



TCOP 2026/2027



Photo courtesy of Anna Eteveneaux

ADVICE TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION – 2026/27 TAHR CONTROL OPERATIONAL PLAN

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Tahr Control Operational Plan 2026-2027 Advice

Priorities for control operations

Priority 1: Tahr outside the Feral Range and Exclusion Zones

The NZTFs position is that controlling tahr north and south of the feral range should always remain top priority for TCOP development to prevent new populations of tahr establishing along the main divide.

Anecdotal reports of tahr outside the feral range continue in the south.

The NZTF advises the Department to continue with the Judas tahr program in these zones.

Independent outlying populations, such as those at Waikiti, Haupiri and Vine Creek should receive sustained official control in 2026.

Eastern populations do not prove an issue for spread, they will remain contained in the ranges they occur in. Effective control is complicated by adjacent private land. For most effectiveness in preserving biodiversity values the focus should be on stopping spread north and south.

Priority 2: Tahr Inside the feral range but outside the management units.

The priority focus is around preventing tahr moving from inside to outside the feral range. The targeted control of female populations is most appropriate to prevent spread. Male tahr in these areas are generally accessible to hunting and pose no threat in establishment of populations outside the feral range.

The Foundation advises the Department to focus on control of all female tahr populations which threaten to extend the feral range, especially those south of MU6 – the TR of the Landsborough and Clarke/Solution Range in particular.

Other ISFR areas such as Greer Creek would benefit from aerial nanny control, with reports from late 2025 suggesting populations remain high.

Priority 3: Tahr inside the management units

The Foundation advises the following items are considered in deciding if and where control operations are required:

- The population in terms of demographic and spatial distribution.

A shift in female: male ratios is highly apparent in many areas. This will create long term changes to the population, as is the intention, but changes in control application must be implemented. The Foundation does not believe that the shift to date has put the population at risk of collapse overall. However, continued pressure in areas with low numbers of female

tahr may cause localised collapse. Field reports suggest only localised hotspots of high female densities and attendant vegetation damage.

The Foundation recommends changing the focus from broad scale hours-based control to localised control where female numbers are high and the risk to vegetative health is greatest and offers its assistance in identifying these areas. The previous TCOP allocated a significant amount of hours strictly to official control that would seem more than is necessary for 26/27. This funding could be better used for improved vegetation monitoring.

- Vegetation as the focus of management

The progression of the vegetation monitoring system will be extremely helpful, however, it may take some time to be informative for management decisions.

The NZTF again offers its assistance in the development of a quick and sustainable process for determining locations where there are identifiable effects from tahr and significant tahr populations. We suggest building on a new Tahr App, and asking PCL users to flag high populations or vegetation damage with waypoints. This can corroborate other information sources and help guide the NZTF and the Department for effective control. Apply tahr control budget into advancing robust vegetation monitoring and establishing criteria for determining management.

- Management tool options across the range

The NZTF prefers that where possible tahr are used rather than shot to waste. Also the intense use of helicopters has altered the behaviour of tahr in some areas and as a result are not always an effective tool. We look forward to a trial using ground hunters and drones for meat recovery in February 2026.

Indications are that there may again be a significant number of AATH offsets available for control activities post the 2026 hunting season. The landscape and cost to operators for undertaking AATH offsets has changed with lower tahr numbers and higher helicopter costs, meaning CPUE is declining.

The Foundation again suggests considering subsidised WARO / temporary increases to WARO permissions for areas identified as a problem to reduce costs and resource wastage as a partial alternate to official control, provided operations are female-focussed. Permit requirements and costs for tahr WARO operations are excessive and a barrier to management.

We encourage DOC to continue with a thorough public review on AATH.

- Identifiable males not to be culled inside the management units.

With the huge demand for bull tahr in the coming season and into the future from both local and international hunters, the Foundation believes there should be no culling of identifiable immature or mature males. The hunting sector members strongly agree that there is no evidence to support the culling of identifiable male tahr in any management unit, including in National Parks, for the protection of any indigenous species. The massive increase in

commercial demand last season will continue in 2026, and in conjunction with increased hunter access would allow for bull populations to be reduced in NPs without shooting to waste.

The NZTF again advises the Department to improve access for hunters to NPs to increase the effectiveness of hunter effort in managing male tahr in huntable areas, and therefore collaterally female numbers, including within Westland National Park. The NZTF offers to assist the Department in this process and appreciates the step forward with the recent Centennial Tag program.

- Flexibility in the use of control measures

The NZTF receives information throughout the year regarding observations of where tahr may be having a detrimental effect on vegetation, as is currently the case in forested and subalpine areas of MU6. The TCOP needs to continue to be able to respond to such information and deal with any problems as a priority when they are identified, as it has done in 25/26. There needs to also be the facility to allocate the right management tool(s) where they will provide the most benefit, ie continuing ground control in the case of MU6 – Landsborough flats.

The NZTF advises that TCOP should continue to be able to be adjusted for new information during its operation. The Department should continue the policy of swapping types of control measures across the MUs as and where needed to deal with these priorities as they become aware of them. NZTF sees this process being part of ongoing reviews as the results of control operations and other information becomes available, and would offer its assistance and expert localised knowledge to DOC and the GAC.

- Continue prompt map delivery

NZTF appreciates the delivery of control maps ahead of TCOP deadline, though we note the lack of mapping for OSFR operations. We also request the inclusion of waypoints recording the sex of animals controlled in the NPs.

In line with the AATH systems analysis, and the report which was due in March 2024, the NZTF emphasises the need to see greater transparency around AATH activity.

We ask that the Department include the Foundation and the GAC in doing a thorough investigation into the efficacy of official control, including the track logs with time of day and way points.

Control within management units listed in order of priority

The Foundation can provide maps to Tom Brookman of areas that still have significant nanny numbers from its member's extensive experience in the field in the last year.

Please note, the NZTF advises the Department to instruct operators to use their allocated time to cull only in these locations. Many of the areas identified will require multiple trips for effective tahr control, and there are catchments with low numbers bracketed by catchments with high numbers.

Management Unit 6 – Landsborough

Feedback still suggests that vegetative impacts are resulting from female tahr populations in and adjacent to this management unit. The Foundation expects that some provision for considerable helicopter hours and targeted ground control will be required in the coming TCOP.

Following on from the successful targeted harvest operations last year, the NZTF is willing to assist the Department in managing nanny numbers in pockets that have been identified as exhibiting identifiable tahr effects and which have high nanny tahr concentrations within this management unit. We have a special focus on the Jacobs Valley given the spring weather precluding late 2025 operations.

Official control for females will be needed in the main Landsborough and Upper Clarke/adjacent West Coast catchments in to the country toward the edge of the MU.

We would like to encourage the use of ground teams with dogs where applicable, such as the flats like Dechen flat which needs sustained control for veg recovery, as reports suggest difficulty for aerial control and helicopter-shy tahr. We also encourage a conversation around joint helicopter operations in the Jacobs.

Management Unit 5 – Ben Ohau

A large percentage of MU5 is private land. However, much of it is accessible to hunters.

The Foundation advises the Department to continue to reduce nanny groups on PCL to 10, where possible utilising tools other than official control which reduce wastage.

Populations are reported to be low in the west, within the Huxley and in to the Hopkins, and higher in the Dobson and the Pukaki faces. NZTF encourages cross-tenure operations in the Dobson.

Management Unit 4a – Westland / Tai Poutini National Park

Feedback indicates that nanny numbers are under control in many areas, and control yield from 2025 supports this. There are still some tahr in parts of this MU living in the bush and alpine scrub zones, and so are more difficult to control by helicopter. We would encourage ‘spelling’ aerial control for most areas in MU4a.

Please note: the hunting sector in no way supports the official control of identifiable male tahr in MU4a. This is a waste of the Department’s control effort and budget, and a waste of a resource that could be used for self-funding management.

The NZTF would like to work with the Department and Stakeholders to resolve this issue and ensure positive conservation outcomes going forward.

Only small areas of 4a are still problematic in our feedback, particularly the lower Callery from Spencer down.

The Foundation suggests a targeted approach to control in this management unit and the application of tools other than official control be applied where practical, i.e offsets or WARO. The additional management effort from the NZTF as a result of the Centennial Tag success should provide a significant boost, and free up DOC budget for vegetation monitoring and increased OSFR work.

Management Unit 2 – South Whitcombe / Wanganui / Whataroa

Feedback indicates that some tahr in this MU are living in the bush and alpine scrub zones, so may be more difficult to control by helicopter. General feedback suggests ground operations have been very successful nanny numbers are in decline, which ties in with significant official control effort in 2025.

The NZTF recommends reducing nanny numbers in nanny/juvenile groups on PCL to no more than 10 and expanding the trials of targeting adult nanny tahr.

Management Unit 4b – Mount Cook / Aoraki National Park

Feedback continues to suggest that tahr concentrations are below what is considered to cause irrevocable damage to vegetation in many areas. Most of the terrain is accessible to hunters.

The hunting sector advises that a “nannies only” culling policy is sufficient for this MU moving forward. Control of bulls would still occur by hunters as the MU possesses some of the most accessible tahr habitat. This format poses no risk of tahr densities in the MU increasing, rather continues to work towards lower tahr densities at lower cost and with higher public buy-in. Recreational use of MU4b has decreased significantly as a result of intensive control.

Management Unit 3 – Gammack / Two Thumb

Feedback suggests that there are pockets of concentrated tahr which may be impacting vegetation.

The Foundation will encourage recreational hunters to remove as many nanny tahr as possible in the more accessible areas, while the Department concentrates on the more remote populations, reducing nanny numbers in nanny/juvenile groups on PCL to no more than 10 and expanding the trials of targeting adult nanny tahr.

The Godley appears to be at low densities away from private land boundaries and especially into MU4b.

Management Unit 1- South Rakaia / Rangitata

Management Unit 1 is moving towards hunter led management.

The Foundation advises the Department to again make provisions for allocating helicopter hours to be directed under this framework.

Management Unit 7 – Wills / Makarora / Hunter

The tahr population is unlikely to be causing substantial damage to vegetation in this MU.

The Foundation advises that no action, other than the support of sustainable vegetative monitoring to support management and the consideration of sensible boundary adjustments, as proposed below, is required. Feedback reports that numbers remain low throughout MU7 in general, with scattered pockets of small mobs and large vacant areas between.

Matters outside of the TCOP

Concerns around matters which fall outside of the TCOP have repeatedly not been addressed through the TPILG process. We support the GAC's request for a summary document of these consistent concerns.