

Available Species

Himalayan Tahr - (*Hemitragus jemlahicus*)



Tahr were liberated near Mt Cook / Aoraki in 1904 and have since become the king of the Southern Alps and are located mainly in the central region. In the early years, they held little attraction for the hunter, but now attract hunters from far and wide who consider a mature bull tahr to be a premium trophy. Add to this the magnificent country that is home to the most accessible tahr herd in the world and you have an unbeatable mix. The moment a hunter stands in the Alps and looks upon a mature bull, sky-lined with his full mane blowing in the wind, is a moment they will savour and lock away with other great memories.

As the best time to hunt tahr is from May through July during the rut, it is also a great opportunity for both trophies and some magnificent skins, (skins also good through August).

At this time, solitary bulls or bachelor groups join up with the nanny groups for the rut, when more than one bull can be in close proximity to the nannies. It requires careful study to determine which bull is the larger or more dominant. Your guide will assist in this decision. For a first-time tahr hunter, a bull with 10" horns will look very impressive; that is until a 12" or 13" bull steps out. Besides the greater horn length, an older bull has far greater presence. They are solid animals with agility that is hard to believe until you watch where they walk with ease and without a care in the world.

A bull can weigh as much as 150 kg / 350 lbs with a massive shoulder which has a thick hide not unlike that of a wild boar. Standing at 1 metre / 36" tall at the shoulder, a mature bull is often spotted with the naked eye, while it will require good optics to see the much less impressive nannies standing beside him.

Young nannies are excellent eating and have very downy skins that also make great rugs. In some locations it is necessary to control the numbers of nannies and, if this is required in the area you are hunting, you will be invited to shoot selected animals at no extra cost to yourself.

Due to the tahr's body mass, rifle calibres from 7mm mag. up with bullet weight of or over 150g are recommended. Shots can range from 50 to 300 or 400 metres / yards. If shooting over long range, accuracy is required to avoid wounding animals. It is also wise to remember that,

due to the mountainous terrain it can be difficult to get to where your animal ends up. Again, your guide will know what is possible.

Tahr tend to camp up in high crags during the day and descend to slightly lower altitude feed areas in the evening, climbing back up the following morning. If left undisturbed, tahr will generally be in a similar location the following day and thus provide another opportunity for you to get closer.

Chamois - (*Rupicapra rupicapra*)



Coming from the European Alps, chamois were liberated in 1907 near to Mt Cook / Aoraki and have since spread throughout most of the mountainous country of the South Island. Their habitat mixes with the lower altitude range of tahr but can be found nearly down to sea level, having adjusted to living in our alpine regions and also the lower rainforests, with their rocky gorges, slips and crags dissecting the terrain. Chamois will often be found in and around the scrub line where forest meets the more open high country.

Chamois must be considered one of the most agile and alert game animals available in New Zealand with their incredibly sharp eye sight and hearing. In observing chamois, you will see the grace of a ballerina and at other times the fun and antics of the circus clown.

Both the bucks and does grow attractive horns, the bucks horns having greater girth at the bases, while some of the longest horns come from does. Their winter skins are also a fantastic trophy in their own right. Chamois with horn length of 9" or greater are considered a worthwhile trophy and anything over 10" is simply fantastic. Between 8" – 9" is considered a representative head. The body mass of chamois is a lot less than that of a tahr, with a buck weighing in at 36 kg /80 lbs. A flat shooting calibre is more important than knock down power.

From April onwards, the bucks start to move in with the does and their skins darken. Although they can be hunted all year round, most hunters target the months May through August due to the superior skins. If the skin is not so important, great summer hunting can be had in the high snow-free basins where the bucks tend to live a solitary life, often spending the day perched on a boulder or similar position that provides ample vision of the surrounding country. To approach a chamois from below could be the hardest thing you will ever do.

Red Deer - (*Cervus elaphus*)



Wapiti / Elk – (*Cervus canadensis*)

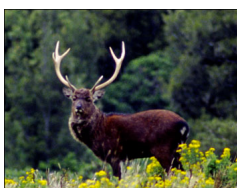
From the original liberation in 1905 from Washington DC, the New Zealand herd never spread very far due to the steep glaciated valleys covered in dense rainforest (rainfall exceeding 7.62 metres / 300" per annum), towering bluffs, the ocean on one side and Lake Te Anau on the other. Despite this, the herd has produced many memorable trophies with more turning up each year in recent times, as the red deer population is targeted to reduce cross breeding between the species and the introduction of some level of management.

However, if you are after a pure-blooded wapiti, you are pretty much out of luck. We tend to call them Fiordland deer, which are bigger than red deer but not as a rule as grand as a pure wapiti. This small remnant herd of free-ranging New Zealand wapiti or elk provides for a challenging hunt in an environment known as one of the wildest in the world. Fiordland National Park is located in the southwest corner of the South Island.

A wapiti bull is much larger than a red stag, standing 1.5 metres /60" at the shoulder and weighing in at 360 kg /800 lbs. Therefore you want a calibre with reasonable knock down plus a well placed shot to avoid the potential of a wounded bull falling off a bluff and smashing its antlers.

There are opportunities during March and April to hunt New Zealand wapiti under a ballot system.

Sika Deer - (*Cervus nippon*)



The main herd of free range sika is located in the central North Island where they were liberated at Poronui, east of Taupo, in 1905. Descending from a likely mixture of Chinese and Japanese sub-species, they are often referred to as Jap deer.

Sika are a favourite species for New Zealanders to hunt due to their exciting habits (such as vocal calling all year round), finer-grained venison (similar to whitetail or fallow), accessibility and generally easier terrain than for some species.

A sika stag is much smaller than a red stag standing, .96 /metres 38" at the shoulder and

weighing 81 kg /180 lbs. A good head has 8 points, 2 strong tines on each top and a spread and length of antler around the 30" mark. Many young sika stags have 8 points, but not the length and weight of a mature animal. Their spotted skins also make for an attractive souvenir of your hunt.

As a thin-skinned animal, bullet placement is more important than power. Shots can range from 5 metres/yards in the thick of it out to 200 – 300 metres/yards in the open country.

The sika rut / roar commences mid to late April through May and it is not uncommon for stags to still respond to a hunter's call during June. Antlers are generally cast around September with hard polished antlers returning during February.

Hunting sika is generally in and around forest and scrub areas, with animals frequenting open country at certain times of the year in some locations.