

MEDIA FACT SHEET: Bush Alert program

18 September 2007

- The Bush Alert program was first discussed with Mullion Creek residents (near Orange) in early 2006 to address their concerns about conservation hunting in Mullions Range State forest.
- There had been illegal hunting in the forest and on adjoining private properties for many years before it was declared for conservation hunting on 13 March 2006 under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act*.
- The Bush Alert program aims to address illegal hunting and is based on similar models in other States.
- It was developed in conjunction with the NSW police force and Forests NSW, and will be rolled out at Mullions Range and Canobolas State forests in the Central West on **18 September 2007**. If successful, the program may be rolled out State-wide.
- Game Council NSW developed Bush Alert in conjunction with the NSW Police Force and Forests NSW to tackle illegal hunting and associated offences.
- There will be a letter drop to about 65 landholders adjoining these State forests explaining the program and offering FREE private property signs for their farm gates.
- Bush Alert encourages licensed hunters, other forest users and landowners to record and report specific details of suspected illegal hunting activities.
- The program includes forest signage promoting Bush Alert, stickers, reporting cards and advertisements/media releases in the local media.
- Through the Bush Alert program, Game Council wants to send a clear message: hunters who choose to operate outside the law are criminals.
- They tarnish the reputation of the majority of people who abide by the law and are making a real contribution to feral animal control through conservation hunting.

Conservation hunting

GAME COUNCIL NSW

- Game Council NSW is a statutory authority of the NSW Government that issues game hunting licences and manages conservation hunting on declared public land.
- There are currently 180 State forests and two Crown Land areas declared for conservation hunting under the *Game and Feral Animal Control Act*.
- To date, licensed and accredited hunters have removed more than 7200 feral animals such as pigs, goats, foxes and rabbits from State forests since the scheme commenced in March 2006.
- For example, at Pennsylvania State forest near Blayney, close to 900 feral animals have been taken by licensed conservation hunters. This includes almost 500 goats.

Requirements for hunting on declared State forests

- A NSW Game Hunting Licence plus written permission is required by law by those wishing to participate in conservation hunting on 180 State forests in NSW. Full list of forests is located at www.gamecouncil.nsw.gov.au
- Canoblas and Mullions Range State forests, near Orange, were 'declared' for conservation hunting under the *Act* in March 2006.
- All conservation hunters must wear an article of blaze orange clothing while participating in feral animal control on these areas.

Penalties for non-compliance

- Hunters are firmly reminded they face fines of up to \$5500 PLUS confiscation of hunting equipment and loss of licence if they hunt on State forests without authorisation, or if they trespass on to adjoining private property.
- The creation of Game Council NSW under the *Act* introduces more legislation and additional powers for NSW Police to help prevent illegal hunting.

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