

Game Hunting in Victoria

Game hunting and firearm safety

Series No 10

When hunting with a firearm, it is your responsibility to ensure that your actions do not put the safety of yourself or others at risk.

You should know the eight basic firearm safety rules (see below for details) before you handle firearms and insist anyone who goes shooting with you follows these rules.

All firearm users must practice firearm safety to reduce the risk of firearm incidents. There is no such thing as a firearm "accident". In every case, at least one of the Firearm Safety Rules has been broken.

Responsible hunters will know and apply the basic firearm safety rules detailed below at **all times** and will insist that other hunters do the same.

1. Treat every firearm as being loaded

Check every firearm yourself, do not take the word of another person that a firearm is unloaded. Pass or accept only open and unloaded firearms.

Never accept or pass a firearm to another person unless the breech is open and all ammunition has been removed from the firearm.

2. Always point firearms in a safe direction

Loaded or unloaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction. A safe direction will depend on where you are and what you are doing.

3. Never have loaded firearms in the car, home or camp

Before entering a car, home or camp, completely unload your firearm. Ensure that the action is open and that there is no ammunition in either the breech or the magazine.

4. Identify your target and what is behind it

Make sure of your target before firing. It is not good enough just to think that what you see is your target. Your target must be positively identified before firing; if in doubt, **DON'T SHOOT**.

The firing zone is not only the area between you and your target, but also the area beyond the target, which is still within the extreme range of your firearm.

5. Never fire at hard surfaces or water

Consider the area in which you are shooting. Could a ricochet occur? A ricochet will almost certainly result from shooting at water or smooth flat surfaces and rocks.

6. Store ammunition and firearms separately

When not in use, lock away firearms and ammunition separately. Not only is this good sense but, in Victoria, there is a legal obligation on firearms owners to store firearms and ammunition separately in locked repositories or similar containers.

7. No alcohol or drugs when handling firearms

Alcohol and many day-to-day drugs and medicines dull and slow your mental and physical reactions. When using firearms, this is an extremely dangerous condition as the ability to recognise and react to dangerous situations swiftly and accurately is essential.



Photo: Simon Toop

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8. Do not climb fences or obstacles with loaded firearms

Before attempting to negotiate a fence or obstacle unload your firearm. Do not rely on safety catches. Safety catches, at best, only supplement the safe handling of firearms.

Other important information to remember

Use of firearms

You must not carry a loaded firearm or use a firearm on any thoroughfare or place open to or used by the public for passage with vehicles.

Also, you must not carry a loaded firearm or use a firearm in a town or populous place (eg. picnic area, camp site) or on or over any area of public land, where hunting is not permitted.

Never shoot across public roads or tracks or towards populated areas, including camping and picnic areas and walking tracks.

Be aware of personal safety

Many hunters today wear camouflaged clothes, which makes them difficult to see. While concentrating on the hunt, there is a possibility that you could be mistaken for game by another hunter.

Always positively identify your target **before** you pull the trigger. Under no circumstances should you ever shoot towards movement or noise.

This is particularly important when hunting game deer in Victoria. To ensure your safety and the safety of other hunters in the field, it is recommended that all deer hunters wear some form of bright coloured clothing or hat when hunting.

Overseas studies have shown that deer cannot see colours such as blaze orange and the wearing of these colours will not affect your hunting success. Many hunters have taken deer in Victoria while wearing blaze orange clothing.

The wearing of some form of bright coloured clothing is also recommended when you are carrying a carcass out of the bush. This will ensure that other hunters do not mistake you for a deer.

More information on the possession and use of firearms

To possess, use or carry a firearm in Victoria, you must hold and carry a current Firearms Licence issued by Victoria Police or any equivalent current interstate Firearms Licence. In addition, all firearms must be registered. This includes all shotguns and rifles (including air rifles).

For information on Firearms Licences and the possession, use and ownership of firearms, contact your Regional Firearms Officer or the Licensing Services Branch, Victoria Police, on 1300 651 645.



Photo: Simon Toop

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