Conclusions

Hunting satisfaction can be improved by increasing deer numbers (i.e., increasing kill-related satisfaction), by increasing hunting opportunity (i.e., increasing satisfaction not directly related to the kill), or by a combination of both (Hendee 1974). Hendee strongly advocated the multiple satisfaction approach for deer management. However, Decker et al. (1980) suggest that, for North American hunters, kill-related benefits are generally far more important in satisfying hunters than benefits such as outdoor experience or comradeship. The willingness of most Blue Mountains hunters to forego hunting opportunity in return for better hunting, and their avoidance of poor blocks, indicates that this is also true in New Zealand. This suggests deer management for hunting satisfaction should concentrate on maximizing the kill.

We found that blocks with an average success rate of one deer per four hunt days satisfied the minimum requirements of most hunters. Such blocks were heavily used in 1984/85, leaving little potential under the exclusive block system to increase their use. There was greater potential to increase both satisfaction and the amount of hunting in the Blue Mountains RHA by increasing deer numbers on all blocks to levels where hunters could average one deer every four days.

In summary, Blue Mountains hunters were reasonably positive about their sport and the management of the RHA, although seeing room for improvement. They appeared to want to maintain the status quo as far as possible. They accepted the need for restrictions to improve the quality of hunting, but were divided about how best to achieve this.

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References