

Who's watching? Who's enforcing the rules?

A comparison of duck shooting regulation in Victoria and South Australia

Victoria

Last year Victoria's Game Management Authority (GMA) commissioned Pegasus Economics (a Canberra-based economics and public policy consultancy firm) to undertake an independent review of GMA's compliance and enforcement function. [Click here to read the Pegasus Economics report.](#)

The report was triggered by what the Authority's Chairman Brian Hine called "entirely unacceptable behaviour" by shooters during the opening weekend of Victoria's 2017 duck shooting season. This behaviour included shooting before the permitted start time, shooting protected species and failing to retrieve shot birds. [Click here to view an ABC news story about the report.](#)

In response to the report's findings, RSPCA Victoria sought a suspension of both the 2018 duck hunting season, and the issuing of any further game licenses to shooters. RSPCA Victoria maintained that the suspension should remain in place until all Victorians were confident in the integrity and effectiveness of the hunting regulator, with the laws designed to protect animals being properly enforced.

The Victorian State Government did not suspend the 2018 duck shooting season, but did introduce two new regulations to Victoria's Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012. Shooters are now required to immediately recover shot birds (rather than continue shooting) and to humanely kill any birds that are still alive when recovered.

They are also now required to salvage at least the breast meat from the birds they kill. They must remain in possession of the bird or the bird's breasts until immediately prior to cooking or until it is taken home.

South Australia

Far fewer people participate in duck shooting in South Australia compared to Victoria. There are 26,000 licenced duck shooters in Victoria, whereas around 1,200 people apply for duck shooting licenses in South Australia each year. This represents less than 0.1% of our state's adult population. However, based on historical shooter reports and injury rates caused by shotguns, this one tenth of a percent is still responsible for the maiming and suffering of thousands of waterbirds a year.

Concerns regarding monitoring of duck shooting

Government monitoring of duck shooting in South Australia is undertaken by National Park Rangers. Rangers are not required to officially report to the Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) so it is difficult to obtain accurate information regarding broad scale compliance with bag limits, correct species being shot and responsible action to prevent suffering via swift retrieval and humane killing of injured birds.

With shooting permitted on eight different game reserves, it is impossible to guarantee adequate monitoring by rangers. In addition, many shooters now shoot on private properties, making it virtually impossible for rangers to monitor.

The [Pegasus Report's findings](#) about duck shooting in Victoria could easily be applicable to South Australia. There is little reason to feel confident that non-compliance with hunting laws (found to be "commonplace and widespread" in Victoria) is not occurring in our state too, as well as the failure to adequately monitor activities in the field and to enforce legislation relating to duck shooting.

Shooters in South Australia are asked to submit an annual report to DEWNR on the number of birds killed, species, location and use of dog and/or decoy. However, the vast majority of shooters ignore this request with an average of only 5% return rate. At the very least, RSPCA South Australia believes it should be mandatory for rangers and shooters to provide reports.

You'll find more information about our position on duck shooting - and action you can take to help end it – here:

www.rspcasa.org.au/duck-hunting