

Northern Territory Back Country Hunting

2018 Annual Report



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



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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.

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 trial program on Litchfield National Park possible.

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

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, and to those involved in the BCH training and assessment sessions in the past year: Alan Specheter, Daniel Horwood and Brian Boyle.

This report contains an overview of the program and the data from the program in 2018. The program in 2017 and 2018 has been an unmitigated success and we look forward to continuing and expanding the program where possible in the future.

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 were modified from the Parks and Wildlife Commission NT (P&W) Guidelines for SSAA 1993, and 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 members 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 a 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 inter-State 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 Brian Boyle, Alan Specheter, Andrew Goldsmith, Tony Orr and Barry Seacombe.

The pit toilets held up well and were checked by Brian Boyle in August, September and October 2018 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. Another volunteer weekend was held in October to remove the pit toilets was attended by Will Bowman, Matt Osborne, Tony Orr and Brian Boyle.

The Council acknowledges and thanks the efforts of those who contribute their time to the successful running of the program.

2.2 Memorandum of Understanding and Deed Poll

NTFC and P&W have been discussing and developing a draft Deed Poll and MoU in relation to the Back Country Hunting Program, the draft document is still being considered when this report was compiled

2.3 NTFC BCH Assessors in 2018

In 2018 there were 5 NTFC BCH approved assessors in Darwin: Alan Sprigg, Alan Specheter, Catherine Baker, Brian Boyle and Tony Orr; and one in Katherine: Daniel Horwood.

2.4 BCH Accreditations in 2018

105 hunters received BCH assessment and accreditation in 2018. Total BCH accreditations to date: 290.

Darwin BCH Accreditation Sessions in 2018	Accreditations BCH Accreditation	BCH Fees Received	BCH Assessor re-imburement for costs
16	105	\$5,150	\$1,050

In 2018 BCH accreditations were: 100 males and 5 by females.

2.5 BCH Hunter Permits and Returns in 2018

143 BCH permits were issued for permitted hunting. This is an increase of 57 on the previous year. Hunting occurred 144 days. Hunters reported taking a total of 170 feral animals.

Feral animal	2018 number of animals taken	2017 number of animals taken
Pigs	93	154
Clean-skin Cattle	5	6
Water Buffalo	27	23
Cats	2	2
Horses	43	172

Hunters were charged a fee of \$25/day booked and total BCH Permit daily fee received by the NTFC for 2018 was \$5,150. This money has been placed into a trust account for expending in the BCH program after consultation/approval by PWC as per draft MoU. The total funds in the trust account is \$10,608. An administration fee of \$10 was charged to cover NTFC Executive Officer time for processing permits, income received for the admin fee totalled \$1,050. The administration fee does not meet the cost of processing and NTFC agreed at its' December 2018 General Meeting to increase admin fee to \$25 in 2018 to assist NTFC with recovering costs for the BCH program in 2019.

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 2018 hunting period from May to October. 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.

