage, particularly with non-lead ammunition. The inside bore constriction at the muzzle end of a shotgun's barrel is known as the 'choke'. When a shotshell is fired, shot travels down the bore, exits the muzzle, and begins to spread out. Just as a nozzle on the end of a garden hose controls the spray of water, the choke controls the spread of shot, making it narrower or wider.

**Pattern:** It is essential to 'pattern' a shotgun to select the appropriate choke for any ammunition (lead or non-lead) used, to optimise the maximum effective range. The rule of thumb is that buckshot will pattern better with more open chokes (i.e. half/modified choke) due to less pellet deformation (deformed pellets have different aerodynamics which can cause pellets to take a more random path) but this can vary between individual shotguns and ammunition brands. Several manufacturers make a dedicated buckshot choke that can extend the effective range.

**Rifle:** The most common choice of rifle for aerial hunting are semiautomatic rifles with large-capacity detachable magazines. These are generally fitted with either a red-dot-optic or a scope with crosshairs and/or a luminous dot recticle. Common calibres used for aerial shooting are: .223 Rem (5.56x45), 300 blackout and .308 Win (7.62x51) calibre.

### *Sight-in the firearm*

Sight-in or check all firearms (shotgun or rifle) before any operation. This ensures the centre of the pattern coincides with the point of aim.

**Note:** Because of the very straight stock design of an AR10 or AR15, the scope or red-dot sight is mounted approximately 1.75 inch above the centre of the bore. When an AR is sighted-in to hit the centre of the target at 50 m, the bullet will be below the line of sight at short range, hit the centre of the target at 50 m, then continue to rise in an arc above the line of sight until the bullet loses energy and falls back across the line of sight again at a longer range.

After the hunter has sighted-in the rifle to their preferred range, they will test to see the point of impact at 20 m and 100 m so that they can determine the distance to hold over at closer ranges (to shoot animals in the head) or hold under at longer ranges.

## Firing range

The optimal distance to engage an animal with a shotgun will be determined by testing of the particular choke and the ammunition being used, see Table 1. This will be evident when the pattern testing occurs. As you get closer the pattern will be tight and require most accuracy on the part of the hunter. Further away means the size in the pattern and a drop off in energy of the pellets will increase the chances of only wounding an animal.

Table 1

Range	Shotgun	Centrefire
Minimum <b>safe</b> range	20 - 30 m*	50 m
Maximum <b>effective</b> range	30 - 35 m	75 - 80 m

\* May alter due to the angle of the shot, see *Helicopter strike risks* section on page 5.

## Ammunition

Purchase the ammunition based on a combination of its reliability/accuracy in the firearm in which it is used and on terminal performance on the target animal, rather than on any potential cost-saving.

**Note:** when there is any change in ammunition manufacturer, projectile type, or weight - only a test quantity of ammunition is bought to assess the performance before a bulk lot is purchased.

*Table 2: Ammunition commonly used for aerial control*

Calibre	Bullet weight (grains)	Type of projectile	Velocity (fps) at muzzle	Energy (foot pounds) at muzzle	Optimum Game Weight (kg)
.223	55 grains	Hornady GMX	3275	1310	72 kg
.223	55 grains	HP - non lead Belmont Barnes	3300	1330	74 kg
.308	145 grains	SP - non lead Gorilla Lehigh	2680	2550	275 kg
.308	165 grains	Hornady GMX	2750	2770	385 kg
.308	200 grains	Lead soft points Belmont Lapua Naturalis	2645	2596	500 kg
.300 BLK	110 grains	No lead GMX Hornady	2350	1378	107 kg
.300 BLK	125 grains	OTM	2215	1360	116 kg
12 gauge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 ball (00) - 342 grains</li> <li>• 1 ball - 38 grains</li> </ul>	Tungsten iron buckshot	1548	1557	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 295 kg</li> <li>• 4 kg</li> </ul>
12 gauge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 9 ball (00) - 477 grains</li> <li>• 1 ball - 53 grains</li> </ul>	Lead buckshot Winchester	1325	1547	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 360 kg</li> <li>• 5 kg</li> </ul>

*Information is sourced from Ballistics101/Federal/Winchester/Lapua/Barnes*

The Optimum Game Weight (OGW) value gives the appropriate maximum weight of an animal that can be reliably killed by a particular cartridge, and gives a reference for comparison.

$$OGW = V^3 \times W^2 \times 1.5 \times 10^{-12} \text{ in pounds}$$

where: V = Velocity of bullet in feet per second and W = Weight of bullet in grains.

For heavy game bullets, the constant used in the equation is  $1.5 \times 10^{-12}$ .

<https://skillatarms.com/matunas-optimal-game-weight-formula/>

### *Suppressors (for rifle)*

Use three x 20-shot magazines per firearm and a suppressor (also known as a 'sound moderator'). Ensure the suppressor is appropriate to the calibre of the firearm and rated for semi-automatic fire. Use of standard suppressors can result in over-heating leading to catastrophic failure.

**Note:** suppressors have a finite life which is determined by the number of rounds fired. The suppressor will have to be replaced after this limit is reached (as per manufacturer's specifications).

Airframe vibrations can cause suppressors to come loose. This will affect accuracy with a possibility of a projectile coming into contact with a suppressor baffle prior to exiting the barrel. This may result in a catastrophic failure of the suppressor. To avoid this, check the suppressor is tight at regular intervals in the flight. If it does feel loose, check it more frequently.

# Safe handling and use of firearms in a helicopter

Firearm safety in-flight:

- i. Always treat the firearm as loaded.
- ii. Control the direction the muzzle is pointing.
- iii. The firearm is unloaded\* until the target zone is reached.
- iv. Safety-catch is engaged until ready to fire.
- v. Safety catch is engaged prior to bringing the firearm muzzle into the helicopter cabin.
- vi. A shell deflector is used.
- vii. Reloading happens continually (best practice is that the safety catch is on), and the muzzle is pointed in a safe direction out the door.
- viii. The correct ammunition for the calibre of firearm being used is in the supply box in the helicopter cabin, and no other.
- ix. Safety-catch engaged when finished shooting.

\*Empty the chamber and place an ejected shell between the bolt face and the chamber. This best practice is a good indication to everyone present that the firearm is in an unloaded state.

## Helicopter strike risks – ricochet, fragmentation and case ejection (firing angles and distances)

Items striking the helicopter or crew during aerial control flights represent a serious safety risk. Strikes to the main or tail rotors have been documented and the resulting damage at best requires expensive replacement and at worst, causes an immediate in-flight safety hazard.

Two primary potential causes of rotor-strike have been identified during aerial hunting operations. A ricochet hazard exists from firing when there is a hard substrate behind the target animal that can cause shot or fragments to come back at the helicopter. Secondly, rotor strikes can be caused by ejected cases, with factors such as flying style and direction, hunter technique, and ammunition and firearm type all playing a role.

Ricochet risk and the ejection pattern differences between different ammunition types have been investigated for the Himalayan tahr programme by a specialist ballistics company as part of the transition to using non-lead ammunition. Guidance for the safe use of DOC-supplied tungsten-iron shot (used for all tahr control) is provided here and represented graphically in Figures 1 & 2.

**Note:** See the Operations Lead – Wild Animal team regarding other tested ammunition types.

### *Ricochet and rock fragmentation*

DOC-supplied tungsten-iron ammunition is considered safe to use within these parameters (Fig. 1):

- Within 30 degrees of the direction of flight, the minimum safe distance to engage a target is 30 metres, as fragmentation of pellets is reduced, and the potential for ricochet and the distance travelled by pellet fragments both increase.
- Past 30 degrees from the direction of flight, the minimum distance to engage a target is 20 metres, as pellets fragment more effectively and pellet fragments travel <20 m.



Figure 1: Safe minimum target engagement distances for DOC-supplied tungsten-iron 9 ball buckshot is indicated by the transition from red to green, according to the angle of shot relative to direction of flight. These distances may vary for other ammunition types; specific guidance will be provided.

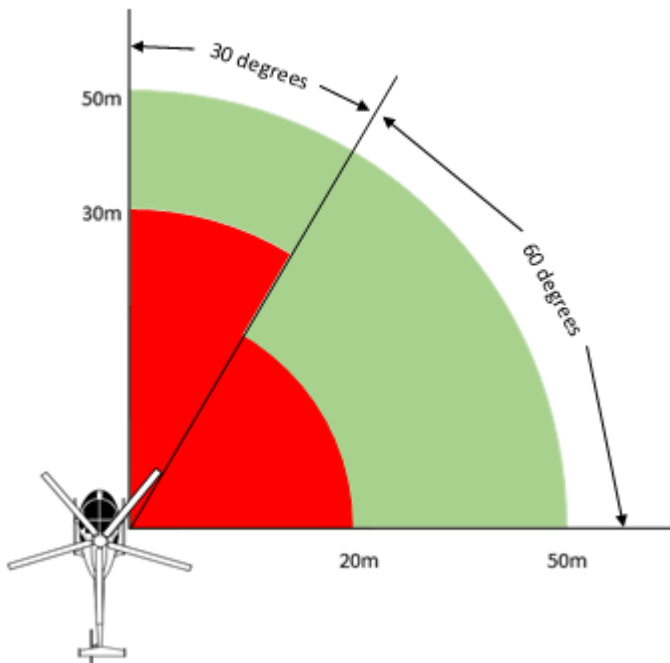
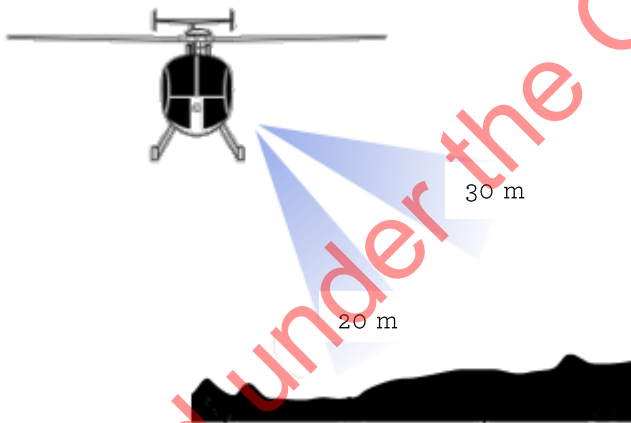


Figure 2: Safe minimum engagement distances for targets on hard surfaces (e.g. greywacke rock) to avoid rock fragments striking the helicopter. Fragments generated by shots taken at  $>45^\circ$  downward angle (i.e. a steeper downward angle) are less likely to reach the machine.



Figs. 1 & 2 credit: Target Dynamics NZ Ltd

### Case ejection

The likelihood of ejected cases drifting into the rotors is increased by hunter technique (changes to the angle at which cases are ejected) and flying style (affects the level of negative G-force). Firing while the helicopter is descending rapidly can cause empty shotgun hulls to float up through main rotor blades and cause a similar result. Mitigation practices such as not firing during a rapid descent and being aware of ejection angles are developed by the hunter through training, practice and good communication between hunter and pilot.

Mechanical factors (ammunition type, firearm type) affecting the likelihood of ejected cases striking blades were investigated for DOC. It was concluded that in a standard shotgun without a deflector, DOC's supply of tungsten-iron ammunition does have a modified ejection pattern compared with the previously used lead ammunition. Cases from lead ammunition ejected between 1.47 and 2.55 m while tungsten-iron ammunition cases ejected up to 3.38 m.

Therefore, the primary control for this issue is the fitting of a deflector to reduce ejection distance. Additionally, the bolt and carrier of inertia-style shotguns can be modified to reduce ejection distance. The tahr programme currently has in operation three modified inertia shotguns (Benelli

M2s) that eject tungsten-iron cases within the same distances as lead, meaning there is no increased risk of a rotor strike from an ejected case. Other firearm makes such as a Berretta gas-operated shotgun can have a consistent ejection pattern with lead-free ammunition.

In future, other non-lead shot types may be utilised. In line with the findings of ballistics investigations, these will be of shot types likely to fragment (e.g. bismuth) or deform (e.g. zinc-alloy) to reduce the risk of ricochet. The ejection patterns of any new ammunition will be assessed before it is put into circulation for aerial hunting operations.

**Note:** Steel and tungsten (i.e. pure tungsten, not tungsten-iron) shot should not be used.

*Enduring 'rules of thumb' to reduce strike risk, regardless of shot type*

30 m is the 'sweet spot' at which tungsten-iron is both safe and effective – If in doubt, 30 m out.

Backdrop – is the target in hard surface terrain (primarily rock)?

Shot angle – do not raise the muzzle above horizontal (as the blades can dip down at any time)

Range – is the target within the effective killing range of the load in use, but beyond the safe minimum distance (where specified).

## Further hazards associated with the aerial operation

### *Accidental discharge*

Always keep the barrel of a weapon (loaded or unloaded) pointed in a safe direction. Keep the firearm unloaded until the target zone is reached. Always keep fingers off the trigger. Be aware that rifles based on the AR platform have floating firing pins and have been known to discharge going into battery on cartridge with a soft primer (Note: battery is where the locking lugs of the bolt have engaged the barrel on closing the bolt).

### *Ammunition of different calibres in the ammunition container*

Always check that the ammunition being used matches the calibre of the rifle. Some calibres are only subtly different than others (i.e. 7mm 08 and .308, .222 and .223) and difficult to feel when loading a magazine. This can cause a jam that is difficult to clear at best or may damage the firearm, helicopter or may cause injury.

Do not have any different ammunition present when the helicopter ammunition box is being filled. When filling the box from a bulk supply, carefully check that all the cartridges are the same.

### *Ammunition with loose projectiles*

Instances have been recorded where a batch of centrefire cartridges have come from the factory with a few cartridges having a faulty neck sizing which has remained undetected through the quality control system. This has resulted in a coming projectile dislodged from the case due to inertia of the closing bolt and becoming lodged at the start of the rifling. On pulling the trigger the primer has failed to ignite the powder and the rifle has failed to go off. The hunter - thinking that it's a misfire - has ejected the case and loaded another round in behind the projectile that is still lodged in the barrel and pushed the next projectile back into the case. When the rifle is fired this time, it has gone off and the resulting pressure has destroyed the firearm, bits of which have hit the hunter, flown up and damaged the blades and put a hole in the bubble. Find the cause before continuing.

## Firearm maintenance

### *Ergonomics*

It is important that the firearm fits the hunter well (that the stock is the right length), with the scope mounted at the correct height so that the hunter can maintain a good cheek weld and the correct eye relief when shooting. Having a trigger with a smooth, crisp break between 2.5-3.5 lbs with minimum over-travel is essential for accurate shooting.



### *Cleaning*

Cleaning is paramount for safe and efficient use of all firearms.

A synthetic cleaning spray must be used – if oil is used on firearm parts it can later freeze at altitude. A small quantity of cleaning spray becomes part of the gear carried in flight.

### *Causes of jams*

The primary causes for jams in shotguns and rifles include:

- badly designed or bent deflectors.
- chipped and broken extractors.
- weak extractor springs.
- faulty or dirty magazines/magazine springs.
- excessively dirty action or buffer spring.
- blocked gas port or damaged gas tube.
- lack of lubrication.
- bad ammunition.
- broken locking lugs.
- just plain worn out.
- bolt bounce caused by over-gassing. This is due to adding a suppressor and not changing the buffer weight or using an adjustable gas port.

Proper and regular maintenance of firearms is essential; however, even well-maintained firearms can fail. A number of the faults above cannot be resolved in-flight. Therefore, it is best practice to carry a spare firearm so that a malfunction does not prematurely conclude the aerial operation.

If unexpected jams occur, note which magazine this is and see if any additional jams are related to this magazine. If so clean and inspect for damage. Replace magazine if further jamming associated with it cannot be rectified.

### *Examples of malfunctions (other than jams):*

- If the rifle is normally reliable, yet suddenly cases are being stuck in the ejection port - nine times out of ten it will be caused by the shell deflector being bumped and bent.
- Malfunctions can also be caused by a dirty chamber, a build-up of debris in the barrel extension, broken locking lug, blocked or misadjusted gas port, lack of lubrication, worn extractor or spring, or a dirty recoil buffer and spring.
- If automatic fire occurs, stop work and get the firearm to a gunsmith or person authorized to repair the rifle/shotgun.
- Flattened primers indicate excessive pressures.
- Pierced primers are caused by a faulty firing pin.
- Faulty case resizing, or a dirty chamber could be the cause of difficulty of closing the bolt on a round.
- Excessive headspace could be the cause of case separation.

Always inspect the ammunition for defects including loose projectiles as it is being transferred into the helicopter box as well as after a malfunction is experienced while firing. If an issue is found, check all the ammunition in the container. If there is a further issue isolate that entire batch and call and return it to the dealer where it was purchased.

# Can the commercial venison recovery industry protect Fiordland's alpine flora?

George Ledgard<sup>1</sup>, Richard Ewans<sup>2</sup> and Norm Mason<sup>3</sup>

## In the beginning:

- 2000 - 2006 commercial venison recovery (aka WARO) in Fiordland National Park ceased after three successive decades of operating (1970's - 1990's)
- Feral deer numbers rapidly increased in alpine areas and widespread and conspicuous browse on sensitive alpine plant communities was observed
- In 2006 the Department of Conservation (DOC) established monitoring at 40 sites in alpine areas throughout Fiordland National Park to quantify deer browse on three selected alpine plant species; *Celmisia verbascifolia* (celver), *Dolichoglottis scorzonerooides* (dolsco), and *Ranunculus lyallii* (ranlya)
- At each monitoring site five transects (50m x 2m) were established. On each transect all individuals of each species were counted and classified as either browsed or not browsed. Deer pellet groups were also tallied for each transect.
- The establishment of these monitoring sites coincided with the resumption of feral deer recovery in alpine areas of Fiordland National Park

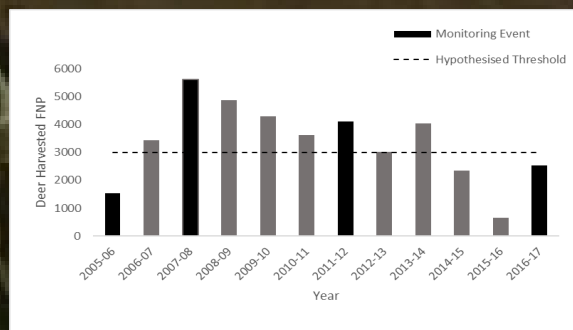


Figure 1: Annual deer harvest, Fiordland National Park 2006 - 2017

## The results:

- After 5 years of deer harvest rates >3000 per annum, browse on all species declined from 17% to 4%
- Deer pellet groups recorded along the transects declined from 115 in 2006 to 4 in 2012
- Between 2014 and 2017 deer harvest rates declined to <3000 deer per annum and browse rates on all species correspondingly increased from 4% in 2012 to 9% in 2017
- Deer pellet groups increased from 4 to 37 during this period
- This is currently the only study evaluating the conservation outcomes of commercial venison recovery in alpine areas of New Zealand. At current harvest rates it would cost DOC 0.7 - 1 million dollars annually to deliver this level of control.
- In 2019 the study design and methodology was independently reviewed and considered fit for purpose

## Correlating hunting effort with browse:

- Helicopter operators provide waypoint data for their kills; DOC now require operators to provide tracklog data
- At its simplest, we can correlate browse with simple annual effort metrics such as deer kills within a management unit or deer kills per unit area e.g. km<sup>2</sup>
- However, the number and location of deer harvested only tells half the story
- Knowing where deer were searched for, and where they were not encountered tells us the whole story and could allow us to model deer browse at sub regional unit levels e.g. catchment level

Table 1: Number of deer pellet groups encountered on transects in measurement years

Year	No. Pellet groups
2006	115
2008	30
2012	4
2017	37

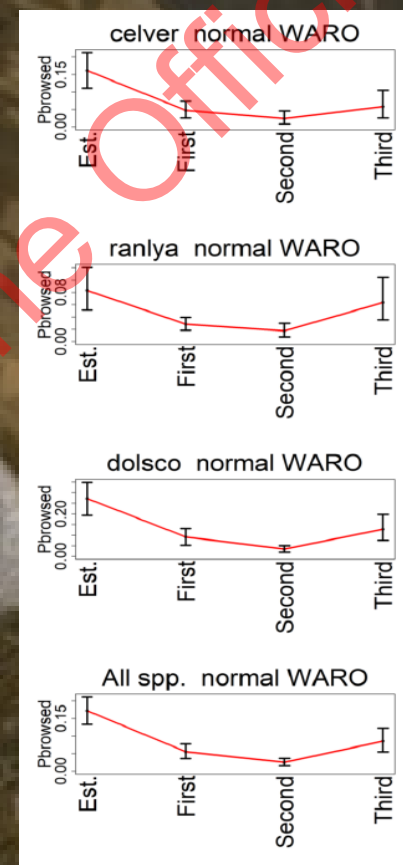


Figure 3: Mean and 95% confidence intervals for the estimate of the mean browse rates (Pbrowsed) for each species and all spp. combined,

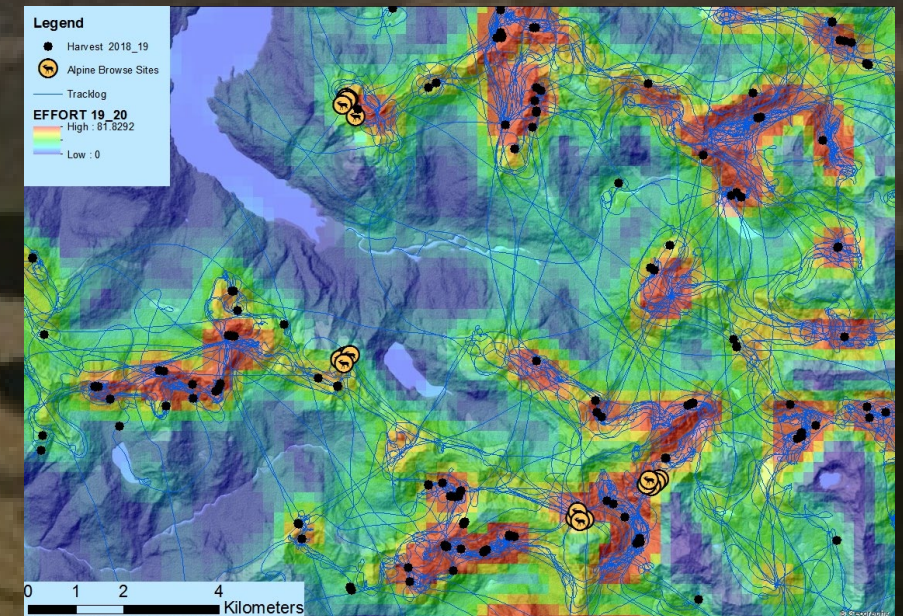


Figure 3: WARO effort represented by kills and tracklog data (heatmap) 2017/18

## Next steps:

- Statistically validating the link between deer harvest rates and browse on selected alpine plants
- Develop a model that correlates effort with browse on selected palatable plants
- Understand the link between browse on selected alpine plants and the wider alpine ecosystem impacts of deer browse