

09 September 2022

Claire Valpy

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Tēnā koe Claire

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (the Department), received on 12 August 2022 in which you asked for:

*“a full copy of DOC policies on all aspects of feral dogs in Northland, including who is authorised to kill the dogs, what methods are permitted to be used to kill the dogs, how the dogs have actually been killed and statistics of how many dogs have been killed to date.”*

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

**1. A full copy of DOC policies on all aspects of feral dogs in Northland.**

We do not have a national policy for feral dogs, with general statutory land management functions enabling dog control instead, outlined in the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act). Under section 26ZZL of the Act, any warranted officer who finds a dog in a controlled dog area (unless the dog is there under a permit or accompanying a police officer, warranted officer, DOC officer, customs officer, or search and rescue person) may seize the dog.

The Act also says that if the warranted officer is “of the opinion that it is impracticable or dangerous to seize the dog, that warranted officer may, without any further inquiry, destroy that dog”. Sections 26ZZS and 26ZZT provide broad limitations of liability for warranted officers carrying out the administration of the Act.

The Northland Conservation Management Strategy 2014–2024 also addresses wild dogs in the following ways:

- (a) Appendix 5, “Threats, pests and wild animals present in Northland” identifies wild dogs as pest animals and the strategy to manage them is to trap or shoot them.
- (b) Objective 5.1.1.8 is to “Collaborate with agencies and communities to prevent the establishment and spread of pest animals, plants and pathogens, including those listed in Appendix 5 in Northland.”

## **2. Who is authorised to kill dogs:**

We have a statutory responsibility and appropriate legislative tools to control wild dogs on land under our management. Our warranted officers and contractors are brought in for the purposes of controlling animals and are authorised to kill dogs as part of the 'Services' being performed for the Director-General (under the Act).

Additionally, section 57 of the Dog Control Act 1996 authorises anyone to seize or destroy any dog that attacks domestic animals, stock, or wildlife. Section 15 of the Dog Control Act 1996 states:

*Dogs attacking persons or animals (1) A person may, for the purpose of stopping an attack, seize or destroy a dog if— (a) the person is attacked by the dog; or (b) the person witnesses the dog attacking any other person, or any stock, poultry, domestic animal, or protected wildlife.*

Far North District Council (FNDC) animal control officers have additional powers to seize/destroy roaming dogs that is not reliant on witnessing an attack.

Private landowners are permitted to hunt and kill "feral dogs" as these are defined as a "pest" under the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (AWA 99). Normal rules of trespass would also apply. People have the right to use reasonable force in defence of themselves and others from dogs (feral and otherwise).

## **3. What methods are permitted to be used to kill dogs.**

Permitted methods to kill dogs are not defined in legislation however there is reference in Section 12 (c) of the AWA 99 which refers to animals not being killed in such a manner that the animal suffers unreasonable or unnecessary pain or distress.

## **4. How the dogs have actually been killed, statistics of how many dogs have been killed to date**

The Department contracted the services of two hunters for the period of 1/12/2021 to 30/06/2022. A total of 11 feral dogs have been culled using firearms. For your interest, please refer to the below links which cover relevant legislation and the applicable management strategy referred to in this response:

- [Conservation Act 1987 No 65 \(as at 12 April 2022\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)
- [Northland: Conservation management strategies \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)
- [Dog Control Act 1996 No 13 \(as at 28 October 2021\), Public Act Contents – New Zealand Legislation](#)
- [Animal Welfare Act 1999](#)



Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact Meirene Hardy Birch, Operations Manager, Kaitaia on 09 408 6014 or [mhardybirch@doc.govt.nz](mailto:mhardybirch@doc.govt.nz)

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sue Reed-Thomas".

Sue Reed-Thomas  
Director Operations Northern North Island  
Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*