

Waikato Conservancy Hunting Dog Policy

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Foreword

This document outlines Waikato Conservancy's policy on hunting dogs used by staff and contractors on official wild animal control operations within the conservancy.

This policy applies to all new handlers and will form part of any new job descriptions and/or contracts.

Existing departmental handlers will be trained in the requirements for their handler certificate. Dogs currently used by handlers will continue to be used for official control operations and receive dog allowance until such time as they pass certification (in which case dog allowance will continue for that dog) or they are replaced by a certified dog (in which case dog allowance will cease for the uncertified dog). Once existing staff are trained to the required standards their job descriptions will be amended to reflect this.

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Greg Martin
Conservator

Part 1: Policy Overview

1.0 Introduction

Dogs are an essential tool in the Department's wild animal control programmes because of their ability to find wary animals in dense vegetation. The use of dogs in areas containing endangered bird life and/or adjoining areas of farmland is of concern to some members of the public and landowners. In order to address these concerns, Waikato Conservancy has decided to formalise its hunting dog policy.

This policy, along with the Northern Region and Wanganui Hunting Dog policies were discussed at length at the conservancy's Hunter Training Workshop held in January 2004. All present hunters were given the opportunity to contribute to discussions that would ultimately set the outcomes and form the basis of this policy.

As with the Wanganui policy, the focus has been placed on the handler. Handlers can have a number of dogs during their hunting careers but the common thread through each combination is the handlers themselves. Waikato Conservancy believes that a policy that focuses on producing good handlers will result in better dogs.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all departmental handlers and dogs within Waikato Conservancy who work on official animal pest (e.g. goat, deer, pig) control operations. All contractors used on official operations will also be required to meet these standards. It is expected that staff and contractors who have undergone similar certification from other conservancies will be fast tracked through this certification process.

3.0 Rationale

1. Dogs potentially pose a risk to threatened wildlife, particularly NI Brown Kiwi and blue duck in many of the areas with animal pest control operations. This risk can be reduced significantly by training individual dogs to ignore threatened species and minimising the risk of dogs becoming separated from their handlers. This risk is also true in relation to farm livestock.
2. The effectiveness of hunting dogs at locating and indicating targets can be enhanced with training of dog and handlers.
3. National policy for dog control on public conservation land will require constraints on the use of dogs for hunting and the likely implementation of a training/certification requirement. Developing a Conservancy policy may ensure that we need to take only a minimal step to conform to any National Policy that may be adopted.
4. The Department of Conservation's reputation and credibility is at stake should dogs involved in departmental operations disturb or worry domestic stock.

4.0 Certification

All handlers and dogs used on official wild animal control operations must undergo the certification process.

There are three main certification levels.

1. **Handler Certificate:** The focus of this level is on the handler, their understanding of dog welfare issues, training and handling knowledge. This certificate should be obtained prior to using any dog on official animal control operations.
2. **Interim Certificate:** This level focuses on the handler/dog relationship. Included are standards for dog obedience and non-target aversion. Certify dogs to owners
3. **Full Certificate:** This level focuses on the hunting style of the handler/dog.

Part 2 outlines in detail the requirements of each certification level. The Programme Manager responsible for official animal pest control operations in Waikato Conservancy will incorporate handler/dog training and testing into their annual work programmes.

4.1 Certifier

Three staff members have been designated as certifiers for Waikato Conservancy. These staff members were nominated by those attending the Hunter Training Workshop.

It was the consensus of the workshop that those people best capable of assessing whether a handler/dog meets the criteria are those that work with them everyday. Rather than a one off test, possibly carried out under artificial conditions, certification should be on a peer review basis, taking into account the views of those who have worked alongside the handler/dog over a period of time.

Certifiers have the right to make a call as to whether a dog meets the criteria to pass the protocol. In the unlikely event of a dispute arising over the failure of a dog to meet protocol the Programme Manager and Area Manager may be called upon to adjudicate the grievance.

To encourage staff development, it was felt that anyone who was interested in becoming a certifier should have the opportunity to do so. To ensure that high standards and credibility are maintained, Waikato Conservancy has developed a Certifier Certificate that must be obtained by anyone who wishes to become a certifier. Full details of this certificate are outlined in Part 2.

In order to maintain standards, only three certifiers at a time will be responsible for certifying handlers and dogs. This panel of three has overall responsibility for maintaining the standards of this policy. As additional staff gain their Certifier Certificate, positions on the panel will be rotated to allow these staff to become

involved in the certification process. It is envisaged that one position on the panel will be changed each year.

4.2 Renewal

Dogs and handlers will be reviewed every two years.

4.3 Revocation

Certification can be revoked or suspended where the dog has injured protected wildlife, domestic stock or people, or where a handler has mistreated his/her dog. Any incident of this nature will be investigated by the certifier(s) on behalf of the appropriate manager. Following the incident report by the certifier(s), the manager may revoke certification or take other action as appropriate.

5.0 Standards

5.1 Breeds - Apply to PM or supervisor to bring dogs on to the job

Pedigree bird type indicating and retrieving breeds should be used for this purpose alone. Again certifiers may wish to refer this matter to the Programme Manager or ultimately Area Manager.

Aside from the above described dogs, a handler can use any breed of dog provided dogs pass the certification criteria.

However to maximise the chance of obtaining certification a handler should select a breed of dog that has been shown through experience to have a natural tendency and receptiveness to being trained as a hunting dog.

Historically, farm working dogs with noise have proven to be most successful at meeting the requirements the Northern Region Hunting Dog Policy given their naturally hunting, heading, healing and bark.

5.2 Hunting Styles

Every hunter/dog combination has its own particular hunting style preference.

Acceptable styles for use in Waikato Conservancy include dogs that find and bail and/or dogs that find and indicate. Crunch bailing is acceptable albeit less favoured provided the dog does in fact stay with a goat once caught. This type of dog has a tendency to be of a hard nature with the probability of becoming harder with age and confidence.

Dogs that hold are acceptable only for use on official pig control operations. Unacceptable styles include killers, holders (except for the case of dogs used for

official pig control operations) and dogs that make no noise (except in the case of indicator dogs).

The testing criteria have been designed to recognise that variations exist. It will be up to hunters to demonstrate the overall merits of each of their dogs.

5.3 Number of Dogs

Up to two certified dogs may be used to hunt at any one time in the field, only one of which may be at interim level.

It is recognised that there is a need for hunters to retain an adequate number of dogs to maintain efficiency and as such, managers may approve each handler to have up to three certified dogs if appropriate. This is to allow enough dogs to cover losses through accidents, old age, bitches on heat, with pups, to lend to a new hunter who has no dogs and at least a two year lead in before he/she has a competent dog.

5.4 Registration

All dogs used on control operations will be required to be registered and vaccinated at the hunter (owners) expense.

5.5 Identification

As part of the kiwi aversion training, dogs will receive a tattoo in their right ear with number and code (WA) defining it's area of origin. The cost of marking will be met by the Department. A register of dogs will be maintained by the Waikato Conservancy Office as well as entered into Tongariro/Taupo kiwi aversion data base.

Micro-chip

5.6 Dog Allowance

Dog allowance shall be paid to the owners of each dog that has passed interim certification for use on official wild animal control operations. Dog allowance will be paid for a maximum of three dogs per handler; however a handler may have only two dogs at interim level at any one time.

Veterinary bills arising out of work related accidents will be reimbursed on an actual and reasonable basis.

Back pay dog allowance for pups to the point of time they were brought onto the job.

Part 2: Certification Requirements

Handler Certificate - 1 off

Part of induction for new hunters & contractors/temps

Prerequisite: The handler must have approval from the Area Manager to run a hunting dog for official wild animal control operations.

Certification Requirements

The hunter has to demonstrate an adequate understanding of the following subjects

- Dog welfare
- Breed selection
- Training techniques
- Dog psychology Dr Clive Dalton chat
- Procedures outlined in this policy
- Predation issues
- Multi guess questionnaire
- Revocation?

A resource kit has been put together that contains as wide a range of information as is available, including articles, videos and books on the subjects above.

Qualification will be via a written multi-choice/short answer test consisting of 20 to 30 questions selected from the information contained in the resource kit. Once completed, the Certifier will go through the test with the handler and discuss their answers to ensure that they have a complete understanding of the topic. Due to the nature of the topics not all questions will have right or wrong answers and it will be up to the handlers to justify their answers. All questions must be answered correctly to the satisfaction of the Certifier for the handler to obtain certification.

The Handler Certificate Part of induction for new hunters & contractors/temps should be obtained prior to using any dog on official animal control operations and **MUST** be gained within one month of starting employment.

Since the focus of this policy is on the handler, staff should be given every opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge. This could be achieved through animal (canine) behaviour seminars, provided by acclaimed specialists e.g. Dr Clive Dalton, or alternately spending time with highly skilled handlers/trainers.

Interim Certificate

Prerequisite: To undertake Interim Certification a handler must have first completed the Handler certification process.

Certification Requirements

- Any dog raised from a pup by the handler must pass interim certification by eight months of age ⁽¹⁾
- Any other dog must pass interim certification within four months of being acquired by the handler ⁽¹⁾

NOTE: (1) Because some dogs are slower to mature and/or some hunting styles (i.e. indicators) may take more time to develop than others a handler may, with approval from their manager, negotiate an extension to these time periods.

The following criteria have to be met by the dog in order to achieve an interim certificate;

- It must follow basic commands
- It must be stock proof
- It must show no gun shyness
- It must show non-target aversion e.g. protected fauna and non-target pests (i.e. possum, pigs deer and /or goats)

Handlers must keep a training diary from the time they acquire the dog.

Both the Interim and Full Certificate qualification will be based heavily on peer review. Final say however rests with the Certifiers who will be required to spend some time in the field with the handler to confirm that all the criteria are met. A standard checklist has been prepared (appendix 1) which will be used by the Certifier to assess the dog.

As part of its non-target aversion training, each dog will be required to pass the avian avoidance training programme as run in Tongariro/Taupo and Waikato Conservancies (see appendix 3).

Full Certificate

Prerequisite: To undertake Full Certification a handler must have first completed the Handler and Interim certification process.

Certification Requirements

- The handler must demonstrate that the dog hunts the target species in a style that is consistent with this policy all the while maintaining interim standards.
- Full certification must be obtained within 18 months of the dog obtaining interim certification ⁽¹⁾

NOTE: (1) Because some dogs are slower to mature and/or some hunting styles (i.e. indicators) may take more time to develop than others a handler may, with approval from their manager, negotiate an extension to these time periods.

Any dog that fails to obtain Full Certification within the required timeframe can no longer be used on official wild animal control operations. Dog allowance will cease to be paid for that animal. A handler can resubmit a failed dog for certification at anytime. However, any additional training required to bring the dog up to specifications must be carried out in their own time and at their own expense.

A standard checklist has been prepared (appendix 2) which will be used by the Certifier to assess the handler/dog combination.

Certifier Certificate

Prerequisite: To undertake Certifier Certification a handler must have first completed the Handler, Interim and Full certification process.

Certification Requirements

To obtain a Certifier Certificate, a handler must complete a project that makes a significant contribution to the dog training resource pool. Manage dog database etc

Project proposals must be submitted to the Certifier Panel for approval. The project can be of any length and in any format so long as it is transferable and enhances the dog training resources of the conservancy.

Projects will be assessed by the Certifier Panel.

Summary: Hunting Dog Policy at a Glance

Certificate	Prerequisite	Time Period	Number of dogs allowed	Dog Allowance	Dog Registration & Vaccination	Dog ID (Tattoo)	Certification Requirements	How Assessed	If fails to pass
Handler	Approval from AM to run a hunting dog	Must be obtained within 1 month of employment – should be obtained prior to running a dog in the field					Must demonstrate an understanding of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog welfare • Breed selection • Training techniques • Dog psychology • The dog policy • Predation issues 	Oral/written multi choice/short answer test of 20 – 30 questions	Resit until obtained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot use a dog in the field if after the 1 month grace period
Interim	Handler Certificate	Must be obtained within 8 months if dog is raised from a pup OR For any other dog, must be obtained within 4 months of being acquired	Staff may have up to 2 dogs at interim level. These dogs can be taken into the hills and trained on the hill although only one dog at interim level can be used while hunting at any one time	Up to 2 dogs	Required	Not Required	Must meet the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must follow basic commands • Must be stock proof • Must not be gun shy • Must demonstrate non-target aversion 	Peer review and assessment by Certifier(s) as per appendix 1 checklist	Resit until obtained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog cannot be used in the field to hunt • Dog allowance stopped for that dog
Full	Interim Certificate	Must be obtained within 18 months of passing Interim Certification	Staff may have up to 3 dogs. These dogs can be taken into the hills and trained on the hill however only two may be used at any one time while hunting	Up to 3 dogs	Required	Required	Must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain interim standards • Hunt the target species in a style consistent with the policy 	Peer review and assessment by Certifier(s) as per appendix 2 checklist	Resit until obtained <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dog cannot be used in the field to hunt • Dog allowance stopped for that dog
Certifier	Full Certificate	Only three staff at a time will comprise the certifier panel. As other staff complete their Certifier Certificate one position on the panel will be replaced on an annual basis.					Must <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a project • Complete two Massey papers 	Pass Massey papers + completion of project to satisfaction of Certifier(s)	Resit until obtained

Appendix 1

Interim Certification Assessment Sheet

Date:

Dogs Name:

Sex:

Age:

Handlers Name:

Certifiers Name:

Basic Obedience

Handlers must be able to demonstrate that they have control of their dogs especially when they encounter members of the public. All dogs must therefore obey the following basic commands (Handlers can use their own words).

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Work
1) Sit			
2) Stay (dog sits and stays until called)			
3) Come here (dog comes to handler when called regardless of situation)			
4) Stop			
5) Get in behind (dog must stay with/behind handler/quad etc at all times and not break)			
6) Get up (dog gets into the truck on command)			

Comments:.....

General Rules

The dog

	Excellent	Satisfactory	Needs Work
1) MUST NOT bark in the truck			
2) MUST NOT bark on the chain or in kennels			
3) MUST NOT be overly aggressive to other dogs			
4) MUST NOT be aggressive to people			
5) MUST NOT be gun-shy			

Comments:.....
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Non-Target Criteria

The dog

- 1) **MUST NOT** chase goats, deer, pigs, sheep or cattle unless told to. Generally the dog must be able to be controlled in all situations. The dog should (unrestrained) follow the handler through stock and/or the target species without breaking and trying to chase the animals.
- 2) **MUST** be able to be controlled from a distance around livestock
- 3) **MUST** pass the avian aversion (interim) course

PASS	FAIL

Comments:.....
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Certifiers Signature:

Interim Certification **PASS**

RESIT

Appendix 2

Full Certification Assessment Sheet

Date:

Dogs Name:

Sex:

Age:

Handlers Name:

Certifiers Name:

To pass Full Certification the dog must

- 1) Find and indicate the target species and/or
- 2) Find and bail the target species
- 3) The dog must be able to be kept in (without physical restraint) while the hunter is shooting
- 4) Bailing dogs must be able to be called off a bail by the handler
- 5) MUST have passed the avian aversion (full) course

PASS	FAIL	N/A

NOTES:

Dogs that hold or kill the target species will fail certification (crunch bail).
Dogs that are regularly lost especially overnight will fail certification.
Dogs are to be tattooed in the right ear after Full Certification is achieved.

Comments:.....
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Certifiers Signature:

Full Certification

PASS

RESIT

Appendix 3

Avian Avoidance Training Programme

This programme has been developed by Adele Smaill, Kiwi Recovery Programme advocate – Coromandel and has been utilised by the DoC Waikato Goat Hunting Team and Tongariro/Taupo Conservancy. It has also been adopted by professional and recreational hunters. The programme is becoming a recognised system throughout parts of the country.

The main principle is to give the dog a short sharp encounter with avian fauna that is unpleasant and that it will probably choose to avoid in the future.

The training is initially with the handler to raise their awareness of the particular vulnerability and attractiveness of avian fauna to dogs. Dogs, wearing an electric collar, are then run through a series of scenarios containing different avian stimuli (both visual and olfactory). When the dog investigates the stimuli it is “punished” by way of the collar. Reminder training is done at a maximum of 12 monthly intervals.

Stimuli consist of dead birds (stuffed and freshly frozen kiwi and blue duck), live birds (chickens) and bird faeces. Dogs that have been actively trained to avoid all birds demonstrate more reliable avoidance tendencies toward native avian species (i.e. kiwi).

Around 200 dogs of all breeds have undergone the training programme. About two thirds of which have revisited the training at yearly intervals. Strong avoidance to avian stimuli has been observed in nearly all these dogs, with reports of trained dogs actively avoiding live moving kiwi in the field.

Current costs for the programme are \$20 per dog. Courses are run by Jim Pottinger of Central Hunting Services at a venue in National Park or will travel to undertake training if required.

