



Bull (male) tahr. Photo: DOC

Himalayan tahr (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*) are large goat-like animals, native to the central Himalayan ranges of India and Nepal.

Tahr were first released in New Zealand at Aoraki/Mt Cook in 1904 for recreational hunting and to attract overseas hunters. The males are known as bulls and prized as trophies by hunters.

With no natural predators in New Zealand, tahr quickly adapted to our alpine environment and have had a considerable impact on native vegetation. Significant numbers of tahr are now present in the central Southern Alps/Ka tiritiri o te Moana. (See map on back page).

What is the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993?

The management of Himalayan tahr is governed by a statutory plan, the *Himalayan Tahr Control Plan 1993*, prepared under section 5(1)(d) of the Wild Animal Control Act 1977 (www.doc.govt.nz/himalayan-tahr-control-plan).

A key element of the Himalayan Tahr Control Plan is that it sets a maximum population of 10,000 tahr across all land tenures in the tahr feral range (the legal boundary of where tahr are allowed to be).

Tahr are officially controlled within seven tahr management units:

The seven tahr management units collectively comprise

706,000 ha

of land inside the tahr feral range (see map).

Tahr can be hunted on

573,000 ha

of public conservation land (PCL) inside the tahr management units.



Female and juvenile tahr. Photo: Dylan Higginson



How many Himalayan tahr are there?

After three summer seasons of tahr population monitoring, the total abundance of tahr on public conservation land (PCL) between 2016 and 2019 was estimated to be 34,478 animals (95% confidence interval: 26,522–44,821). This estimate does not include tahr herds on other land tenures.

The current estimate is an average abundance over the three seasons of data collection using aerial surveys in the tahr management areas on public conservation land. This means we effectively average over any additions (tahr births) or losses (tahr deaths due to control operations and natural causes) to the population during this period.

The population assessment was made prior to control by DOC, commercial hunters and contractors who collectively removed approximately 11,000 tahr during July to November 2019. There has since been another breeding season.



Estimating Himalayan tahr numbers factsheet:
www.doc.govt.nz/tahr-control-operations

How do Himalayan tahr impact the environment?

New Zealand alpine ecosystems evolved without mammalian herbivores (such as tahr), and many alpine plants have no defence mechanisms (such as toxins or spines) to discourage tahr from eating them.

Tahr browse on native plants that birds, lizards and insects use for feeding, nesting and shelter. The tahr diet includes some large, succulent herbaceous species including alpine buttercups and mountain daisies. Some of these species are ranked as Threatened or At Risk by the New Zealand Threat Classification System.

Tahr also feed on snow tussock and shrub species which are the dominant vegetation in many of New Zealand's subalpine and alpine environments. In extreme situations, large groups of tahr can transform tall tussocks and subalpine shrublands to a grassy turf or bare ground.

DOC has been recording the impacts of Himalayan tahr on alpine and subalpine biodiversity since the early 1990s by monitoring a network of 117 permanent plots in alpine grasslands within the tahr management units.

New research since 2011 has established that there is less shrub cover in the tahr management areas than in the tahr exclusion zones (the areas to the north and south of the tahr feral range).

There are very few tahr in the exclusion zones, as all tahr present in these areas are targeted for removal to prevent the tahr feral range from expanding.

High tahr numbers have led to a drastic change in the vegetation at Zora Canyon, South Westland, with tall snow tussocks in some places almost gone (photos show the same monitoring plot in 1999, top, and 2012, bottom).



Zora, Landsborough, 1999 (top) compared with 2012 (bottom). Photo: DOC



Further information on tahr and their impacts is available at:
www.doc.govt.nz/monitoring-reporting

What control did DOC undertake on public conservation land in 2019?

DOC worked with commercial hunters and contractors to control approximately 11,000 Himalayan tahr on public conservation land between July and November 2019. There has since been another breeding season and tahr kids have been born, so population recruitment will have occurred.

DOC has continued to carry out tahr control outside of the feral range to prevent the animals' geographical range from expanding. All stakeholders consider this control work to be important.



What control will DOC undertake on public conservation land this year?

DOC will undertake Himalayan tahr control on public conservation land (PCL) between 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Control will focus on:

- ▶ Critical work outside of the tahr feral range to stop the geographical range of tahr from expanding.
- ▶ Controlling all tahr in Aoraki/Mt Cook and Westland Tai Poutini National Parks to the lowest practicable densities to protect and preserve these special places.
- ▶ Controlling high densities of female and juvenile tahr across the tahr feral range to reduce tahr impacts and population spread.



Hunters can record their contributions using the Tahr Returns App: nzgameanimalcouncil.org.nz/tahr-returns-app/

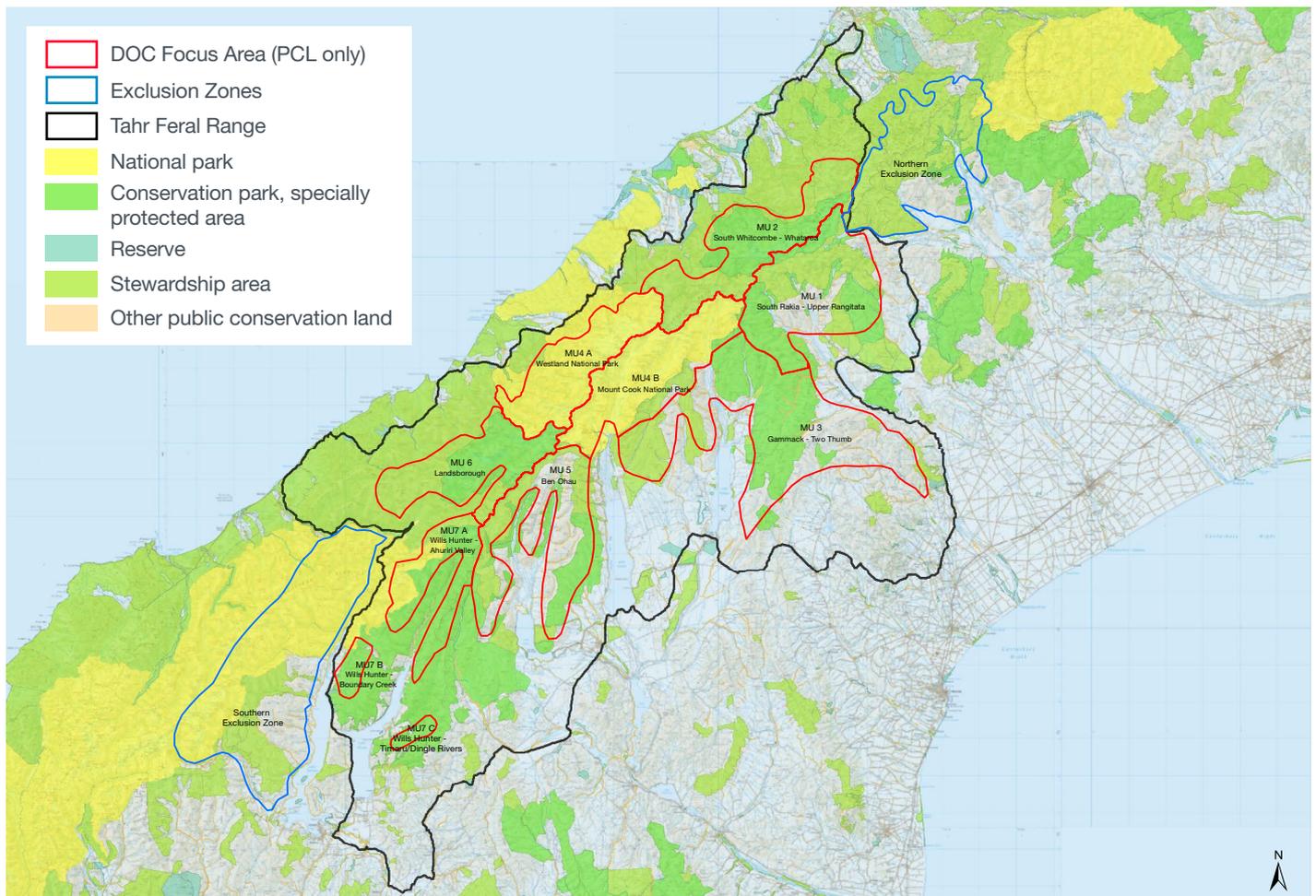
For more information:

www.doc.govt.nz/tahr-control-operations



Juvenile tahr. Photo: Dylan Higgison

Map of Tahr management units



R189956

