

2020 Game Bird Opening Date Options Paper

New Zealand Fish and Game Council

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Purpose

1. On Friday 17th April the NZC resolved to delay the opening date of the 2020 game bird season, and to reconvene following the Monday 20th April Government announcement to specify the opening date.
2. The purpose of this paper is to set out the pros and cons of the available dates for the opening of the game bird hunting season.

Alert Level Timeline

3. On Monday 20th April the Government set out the following timeline for moving out of Alert Level 4:
 - a. New Zealand will move to Alert Level 3 at 11:59pm Monday 27th April.
 - b. New Zealand will remain at Alert Level 3 for at least two weeks, with Cabinet set to decide on whether to move to Alert Level 2 on Monday 11th May.

The current Alert Level 2 considerations as at 21/4/20

4. At Alert Level 2, unless the Government prohibits game bird hunting, the current restrictions will impact on any season as they state:
 - a. People asked to stay at home where possible.
5. People advised to minimise non-essential travel and stay local. Note until we hear differently we have taken local to mean regional in terms of distance travelling.
 - a. Participating in sports and recreational activities is allowed, subject to conditions on gatherings.
 - b. Public venues are open but must comply with conditions on gatherings.
6. Under Alert Level 2 you are allowed outside gatherings of 500 and inside gatherings of 100, so sharing vehicles, boats and maimais are allowed if you can maintain one metre apart.

Assumptions

7. Currently the status of hunting under Alert Level 3 is unclear, however even if game bird hunting was permitted at Level 3 the movement and socialisation restrictions on hunters are such that many of the aspects that make game bird hunting such a classic kiwi tradition, like socialising in the maimai with mates or travelling back home to hunt with your family, will not be permitted.
8. It further assumes that we will move from Level 3 to Level 2 on or around Monday 11th May. However, this is not guaranteed and the possibility of an extension from this date should be considered as a factor when evaluating the available options.
9. Because of these assumptions, the earliest available date to have an opening weekend is Saturday 16th May and dates from this point are considered.

Saturday 16th May

10. Pros:
 - a. Maximises season length and hunting opportunities for hunters.
 - b. Minimal need to extend season length, if any.

11. Cons:
 - a. Less opportunity for hunters to prepare after moving to Level 2 (when retail shops are expected to open).
 - b. Places pressure on retailers and may limit their sales.
 - c. Possibility of Level 3 extension beyond this date, creating uncertainty and compounding the above two points.
12. Conclusion:
 - a. Overall, the uncertainty around when exactly the move to Level 2 will happen and the limited time available to both retailers and hunters to prepare means that this option while possible is not preferable.

Saturday 23rd May

13. Pros:
 - a. All regions have hunting opportunities in their regular gazetted season.
 - b. Sufficient opportunity for hunters to prepare after move to Level 2.
 - c. More opportunity for retailers.
14. Cons:
 - a. Probable need to extend season in Auckland/Waikato and Eastern into mid-June.
 - b. Probable loss of some hunting opportunity as a result of biological limitations on how long the season can be extended for.
15. Conclusion:
 - a. Saturday 23rd May represents the earliest practical date on which we can set an opening date, having mind to both the requirement for hunters and retailers to prepare as well as the possible uncertainty around the exact date at which we will move to Level 2.

Saturday 30th May

16. Pros:
 - a. Ample time for hunters to prepare after move to Level 2.
 - b. Ample time for retailers to prepare and conduct sales.
17. Cons:
 - a. Gypsy day is the 1st of June and strong indications from rural communities are that the 30th of May would be unworkable as an opening date.
 - b. Need to extend season in several North Island regions.
18. Conclusion:
 - a. Because of the significance of the 1st of June for the rural community, and the fact that the preceding weekend will be spent preparing for the moves, this option is not considered workable.

Saturday 6th June

19. Pros:
 - a. Ample time for hunters to prepare after move to Level 2.
 - b. Ample time for retailers to prepare and conduct sales.
20. Cons:
 - a. Minimises hunting opportunity.
 - b. Need to extend season in most North Island regions.

- i. The later the season starts the shorter it will necessarily be because of biological considerations as to how long the season can be extended for.
- c. Substantial delay for hunters also.

21. Conclusion:

- a. This option is workable, however it represents a less satisfactory outcome than the 23rd of May because of the need to extend the season substantially in several North Island regions and the loss of hunting opportunity.

Recommendation

1. That the game bird season opens nationwide on Saturday 16th May or Saturday 23rd May.