

Northern Territory

2017 Back Country Hunter Annual Report

NOTE ; THIS VERSION INCLUDES MINOR EDITING TO REMOVE REFERENCES TO IN-HOUSE FUNDING DISPOSITIONS AND PAYMENTS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR PUBLIC RELEASE



Compiled by the
Northern Territory Firearms Council
for the
Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Commission



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The NT Firearms Council wishes to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission staff who have made the introduction of the Back Country Hunting program on Litchfield National Park possible.

The Council would also like to recognise the work of our Executive Officer Alan Sprigg in undertaking the day-to-day administration of the program, NTFC Councillors Brian Boyle and Tony Orr for the development, organisation and management of the program and to those involved in the BCH training and assessment sessions: Alan Specketer, Daniel Horwood, Brian Boyle and Tony Orr.

The Council also acknowledges the kind use of the Darwin Rifle Club rooms for the BCH Accreditation sessions.

THE NT FIREARMS COUNCIL

The Northern Territory Firearms Council is an incorporated consultative and advisory body representing the interests of legitimate firearms owners and users throughout the Northern Territory. The Council is supported by the Northern Territory Government and solely funded by government financial grants which are used to resource the position of Executive Officer, fund the Council's operational functions, maintain the Mickett Creek Shooting Complex and manage the Council's Office in the Rifle Club building at Range #1.

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the Back Country Hunting Program (BCH) is to provide hunters in the Northern Territory with areas of public land to hunt feral animals with firearms and to provide training, knowledge and information to assist hunters to hunt safely, legally, ethically and responsibly on public land. A pass in the Hunter Accreditation Course is one of the requirements for application to participate in the BCH.

To assist in the process of continual learning, the Northern Territory Firearms Council (NTFC) compiled a Hunter Accreditation Handbook. The Handbook was designed to be used by:

- hunters who:
 - wish to apply for access to the NT estate under the 'Back Country Hunting' initiative;
 - want to further their knowledge of hunting methods; or
 - are hunting on public land for the first time.
- individuals, clubs and organisations as a learning guide for the reinforcement of knowledge and the safe and ethical practices of hunting.

The information provided in the handbook is primarily based on the NSW Hunter Education Handbook which the NSW Department of Primary Industries Game Licensing Unit has kindly allowed the NTFC to use.

1.1 WHO CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE BCH PROGRAM?

Northern Territory Residents

Residents of the Northern Territory can participate in the BCH initiative subject to the following requirements:

- i. hold a current NT firearms licence;
- ii. be a current member of a P&W Approved Hunting Organisation;
- iii. have a BCH accreditation from a P&W approved BCH assessor;
- iv. have an appropriate BCH permit from P&W.

Residents outside of the Northern Territory

Residents of areas outside of the Northern Territory can participate in the BCH initiative subject to the following requirements:

- i. Hold a current firearms licence accepted by the NT Police;
- ii. Be a member of a hunting club or organisation that holds \$20 million public liability which covers all members who participate in hunting on public land under permit or licence;
- iii. Have a BCH accreditation from a P&W approved BCH assessor;
- iv. Have an appropriate BCH permit from P&W;
- v. Must be accompanied by an NT Resident with a BCH accreditation and Permit on the permitted hunt.

1.2 THE BCH TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Hunter education training in accordance with the Handbook was provided at sessions organised at the Darwin Rifle Club and conducted by NTFC approved assessors.

Recognition of Prior Learning

To qualify for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in any of the fields covered in the Accreditation Course, the applicant must provide evidence of prior learning to an AHO Assessor. The NSW Restricted Game Hunting Licence (R-Licence) was approved by the PWC and may be used as RPL for interstate hunters for the BCH Program

2. The 2017 BCH Program Report

2.1 NTFC Program Set-up

The NTFC held a volunteer weekend over 27-29 May 2017 to check and set up the five BCH campsites in Litchfield National Park, erect entrance and directional signage, clear grass and vegetation from around toilets and campsites and repair creek crossings. The weekend was attended by Barry Seabrook, John Dakers, Jerry Roberts and Brian Boyle.

The long drop toilets held up well and were checked by Brian Boyle in September 2017 and all were still OK to use. The dual lock system with an NTFC combination lock on the entrance gate to the hunting block on Stapleton Track worked well. The combination lock was removed from the gate in January 2018 and will not be put back on until the block is open after the wet season in 2018.

2.2 Memorandum of Understanding and Deed Poll

NTFC and P&W have been discussing and developing a draft Deed Poll and MoU which should be completed in early 2018 and ready for signing by the NTFC President and the Director General for the NT Department of Tourism and Culture.

2.3 NTFC BCH Assessors in 2017

In 2017 there were 4 NTFC BCH approved assessors in Darwin: Alan Sprigg; Alan Specketer; Brian Boyle; and Tony Orr; and one in Katherine: Daniel Horwood. The NTFC would like to acknowledge the time and efforts by these gentlemen in undertaking the accreditation sessions and assessments for the BCH program.

2.4 BCH Accreditations in 2017

183 hunters received BCH assessment and accreditation in 2017. Total BCH accreditations 2016-2017: 193. Fourteen accreditation sessions were held at the Darwin Rifle Club and one at Adelaide River for 4 hunters from Katherine. Brian Boyle conducted 5 accreditation sessions at other locations for hunters who could not make the night-time accreditation sessions. Daniel Horwood accredited 4 hunters in Katherine and 14 RPL accreditations were conducted for inter-State hunters with a NSW Restricted Game Licence (RPL = approx. 19.5% of accreditations).

186 BCH accreditations were by males and 7 by females. The number of females may increase next year as Catherine Baker who runs a women's hunting and fishing forum in Darwin with 1,000+ members has volunteered to be a BCH assessor and is prepared to run BCH accreditation nights for women as part of her group's hunter education program.

2.5 BCH Hunter Permits and Returns in 2017

137 BCH permits were issued for 325 permitted days hunting. Hunters reported hunting on 175 days and taking a total of 357 feral animals.

Feral animal	Number of animals	
	Taken	Seen
Pigs	154	515
Clean-skin Cattle	6	87
Water Buffalo	23	118
Cats	2	5
Horses	172	115

Hunters were charged a fee of \$25/day booked. This money has been placed into a trust account for expending in the BCH program after consultation/approval by PWC as per the draft MoU. An administration fee of \$10 was charged to cover NTFC Executive Officer time for processing permits. The administration fee does not meet the cost of processing and NTFC agreed at its' December 2017 General Meeting to increase the administration fee to \$25 in 2018 to assist NTFC with recovering costs for the BCH program.

Recommendations for 2018:

1. It is recommended that only one hunter return be submitted for each party. This will avoid duplication of reported sightings of feral animals.
2. NTFC permit administration fee be increased to \$25 per permit to help NTFC meet administration costs.

2.6 BCH Hunter Compliance with Permit Conditions

There were no issues with permitted hunters complying with permit conditions in the BCH block in Litchfield for the 2017 hunting period from May to September. There were several short notice closures of the hunting block in the hunting period due to fires in the area and hunter's willingly complied with closures or requests to leave the area. Hunters also provided a number of illegal hunting reports for P&W as part of the program. NTFC has purchased a number of trail cameras which will be placed in the hunting area to aid in surveillance and intelligence gathering for PWC.

2.7 Expansion of BCH program to other areas

The NTFC would like to enter into discussions with PWC to ascertain other areas where the BCH program can be expanded to.

