

Code of Practice for the hunting of ducks in Tasmania.



Game Management Liaison Committee

Approved as an Animal Welfare Guideline under Section 44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water.

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Introduction and scope of this code of practice.

The Game Management Liaison Committee (GMLC) is a committee established to advise the relevant Minister on game management matters. As part of its function, the Committee develops Codes of Practice for hunting in Tasmania. These codes are intended to provide hunters with guidelines on the appropriate use and management of game animals and also demonstrate the ethical standards to which they should aspire.

When approved by the Minister as Animal Welfare Guidelines under S44B of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, these codes are intended to educate and guide hunters and provide the courts with a clear statement of what is current best practice that may be used as a yardstick to assess cruelty cases before them. As guidelines, a failure to adhere to them is not an offence under the Act. Only breaches of the Act, including the attached regulations, can result in prosecution.

The *Animal Welfare Act 1993* allows hunting as long as it is carried out in a reasonable and acceptable manner, and without causing undue suffering to the animal. Hunting must, therefore, be conducted safely and humanely. It must endeavour to ensure the sudden and painless death of the hunted animal.

The Game Management Liaison Committee in conjunction with the Wildlife Management Branch, has developed this Code of Practice for the hunting of ducks for recreational and crop protection purposes in Tasmania. The Code is designed to accommodate the circumstances and environment that impact on duck hunting in Tasmania.

The Code has been developed in close consultation with individuals and organisations with interests in the hunting of ducks in Tasmania. The development of this Code is in support of duck hunting and has been designed to guide duck hunting practices in Tasmania to ensure that animals are dispatched as efficiently as possible with the minimum of suffering.

The recommendations contained in this Code in relation to firearms are consistent with the provisions of the ***Firearms Act 1996***. This Code is based on current knowledge and experience on the hunting of ducks in Tasmania and the technology available at the time of publication. It may be revised as required, to take into account advances in technology and understanding of animal physiology and behaviour, as well as expectations of duck hunters and the general community.

Ducks in Tasmania.

The species of ducks that can be legally hunted in Tasmania during a declared open season are:

- Pacific black duck (*Anas superciliosa*)
- Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)
- Grey teal (*Anas gibberifrons*)
- Mountain duck / Shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)
- Australian wood duck (*Chenonetta jubata*)

Other species of ducks are present, or have been sighted in Tasmania, but are not permitted to be hunted. These include:

- Australasian / Blue-winged shoveler (*Anas rhynchos*)
- Blue-billed duck (*Oxyura australis*)
- Hardhead (*Aythya australis*)
- Musk duck (*Biziura lobata*)
- Freckled duck (*Stictonetta naevosa*)
- Pink-eared duck (*Malacorhynchus membranaceus*)
- Plumed tree / whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*)

The last three named species are very rare in Tasmania.

The hunting of black duck, chestnut teal and grey teal for recreation and private consumption has

occurred in Tasmania since the first days of European settlement. The first attempt to regulate the taking of a duck species in Tasmania was in 1860. Monitoring of the harvested species to ensure the sustainability of annual harvest is conducted annually using waterfowl counts and by collecting harvest and sample data.

The changes to the Tasmanian environment resulting from European settlement have favoured some duck species. In particular, the clearing of areas of native forest for agriculture, and the creation of a mosaic of dams, pastures and crops has enabled some duck populations in parts of Tasmania to increase to levels where numbers have needed to be controlled to protect crops. In particular, Mountain duck and Australian wood duck are shot to limit their adverse effects on agricultural production.

Hunting by recreational hunters and landholders is a recognised tool in controlling duck numbers and the potential damage they cause. Where shooting is not successful or appropriate, the use of alpha-chloralose may be permitted.

Legislation relating to duck hunting in Tasmania.

The five duck species that can be legally hunted in Tasmania are classified as Partly Protected Wildlife under the *Wildlife Regulations 1999* of the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*. All five species can be taken during a declared open season by persons who have a duck hunting licence. The regulations also allow these species, and other protected waterfowl species, to be taken under a permit issued by the Secretary of DPIW to protect crops and pastures.

In order to obtain a wild duck hunting licence:

Hunters must possess a current Firearms Licence, and produce evidence that they have passed the Waterfowl Identification Test. Applicants born in or before 1935 are exempt from this test. The wild duck hunting licence allows a hunter to take ducks during daylight hours during the annual open season and retain the products for personal use.

Landholders and hunters who are hunting under the authority of a crop protection permit must possess a current Firearms Licence and carry a copy of their crop protection permit whilst hunting.

The *Wildlife Regulations 1999* prohibit the taking of wildlife, including duck, with chemicals, poisons, bow and arrows, and spears. The Regulations also impose the following restrictions for taking ducks:

- Ducks may only be taken with shotguns not exceeding 12 gauge (or bore).
- A person must not use a firearm that is fitted with a silencer.
- A person must not use any solid-jacketed military bullet of any calibre.
- Decoys, including feathered decoys, are permitted but the use of any bait, live birds, tape recorders or other electronic devices is prohibited.
- The use of boats propelled by an engine is prohibited for taking ducks.
- Aircraft are prohibited for rousing ducks.
- Shooting duck between 1 hour after sunset and 1 hour before sunrise is prohibited.
- Hunters must retain either the head or the wings on a harvested duck until the hunter has arrived at their normal place of residence, shack, or camp.

Duck hunters may use dogs to retrieve ducks shot over water or open land.

Crop protection permits may allow hunters to use rifles during daylight hours. Birds must be shot when stationary.

Whether shotguns or rifles are being used, the hunter must ensure that the shooting distance and shot placement is consistent with the calibre or type

of shot being used to ensure the sudden and painless death of the duck.

Non-toxic shot for hunting ducks:

The use of lead shot to hunt ducks over wetlands in Tasmania is prohibited. The definition of a 'wetland' for the purpose of using lead shot in relation to hunting wild duck under the *Wildlife Regulations 1999* is:

a marsh, mudflat or other expanse of land that is, permanently, intermittently or cyclically, inundated with water, whether the water is static or flowing; or the water is fresh, brackish or salt; or the inundation occurs as a result of a natural or artificial process.

Thus, hunters are not permitted to use lead shot when hunting ducks over wetlands, lakes, dams, harbours, estuaries, lagoons, rivers, creeks, canals or other watercourses, on either public or private property, even if at certain times of the year these areas become dry.

It has been known for many years that heavy metals pose serious environmental and health dangers. Exposure to lead in the environment can cause a build up of this metal in body tissue and cause serious health problems. It is important to ensure that lead does not end up in sediment where animals are likely to feed, because of the potential for them to ingest lead shot whilst they are dabbling for grit and feed.

Alternatives to lead shot are available that are effective, and are less harmful to the environment. A detailed explanation about the alternatives to lead shot is contained in the booklet “The use of non-toxic shot for hunting wild duck over wetlands in Tasmania” which is available from the Department of Primary Industries and Water.

Use of firearms for shooting ducks.

Shotguns

Shotguns are designed to dispatch moving targets at close range and can be very effective in achieving a humane kill. However, if used carelessly or negligently, shotguns can cause serious wounding resulting in unnecessary pain and suffering. All hunters should have the ability to shoot with adequate skill to kill the bird outright. This includes the ability to judge distance, wind direction and speed as well as knowledge of the performance of the shotgun and ammunition being used. A hunter using a shotgun must aim so that the animal will be hit in the head, neck or chest by the centre of the pattern. Differences in body size have resulted in different shotgun prescriptions for ducks of differing sizes. Shotguns smaller than 20 gauge (e.g.

410 gauge) are inadequate to consistently achieve a humane kill over the range of conditions encountered in the field and are not recommended for this purpose.

Recommended Minimum Requirements for Use of a Shotgun for Shooting

Point of aim: Centre of shot pattern to be head, neck or chest

Gauge: 12, 16 or 20. It is recommended that 410 gauge not be used.

Shot size: Larger ducks, for example Mountain duck: # 2 steel or the equivalent (# 4 lead) or larger shot.

Smaller ducks, for example Grey teal: # 4 steel or the equivalent (# 6 lead) or larger shot.

Minimum Recommended load: 32g (= 1 1/8 oz) or greater for 12, 16 or 20 gauge.

Choke: Appropriate for target, shot type and range.

But note when using steel shot:

- The hardness of steel and its predictable shot-string and pattern performance suggest that you can relax your choke without compromising energy-on-target performance.
- Interchangeable chokes should be opened by one quarter to obtain a similar pattern for steel.
- Fixed chokes should be modified, or replaced

with a set of interchangeable chokes fitted by a qualified gunsmith.

- Steel shot used in a fully choked gun can increase the risk of 'ring bulging' at the choke.

The risks are best assessed on a case by case basis by your experienced gunsmith.

Effective range: 30 – 40 metres.

Rifles

The use of rifles to shoot ducks is only permitted in special circumstances and with the permission of the Secretary under a current crop protection permit.

All hunters using a rifle to shoot ducks should have the ability to place a projectile on a stationary target so as to achieve a humane kill. They should be able to judge distance, wind direction and speed as well as having knowledge of the performance of the rifle being used.

Hunters are advised to use a rifle fitted with a telescopic sight for best results. Prior to each day's shooting, the rifle should be sighted in against an inanimate target. A hunter using a rifle should aim so as to hit the target bird in the chest, so as to hit the heart. The hunter must monitor all shot birds and, if necessary, properly dispatch them before targeting another bird.

High velocity .22LR and .22 magnum rimfire ammunition is adequate to reliably kill small ducks humanely provided that the target animal is within a specified range. A centre-fire rifle is required for humanely shooting larger ducks, or ducks outside of the specified range.

Recommended Minimum Requirements for Use of a Rifle for Shooting Ducks

Point of aim: That part of the body so as to hit the heart is acceptable. The bird must be monitored and properly despatched before another is targeted.

The target animal must be stationary.

It is recommended that shooters use a telescopic sight.

Firearm/ammunition specifications:

Firearm	Maximum Distance	Size of duck
.22LR	50 metre	Small
.17 - .22 magnum	80 metres	Small
.22 Centrefire	over 80 metres	Large and Small

Projectile type: Hollow-point, or other frangible projectiles are recommended, as these are more effective in achieving a humane kill.

Use of dogs in hunting ducks.

In Tasmania, hunters may use dogs to retrieve shot ducks, or to allow wounded ducks to be retrieved and humanely dispatched. The use of dogs in this way is allowed under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*, provided that it is carried out in a reasonable and acceptable manner.

Section 10 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* states in part that a person must not keep, use or allow an animal to kill or injure another animal. An offence under this section carries a fine of up to \$20,000 and/ or up to 12 months imprisonment. Therefore, the use of dogs for catching, injuring and killing ducks is illegal.

Prescriptions for Use of Dogs in Hunting

- Dogs may only be used to locate and retrieve shot ducks and to allow wounded ducks to be retrieved and humanely dispatched.
- Dogs must not be used or allowed to injure or kill ducks.
- Any person found using or allowing dogs to kill or injure wildlife is liable for prosecution under Section 10 of the *Animal Welfare Act 1993*.

Dispatch of wounded ducks.

Wounded ducks must be dispatched as quickly and humanely as possible.

Duck hunters often shoot more than one duck from a group before retrieving the carcasses. This is acceptable provided that where an individual bird is wounded no further animals are shot until all reasonable efforts have been made to dispatch the wounded bird as quickly and humanely as possible.

Rapid dislocation of the vertebrae of the neck is a recommended method for dispatching wounded ducks.

To achieve this, the legs of the duck are taken in one hand and the head held between the first two fingers of the other hand with the thumb under the beak. A sharp jerk with each hand pulling the head backwards over the neck will break the spinal cord.

Care of harvested ducks.

In the case of harvesting ducks for human consumption, their shooting, handling and transport must be carried out in accordance with best practice.

The *Wildlife Regulations 1999* allow the removal of the head of a duck in the field, provided a wing is left on the carcass for identification purposes. This assists in reducing the deterioration of harvested ducks, whilst still allowing for proper identification by enforcement officers.

Freshly harvested game is, of course, warm. This body heat must be allowed to disperse as quickly as possible otherwise the carcass will sweat and decompose. For example, birds left in a heavy game bag will deteriorate in as little as two hours. Ducks taken in warm weather must be moved to a cool, fly-proof, larder as soon as possible or be at risk of becoming fly-blown. Dressing out the neck and gizzard area of harvested birds will assist in delaying deterioration.

It is essential that shot ducks are handled as a food product. The larder should be a clean room and large enough to hang all of the birds. Hanging by strings is preferable to hanging on hooks or nails as air must be allowed to circulate around the carcasses. The larder should also be insect and scavenger-proof.