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# ASJ

**AUSTRALIAN SHOOTERS JOURNAL**  
*The political voice of the SSAA*



**Anti-hunting stance  
rebuffed  
by SSAA**

# AUSTRALIA



# In this issue

# ASJ

**The political voice  
of the SSAA**

**Staff** CEO-Chief Editor Tim Bannister, Editor Allan Blane, Associate Editor Thomas Cook, Assistant Editor Dave Rose, Chief of Staff Jennifer Martens, Art Director Mike Barr, Production Coordinator Judy Ward, Graphic Designer Natalie Kuhlmann, Communications Officer Sam Talbot, Advertising Representative Karoline Minicozzi, Administration Debbie Wing.

PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061  
Phone: 08 8272 7100  
Fax: 08 8272 2945  
Internet: [www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au)  
Email: [as@ssaa.org.au](mailto:as@ssaa.org.au)

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**3** A message from SSAA National President Geoff Jones

**4** Recreational hunting and animal welfare - An RSPCA Australia (mis)information paper



**14** Unrealistic path to utopia  
The Greens' visceral view of volunteer hunters

**16** Tackling the feral pest problem head on

See back issues of ASJ at [ssaa.org.au/asj](http://ssaa.org.au/asj)



## A message from SSAA National President Geoff Jones

**Regardless of the demands of an increasing politically correct world, it is sometimes difficult to respond politely to crass stupidity and blatant dishonesty put to the Australian public as 'fact' or 'research' in relation to animal welfare. When the zealots of fairyland try to denigrate the natural, legitimate and cultural claim human beings have to ethical, sustainable and humane hunting and harvest of a natural resource, their diatribe cannot go unchallenged.**

Despite the fact that genuine, peer-reviewed research and hard evidence almost always favours the lawful, ethical hunter, the naysayers are undeterred from peddling their extreme ideologies and divisive, unrealistic agendas. The RSPCA is sometimes unfortunately guilty of this, while The

Greens are almost always guilty of this.

The truth is, the world over, recreational hunters have contributed more to conservation efforts and animal welfare outcomes than most of the inner-urban armchair do-gooders combined. Some non-hunting conservation groups have also had positive effects through their efforts however, it is worth noting that the principles underlying these successes are often so similar to those of hunting groups. Sadly, there are some good and sensible people in non-hunter groups whose genuine commitment to wildlife is devalued and distorted by association with the extremists.

By the same token we should not be expected to stand idly by while the \$5 contributor 'conservationist', 'animal rights supporter' or Greens voter denigrates the real contribution hunters make to conservation and the dignity of animals in life or in death. To suggest that all motor car drivers are deranged and homicidal maniacs just because a small minority of their number do stupid or criminally negligent things, often with catastrophic consequences, is equally disingenuous or laughable as labelling

ethical hunters that way. The only losers in this sort of ideological contest are our wildlife and environment. This contest is not what SSAA and its members believe in or promote. Our ongoing 'Be Part of the Solution' campaign is much more than cheap rhetoric: it is an opportunity for all our members who identify as hunters to 'walk the walk'. Whether through our highly skilled and regulated Conservation and Wildlife Management groups, our accredited Farmer Assist participants or just through our individual ethical hunter members, we can and should make ourselves aware of the truth, take the moral high ground and openly challenge the dishonesty every time it is pushed.

Legitimate hunters all have a place in the natural world and, provided we always act with integrity and respect for humans and animals alike, we can and should claim that right and not allow ourselves to be marginalised by an extreme radical minority whose only weapon is irrational emotion. We will continue to educate groups like the RSPCA about the real role hunters play in conservation and call out offensive anti-hunting policies perpetuated by groups like The Greens. ●

# Recreational hunting and animal welfare



AN RSPCA AUSTRALIA INFORMATION PAPER

## SUMMARY

The aim of this briefing paper is to present concise information on some of the contemporary animal welfare issues associated with recreational hunting in Australia.

The RSPCA opposes recreational hunting, or the act of stalking or pursuing an animal and then killing it for sport due to the inherent and inevitable pain and suffering caused. Hunting has the potential to result in significant animal suffering: animals are sometimes chased to the point of exhaustion and then killed with methods that do not cause a quick and painless death. Although some hunters may have the skills, knowledge and motivation to minimise the suffering of their animals, many do not and it is inevitable that many animals will endure pain and suffering.



**10.1 RSPCA Australia is opposed to the hunting of any animal for sport as it causes unnecessary injury, pain, suffering, distress or death to animals involved.**



# Recreational hunting and animal welfare –

## An RSPCA Australia (mis)Information Paper

The information paper released by RSPCA Australia in late 2017 is a collection of various policies and statements dating back a number of years. This document is littered with emotional terms and statements, preconceived notions that the majority of hunters do the wrong thing and don't take animal welfare seriously and is more or less expressed opinion rather than facts.

The continual use of the term 'sport' when discussing hunting is rather disingenuous. The term 'sport' in regard to hunting originates from North America where it was simply used to distinguish real hunters (sportsmen) from market or commercial hunters. These days, and in the Australian context, hunting is simply a recreational pastime.

The opinion that 'the potential for significant suffering is extremely high' during hunting activities is exaggerated. The act of hunting in Australia is highly regulated. There are a number of codes of practice (COPs) in place that must be followed when hunting. Not only do regulatory authorities have COPs that hunters

must follow, hunting organisations also have their own which obliges members to follow the rules. To make blanket statements that seem to imply the majority of hunters do the wrong thing and have no regard for animal welfare is somewhat disappointing. Animal rights organisations have a tendency to make outlandish statements to further their cause, but this is something we shouldn't expect from the RSPCA.

In an attempt to downplay the use of recreational hunting as a pest control tool, statements are made that hunting is ineffective at reducing pest populations on a broad-scale level. The problem with this statement is that most hunting occurs at the local scale (being the property) and is focused on impact mitigation of the particular pest animal. For example, hunters target foxes through spotlighting activities during lambing season to improve lambing rates, or target grazing pests at particular times to reduce crop damage. Coordinated shooting programs such as those undertaken by the SSAA Conservation and Wildlife Management branches can be

## Farmers speak about Farmer Assist

**“We have always found the Farmer Assist shooters extremely good, communicative and obliging (and very successful!). They ring before they come; and on the way before arrival. They were clean, tidy and left no mess. They camped in our cottage.”**

Andrew C, Aramac farmer

## SSAA Farmer Assist program aims to curb malignant ferals

SSAA MEMBERS CAN do their bit to bolster the SSAA Farmer Assist program, which has already made a major impact across the length and breadth of Australia.

The venture seeks to help farmers eradicate rogue and feral pest animals on their properties thanks to volunteer shooters and is now fully operational in Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Victoria.

The concept is simple but highly effective - SSAA members sign up as shooters to put their skills to use free of charge when assignments come up at the request of farmers, landowners or managers who are also registered.

To become involved you simply fill out an online enrolment form. Members must undertake the firearm proficiency requirements and have a digital copy of their assessment target available prior to completing the online document.

This initial online form only requires contact information to construct your profile and create a password that will allow you to retrieve your account once established.

Members must read the Complete Program Booklet and be prepared to follow the safety, animal welfare and ethical hunting guidelines.

Members are required to undertake a self-guided shooting competency test at their local SSAA range using the SSAA Farmer Assist target. If you're already a member of a Conservation and Wildlife Management (CWM) branch you don't need to take this test.

With a completed target in hand you'll be ready to fill in the signup form and upload a digital copy of your target or CWM membership evidence. Registration is completed by responding to an email from SSAA Farmer Assist to verify your account. This will let you log in to the Farmer Assist jobs page and start being part of the feral pest solution.

For more information visit [farmerassist.com.au](http://farmerassist.com.au)



*Animal rights organisations have a tendency to make outlandish statements to further their cause, but this is something we shouldn't expect from the RSPCA.*



conducted at broad-scale level. These activities are very different in motivation and resources and involve a number of shooters in teams across larger areas.

To infer that limited monitoring and enforcement leads to increased suffering and distress of animals shot by 'unskilled' hunters during pest control is also disingenuous. It's another claim made without providing evidence to support it. Every week there are thousands of hunters at SSAA ranges shooting, practising and improving their skills. It is highly likely they spend more time practising at ranges than so called 'professional shooters' who may only need to apply for an ABN and demonstrate competency once when gaining accreditation. Hunters gain no pleasure from a misplaced shot and because of this fact they endeavour to practise and improve their skill levels.

Whether a child can obtain a hunting permit or not has no negative implications on animal welfare. A young child may be able to legally hunt but not without direct supervision of an adult who has passed the checks and balances to be a licensed firearm owner. This enables a

young hunter to be mentored by someone with experience and develop the skills and ethics required to be a good hunter. The regulatory ability to mentor juniors is something that should not be seen in a negative light. Mentoring is a positive part of Australia's hunting culture.

*Hunting is a component of pest animal management.*

To imply that hunters are not motivated or required to follow standard operating procedures or best practice is insulting. Hunters are motivated to succeed and will happily seek and take on advice that improves hunting success. Ensuring a clean kill is a component of hunting success. Standard operating procedures such as those developed and promoted by PestSmart for the humane control of pest animals reflect generally followed hunting practices and methods that have

been used by hunters for many years. In reference to statements regarding the effects of hunting on other animals, the same can be said about other methods of pest control. Trapping, poisoning etc can also result in dependant young being left to fend for themselves. To try to infer this issue is only relevant to hunting is very misleading. To also imply hunters deliberately leave dependant young alive for the purposes of 'becoming future targets' without evidence is offensive to all those who undertake hunting for pest control reasons.

Any pest population that has been subjected to physical control where human interaction exists will display some sort of flight or avoidance response. This would not be limited to just hunting activities so to imply this would be wrong. Without providing evidence of 'stray bullets' wounding native animals or causing injury as 'they try and flee the area', such claims sound more like a story concocted by animal rights activists intended to mislead people.

Hunting is a component of pest animal management. To imply that 'most hunting

## Our members, our environmental volunteers



## Environmental volunteers speak about Farmer Assist

**“We make a yearly trip to Blackall and also go to Tambo once or twice a year. We’ve taken down bunnies, roos, goats, feral cats and hope to take more wild dogs, which are the worst for farmers.”**

Jared Battye, environmental volunteer

is primarily done as a desire to kill pest or game animals’ is plainly offensive to legitimate hunters. The act of killing is only a small element of hunting and the motivation to hunt is varied. Some people hunt for cultural or recreational reasons or for pest control or conservation.

As mentioned previously, hunting as part of pest management is generally a tool used at a local level, where hunters and landholders have the ability to manipulate activities (frequency and intensity) to achieve desired results. Anti-hunting groups usually imply hunting is done on an ad hoc basis and is something that should be seen as a negative. Ad hoc means to be ‘done for a particular purpose as necessary’ and this can suit many situations farmers find themselves in.

There’s nothing wrong with a landholder requesting a hunter to undertake spotlighting for fox control to limit lamb predation while lambing season is under way. While not every fox is eliminated across the landscape (as is hoped with coordinated mass poisoning programs), the objective of reducing fox predation at the property level (the desired effect) can be achieved. To simply say hunting has no

defined objective or planning or assessment when used as a pest control method is illogical. Utilising hunting doesn’t negate the use of additional pest control measures. Best practice pest control relies on using all tools in the toolbox to achieve a positive outcome.

When trying to minimise the effectiveness of hunting as a pest control method, the statement that hunting is ‘labour intensive and expensive’ is often made. Hunting or shooting can be as labour intensive as other methods of control such as trapping. But does this really matter when people are willing to undertake it as a recreational activity free of charge? How can it be viewed as expensive when the landholder pays no hourly rate or equipment costs? Using the same logic, Trees for Life volunteers may as well stop turning up for activities that improve our environment. Their contribution to the environment may also be viewed as too expensive and labour intensive.

When suggesting hunting is ineffective, the common play by organisations opposed to recreational hunting is to compare apples with pears in the hope of misleading people unfamiliar with the issue. This was

evident when the comparison between state forest hunting in NSW and helicopter culling was made. State forest hunting in NSW is managed as a recreational pursuit where hunters, hunting only on foot, generally harvest feral and game animals for food or trophy reasons. There can be a pest control element to activities in state forests where individual hunters may conduct their activities as pest control. For the most part, a recreational activity and a harvest of meat is the main motivation.

In contrast a helicopter cull, where pest animals are chased by helicopters and shot with self-loading firearms (that are not available to recreational hunters) is a completely different situation. The high costs associated with helicopter culling demand large areas be covered, usually across land tenures, to ensure a successful outcome. State forest hunting in NSW has restrictions on the number of hunters who can be in the same forest at any time. This safety measure restricts hunters’ ability to provide the level of intensity and frequency that replicates pest control methods such as helicopter culling. This is undoubtedly an apples-and-pears comparison.

## Farmers speak about Farmer Assist

**“The two shooters I had here could not be faulted. They did an excellent job and all gates were shut properly, etc. I think the program is a great asset in helping reduce the plague proportion of pest animals at the moment, especially with the drought conditions we are experiencing out here. Thank you.”**

Tracey W, Newstead farmer

*Whatever the RSPCA thinks regarding recreational hunting in national parks is irrelevant. They are an animal welfare advocacy group, not a pest management organisation or a government land management authority.*



Another common issue used to downplay the effectiveness of hunting is to imply pest management programs target all animals but hunters only target large trophy animals and leave the young to breed up. This statement never takes into account the different motivations hunters have. For instance, if a hunter is looking purely for a trophy they will most probably not shoot a female because they are after a male with antlers, but if a hunter is culling for pest management they will shoot every individual of a particular target species they can manage male, female, young and old.

The RSPCA's statement that 'shooting by itself is not an effective way to significantly reduce animal numbers and is of limited use to achieve long-term control' can also be said about other pest control tools (baits, traps etc) currently used. Best practice pest control demands using a suite of measures to achieve a desired outcome. There is no one silver bullet and hunting organisations such as SSAA never imply shooting is a silver bullet. Many pest control programs are dependent on funding and have ceased after funding has run out. This has a big impact on the success of any long-term control program.

A silver bullet may not currently exist but nor does a wishing wand that guarantees the success of every long-term control program.

To suggest the competency of recreational hunters is not up to standard by comparing them to a limited few in the country that have specific training to shoot from helicopters is ridiculous. The vast majority of staff from all government agencies that conduct on-ground pest management as well as so-called professional shooters would not have this level of training. To infer only highly skilled and accredited shooters can deliver good welfare outcomes is simply wrong. In some circumstances it is shooting organisations such as the SSAA that actually train departmental staff on how to safely and competently use firearms for pest control.

Questioning whether recreational hunting hinders the management of pest animals without providing indisputable evidence is just hearsay. It's possible that rogue hunters, or better termed poachers, may interfere with pest control equipment but so too can bushwalkers or even animal rights activists. The reality is the vast majority of hunters, like the vast majority

of the general population, do the right thing. This means 99 per cent of hunters don't damage property, don't release feral animals in new areas or do anything that is counteractive to other control efforts. To imply otherwise is simply unfair to those doing the right thing.

We certainly agree shooting is a humane way to kill an animal. What we don't agree with is the assertion that recreational hunting is likely to cause a high degree of suffering due to hunters lacking the necessary skills to kill animals humanely. Hunting organisations provide educational material to their members as well as providing facilities to enhance their shooting skills. There's a clear difference in opinion regarding the humaneness of both head and chest shooting between animal welfare and hunting groups. This opinion is squarely based on the lack of real life expertise and experience, and the unrealistic utopian views that many animal welfare groups hold.

While it sounds ideal to deliver immediate unconsciousness through a well-placed head shot, most field conditions (and equipment restrictions) experienced by recreational shooters make a chest shot the preferred method for the delivery of



## Environmental volunteers speak about Farmer Assist

**“We put in 100% and if we’re not eating or sleeping, we’re shooting - on average about 18 hours a day. On every single property I’ve been to through Farmer Assist I’ve received a “come back anytime” and I plan to continue with Farmer Assist for as long as it’s available – the whole program is genius!”**

Paul Land, environmental volunteer

a humane kill shot. A chest shot may not produce an immediate kill all the time but still ensures a rapid and humane death. The loss of blood to the brain causes insensibility and, if not killed instantaneously by hydrostatic shock, the resultant blood loss and unconsciousness will lead to a rapid demise.

Chest shots are not simply made ‘to preserve a head so that it can be mounted’, but to minimise the margin of error especially when dealing with species that are flighty and make sudden head movements. A chest shot should be viewed as acceptable because it reduces the risk and potential of wounding and it should be the gold standard when assessing best shot placement. An animal running away with a devastating facial wound after a failed head shot due to a sudden head movement is not a good welfare outcome. The choice of shot placement should be based solely on field conditions and target behaviour at the time, not some preconceived utopian view that to be humane every pest animal needs to be shot in the head to ensure an instantaneous death.

The RSPCA opposes ‘recreational trophy hunting as it causes unnecessary injury, pain, suffering, distress or death

to the animals involved’. In order to hunt or cull or harvest meat, it is necessary that an animal must die. Hunters do not go out with intent to cause unnecessary injury, pain, suffering or distress. Far from it, hunters like other industries with animal-human interactions have codes of practice to follow that minimise the potential of pain, suffering and distress. There are very few animal-human interactions that involve animal use that are free from the potential of injury, pain, suffering or distress. The RSPCA may think it’s unnecessary for everyday people to cull a pest or harvest healthy free-range organic wild food, but many more reject that narrow-minded ideology.

Whatever the RSPCA thinks regarding recreational hunting in national parks is irrelevant. They are an animal welfare advocacy group, not a pest management organisation or a government land management authority. Best practice pest management focuses on a ‘Nil-Tenure’ approach, which means it doesn’t matter who owns or manages the land, all lands should be treated the same while taking into account cultural considerations. As stated previously, hunting is a component of pest control and can also be a purely

recreational activity to harvest food or product. Hunting can have different motivations, objectives and outcomes. Hunting can and should occur on both private and public lands in a regulated way.

Again, the apples-and-pears approach has been used to compare the effectiveness of recreational hunters in national parks to professional shooters. It must be stated that recreational hunters in those areas do have limitations on equipment (self-loading rifles and shotguns) and accessibility (on foot, limited access to land), whereas professionals have access to helicopters, semi-automatics and sound suppressors. In all seriousness the approaches are so different that most people with any expertise in the area wouldn’t consider comparing the two.

The RSPCA states that ‘some recreational hunters are highly skilled at shooting, but there are many who are not’. In an attempt to substantiate this claim they use an example from New Zealand, indicating that 5 per cent of recreational hunters account for more than half of all deer shot. The problem with this claim is that it’s not hunters who are highly skilled at ‘shooting’ but hunters who are highly skilled at ‘hunting’ who are having better

## Farmers speak about Farmer Assist

**“Farmer Assist is definitely the way to go if you have an unwanted wildlife problem on your property. The quick, easy and effective SSAA process had us in touch with responsible shooters who have come out and helped us to significantly reduce the impacts of pests on our crops and grazing lands.”**

Andrew Hannaford, farmer

*Codes of Practice  
mandate permit  
holders and members  
alike to abide by  
humane hunting  
principles whenever  
they go hunting.*



results. This doesn't reflect an animal welfare issue, it is purely a numbers game. It simply comes down to hunter experience and the way they go about a hunt. Also, the NZ example takes into account hunters who may only shoot one deer every now and again for personal use and others who shoot every deer they see for other reasons (culling). Again, different motivations produce different results.

To express concern because there have been no independent audits of wounding rates of animals shot by recreational hunters is unreasonable. To state that until such studies are done recreational hunters can't make claims regarding the humanness of hunting is somewhat ridiculous. Maybe the RSPCA should practise what they preach and not make claims like they do regarding 'inevitable pain and suffering' when there are no independent audits to suggest this. Granted, there is potential for accidental wounding through activities conducted by professionals and recreational hunters alike, but their overarching aim is to take steps to minimise the chance of this occurring and provide a rapid, humane death. State hunting regulations and hunting organisations' Codes of Practice mandate permit holders and members alike

abide by humane hunting principles whenever they go hunting.

To imply trophy hunting is 'purely for sport and pleasure' is a regurgitation of animal rights propaganda. Trophies can be sourced from animals harvested for food, cultural reasons (by both new and indigenous Australians) and as a memento to celebrate a successful hunt. Hunting regulations cover all motivation to hunt and this includes animals hunted for trophies. To say that 'animal welfare implications of such activities are often overlooked when potential economic benefits take priority' is just incorrect. All trophy hunting activities that are regulated consider animal welfare; to claim otherwise is incorrect, if not misleading.

Overseas trophy hunting generally takes place under sustainable use principles. Hunting captive-bred animals through sustainable use programs and 'canned' hunts are two different activities. There are a lot of misconceptions on what is 'canned' hunting and this is normally driven by animal rights activists to cause confusion and further their propaganda. Captive-bred animals hunted in extensive wildlife systems as part of sustainable use programs benefit both local communities

and conservation. These programs are supported by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the world largest conservation group. 'Canned' hunts are where animals are hunted in environments that don't allow them to be free-roaming or they are even drugged to prevent their escape. These hunts are unethical and not supported by hunting organisations. Canned hunting is strictly illegal in South Africa and the Professional Hunters' Association of South Africa prohibits its members being involved in it.

Commentary regarding duck and quail hunting is commonly fixated on the term 'sport' and disregards the main motivation why people hunt ducks, that being for food harvest. Duck hunting is a regulated activity that carries fines for non-compliance just like fishing. If the RSPCA continues its opposition to the use of shotguns on animal welfare grounds, that is a complete contradiction to the model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest control methods. In this model, the humaneness of shooting as a pest control measure rates the most humane way to destroy pest birds. The RSPCA Chief Scientist was part of the Humaneness Assessment Panel team that developed

## Environmental volunteers speak about Farmer Assist

**“I really like culling pest animals and feeling that I’m being useful for the property owners. I even recently helped put out cropping seeds while on a property.”**

Paul Land, environmental volunteer

this model. The question that should be asked is why it would be humane to shoot a duck as a pest but not a duck harvested for sustainable use. The answer to this is purely an ideological one.

The reasoning behind the RSPCA assessment that there’s a high risk of wounding during duck hunting fails to take into account modern hunting practices. With the widespread use of double barrel shotguns offering only a two-shot capability, modern hunting techniques now focus on bringing birds within effective shotgun range using callers and decoys then targeting single birds. Hunter education via regulatory bodies and hunting organisations has improved animal welfare outcomes to more than an acceptable level.

The attempted calculations of wounding rates provide another example of an apples-and-pears comparison. Overseas research is irrelevant to the Australian context because of the different culture and firearm types available. To make the statement ‘it is indisputable that duck hunting using a shotgun results in a significant number of ducks who are wounded’, is flawed when it’s based on old and irrelevant information. This is yet another

example of trying to find information that suits an anti-hunting agenda.

An exit survey at a prominent South Australian hunting area in 1996 indicated 2718 ducks had been bagged during a morning hunt. Only 38 wounded ducks were collected by animal liberation members combing all areas of the wetland as well as searches by a retrieving dog club. This number of collected ducks indicated a wounding rate of less than 2 per cent in an area with a large number of both hunters and those looking for wounded ducks. In 2011 in Donald, Victoria it was also reported that fewer than a dozen wounded ducks were collected after a morning hunt where approximately 2000 hunters bagged an average of four ducks each. Again, this indicated a wounding rate of less than 2 per cent. In recent media reports following duck opening weekends, there has been nothing to suggest the overall current wounding rate would be significantly different to what was experienced in the above examples. This clearly indicates RSPCA’s attempt to develop over-inflated wounding figures (26-45 per cent) for propaganda reasons.

Dogs can be a valuable tool for the hunter to locate, flush and retrieve game.

The general statements made in the RSPCA information paper try to illustrate the use of dogs while pig hunting as inherently cruel and unnecessary. Regulations exist to prevent dogs from attacking other animals, thus most of the RSPCA’s statements reflect illegal acts and not general hunting practices. As is the case time and time again the RSPCA, like other animal rights organisations, try to infer the majority of hunters do the wrong thing when there’s only a small minority flouting the law. It is unacceptable to blame the majority of hunters for the actions of a few. Even ‘pig dogging’ organisations have specific codes of practice their members must follow in regards to how their hunting dogs behave.

Although there are claims that there ‘is plenty of video, photographic and direct evidence that reveals the true nature of pig hunting’, actual and perceived animal welfare issues are two different but relevant things. A pig dog chasing then bailing up a pig may cause a level of stress but this is no different to other stress reactions that a prey animal may face regularly in nature. A hunter coming in and despatching the pig in a rapid manner is certainly a more humane method of death

## Farmers speak about Farmer Assist

**“We have always found the Farmer Assist shooters extremely good, communicative and obliging (and very successful!). They ring before they come; and on the way before arrival. They were clean, tidy and left no mess. They camped in our cottage”.**

Andrew C, Aramac farmer

## Ethical hunting the only way

As modern-day society continues to place more emphasis on the ethical treatment and welfare of animals, it is vitally important for hunters to ensure their practices don't fall foul of such considerations. Ethical hunting means hunters obey both the unwritten or moral codes of practice as well as formal written laws.

Modern means of travel, firearms technology and optical sights make it easier for hunters to find and see their target. But it's still up to the hunter to ensure a clean and rapid kill. Hunters should always make time to regularly practise and sharpen their skills at their local shooting range.

It's important to understand that during wildlife management activities, such as the removal of problem animals, ethical hunters still need to ensure that animals, no matter their status, are treated in a humane way.

The ethical hunter shows concern for wildlife and the surrounding environment. They instil in others they mentor along the way the same principles they follow in regard to ethical hunting behaviours. This includes letting others know if they feel their behaviour is out of line.

Ethical hunters know the importance of obeying laws to ensure the sustainable use and management of wildlife. They take care of the environment and always have people's safety in mind while recognising the sensitivities of others with regard to wildlife management issues.

Read the SSAA's code of Safety, Ethics and Etiquette at <https://ssaa.org.au/hunting/safety-ethics-and-etiquette>



This fox was caught in the act on a Bendigo sheep farm. Luckily the lamb, above, survived.

than one from a pack of wild dogs mauling it to death. Nature is cruel but people in general endeavour to be kinder and humane.

It's easy to say that 'many aspects of pig hunting involve significant cruelty and would breach animal welfare legislation', but what is not so easy is to provide evidence by way of prosecutions to support the legitimacy of such statements. With so-called claims of 'plenty of video, photographic and direct evidence', there should be a long list of prosecutions to substantiate these statements but this is simply not the case. Just because you say something is cruel doesn't necessarily mean it is.

Pig hunting with dogs can be a very effective pest control method depending on the objectives of the hunt and the terrain. With the reduction in the availability of self-loading firearms, dogs provide a way of increasing hunting efficiency through their detection and holding capabilities.

Dogs are also used to locate, point and flush deer. In those states where dogs can be used for this purpose, the activity is heavily regulated. Deer are

naturally flighty so the use of dogs such as companion dogs and scent-trailing hounds can be an effective way to find and/or hold deer. Although evidence from the UK is provided to suggest hunting dogs can stress deer, it should be stated that the particular deer (red) in that study are not permitted to be hunted using scent-trailing hounds. In Victoria, only sambar deer can be hunted in this way and this species has evolved with a completely different set of predators to red deer (such as wild dogs, tigers etc). Seeing that scent-trailing hounds only find and hold (surround at a distance) sambar deer, and other dogs flush or point without chasing, there is limited animal welfare impacts that would warrant a case to oppose the use of dogs, especially when considering some coordinated control programs use helicopters to locate, chase and shoot deer.

The interpretation given of 'effective and humane deer control' again blurs the motivation of hunters or hunting objectives. It is certainly agreed that ground shooting is the most effective and humane technique available for reducing wild deer populations. The national standard operating procedures referred



## Environmental volunteers speak about Farmer Assist

**“The sheep farmers in Blackall have wild dogs and even feral cats ripping lambs apart.”**

Jared Battye, environmental volunteer

to are just a guide and generally reflect common hunting practices in regards to shot placement and firearm calibre choice. Recreational hunters are certainly disadvantaged by regulations that prevent use of certain firearms (self-loading) and equipment such as suppressors, which would improve efficiency and welfare outcomes. At times it's like having someone use only a four-cylinder car to race in a V8 event.

The inability of the RSPCA to understand that hunter motivations can change is constantly on display. Although some species are classified as game, this does not mean they cannot be managed differently if they become locally over-abundant and impact landholders or the environment. All states that manage game species have processes to deal with over-abundance when necessary. A permit can generally be sought to allow recreational hunters to assist landholders in culling operations where the objective is beyond taking an animal or two for meat purposes. The SSAA Farmer Assist program is a good example of where recreational hunters can provide effective and humane deer control free of charge, when the

objective would be to cull as many animals as possible.

To even ask the question if there are any alternatives to recreational hunting that don't involve the killing of animals shows a total lack of understanding of the reasons people hunt. There's no substitute for the harvest of wild, free-range, organic food. Hunters undertake target shooting to build and improve skill so they can hunt better. Put simply, paper or clay targets don't provide a protein source that can be shared with the family at meal time. Not every person in this country is vegetarian or vegan and there are many who have the skill and motivation to source something different that can't be found hunting around the supermarket aisles.

Hunters can rightfully take the moral high ground for being responsible for their harvest of meat from an ethical supply chain that doesn't involve constant human-animal interactions, penning, transport and industrial processing. And that is something the RSPCA should be supporting, not trying to demonise. ●



**An excellent result for Australia's indigenous wildlife.**

## Farmers speak about Farmer Assist

**“The program is working well for us – every pest animal taken is one less, so that in itself is a positive. Our volunteers have all been good fellas. I know it is expensive for them to take part, so we appreciate their efforts.”**

Jane B, Cunnamulla farmer



# Unrealistic path to utopia

## The Greens' visceral view of volunteer hunters

For true environmentalists, witnessing feral and introduced animals ravage our native and pastoral lands is a driving force that motivates us to help landowners, governments and traditional owners deal with this threat to Australia's unique biodiversity. But the tangible contributions volunteer hunters make to conservation can come under fire from those who adopt an ideological approach to wildlife management, rather than a pragmatic one.

The *ASJ*, along with the SSAA's flagship publications *Australian Shooter* and *Australian Hunter*, has long documented the positive role played by hunters in protecting and saving native fauna and flora. We have also challenged anti-hunting views touted by groups like the various RSPCA branches and extreme animal rights groups, including PETA and Animals Australia.

One group notorious for denying that volunteer hunters are a viable option for wildlife management is the Australian Greens Party. In the lead-up to the Victorian state election that takes place this month, the party's Victorian arm has again targeted legitimate hunters in a series of divisive policies.

The Greens have a long-standing policy against regulated recreational hunting, including for wild ducks. Ahead of the November 24 vote, the group is airing its ideological hatred of the lawful pursuit of gathering free-range ducks for the table. The party's candidate for Northern Victoria, Nicole Rowan, penned an opinion-editorial under the guise of "standing up for the country" saying "duck shooting (hunting) is detrimental to rural areas and nature-based tourism would be far more lucrative."

The op-ed, published in various newspapers in August, painted the party as a "much-needed advocate for rural Victorians" as they sized up a regional seat. In addition to this standard attack on duck hunting, Ms Rowan touted the economic

benefits of the proposed Great Forest National Park. However, she failed to mention that hunting by volunteers would not be welcome here.

A document prepared for the party only conceded that "professional hunters" would be used to eradicate pests and reduce environmental damage within the proposed Park. This is despite Parks Victoria regularly relying on SSAA members to conduct pest management activities in national parks on behalf of the State Government. There is even a Memorandum of Understanding sealing the symbiotic partnership.

Another document recently circulated by The Greens examined the economic

*The Greens have a policy that calls for "the end of recreational hunting on public land".*

viability of the Park. However, its executive summary essentially discredits the whole report: "Nous Group was engaged by The Wilderness Society to undertake a narrowly scoped analysis," it reads. The Wilderness Society is a corporate pro-Greens giant created by The Greens founder, Bob Brown and others, casting a shadow on the report's objectivity.

Along with this deliberate language that puts paid hunters on some kind of elitist pedestal, The Greens have a policy that calls for "the end of recreational hunting on public land". In Victoria, hunters can currently access private and public land to conduct hunting activities. The Greens' stance on banning hunting on public land

would lock out the state's 38,000 SSAA members and the broader hunting community from conducting any form of hunting using firearms, be it for pest control, food or other cultural reasons.

SSAA Victoria CEO Jack Wegman hit back at the op-ed and study on behalf of responsible hunters. "Is it narrowly scoped because they don't want us to know the whole truth about the massive taxpayer burden to replace the current income from the areas earmarked in this to inner-city voters who never visit the bush?" he asked. "SSAA Victoria believes our bush should be open to everyone, especially the hunters who are the real environmentalists."

Supporting Mr Wegman's stance is an independent study conducted by the Department of Environment and Primary Industries which showed that duck hunting tourism alone had a positive and direct \$43 million impact on the state. The report, *Estimating the Economic Impact of Hunting in Victoria in 2013*, found that in total, hunting tourism brought of \$439 million to regional Victoria in that year alone a figure even the economically reckless Greens shouldn't sneer at.

"It was hunters who restored Victoria's wetlands where game and protected species (and tourism) now thrive, and it is hunters who control invasive species in the bush," Mr Wegman added. "From this evidence it appears The Greens want to rob regional towns of real, tested, studied and proven hunting-tourism dollars and replace them with yet another eco-tourism fantasy."

SSAA Victoria Hunting Development Manager David Laird offered an insightful analogy regarding The Greens' unwarranted attacks on volunteer hunters. "Volunteer fire-fighters are not paid, yet no one claims they should not be utilised or that their skills and contributions are less valuable than 'professionals'," he said. "Volunteers are generally respected in all other areas so the logic of volunteer



hunters being somehow different and inferior doesn't stack up."

SSAA National President Geoff Jones agreed. "The view that only professional hunters should conduct culling activities, also seen in the RSPCA's misinformation paper, fails to recognise the important contributions volunteer hunters make to conservation," he said. "The idea that only paid hunters can play a part in creating some sort of utopia is laughable. Volunteer hunters are just as capable, ethical and adhere to a code of ethics and relevant laws when conducting the very same activity as paid hunters."

This visceral view of volunteer hunters is also evident among the Tasmanian Greens. An informed decision to allow recreational hunters access to national parks and World Heritage-listed natural areas as part of a pest management strategy was insultingly described as a "public safety risk" by its leader, Cassy O'Connor.

"A well-resourced and properly managed cull is what's needed, not open slather for recreational shooters," she said. "There have been tragic, avoidable deaths in other parts of the world where shooters are allowed into places where people go to enjoy bushwalking and camping."

In comparison to the Greens' scaremongering approach, the decision to utilise willing and capable volunteer hunters to protect Tasmania's idyllic parks came after a thorough Legislative Council inquiry into wild fallow deer, which recommended the eradication of deer populations in World Heritage and other conserved areas. The expertise and experience of recreational hunters was identified as a way to lessen the damage wild deer have on the natural environment.

"Our goal is to support the positive role that responsible recreational hunters play in conservation and wildlife management in a safe, regulated way that ultimately

benefits our natural areas," Tasmanian Liberal Adam Brooks explained. "The issuing of permits will be limited and hunting will only be available in designated areas, away from those areas frequented by visitors. A statewide deer population census will inform demarcation areas and deer population management strategies."

SSAA Tasmania Senior Vice President Donald Riddell was interviewed about the issue by the ABC in August and described the utilisation of experienced hunters to cull wild fallow deer as an obvious option. "This is a sensible way of going about it, getting people who are familiar with the terrain, familiar with the animals and familiar with what's required to hunt deer," he said. "We welcome the Government looking for a low-cost sensible alternative for managing these deer numbers."

"The misrepresentation of the Government's position by the Tasmanian Greens leader is quite staggering. There are huge areas that never see bushwalking and camping and there are well-established protocols and plans in place already for hunting on public lands, including reserved land managed by Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service."

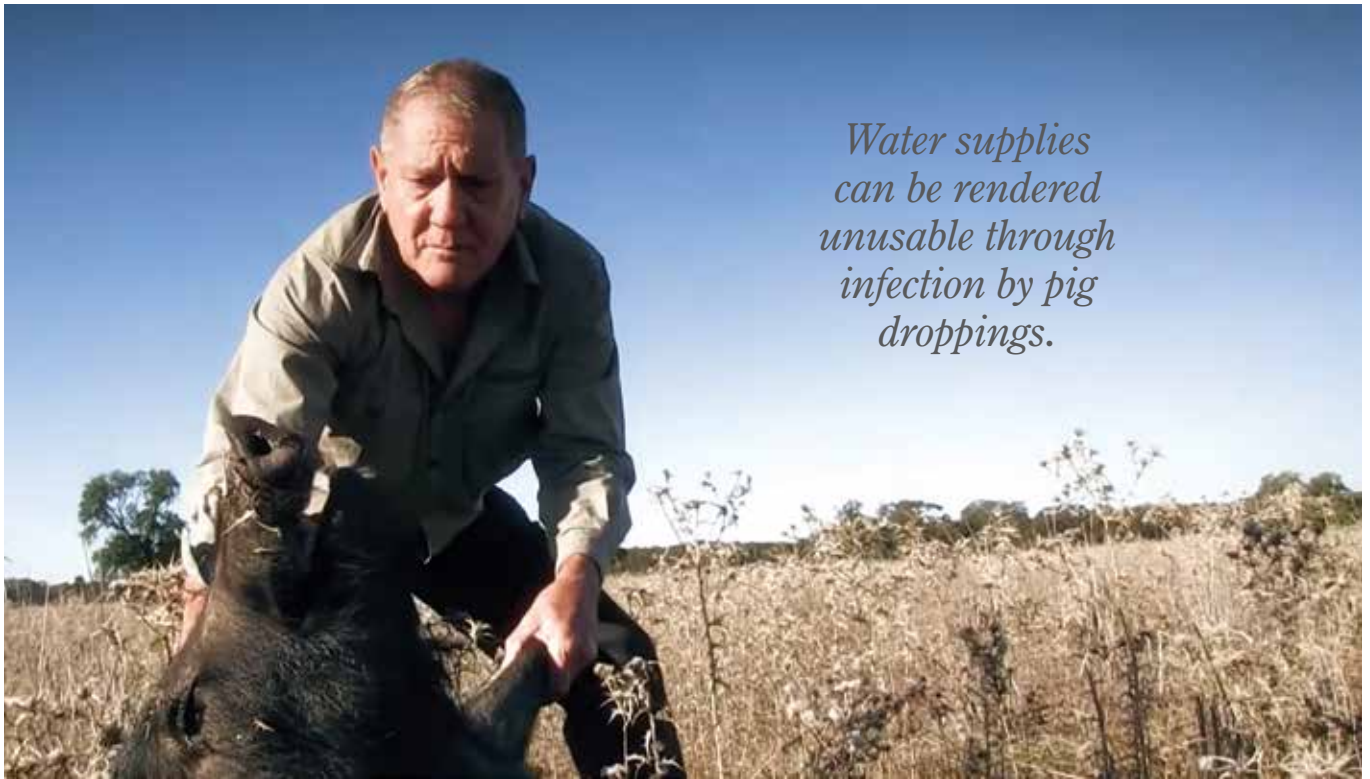
The SSAA has long advocated that our land of open plains should be protected by those willing, capable and able. Our organisation has a proven history of success in hunting and culling activities across many landscapes, on behalf of state governments, farmers and traditional owners. Unfortunately for The Greens, pest and feral animals have no regard for government land classifications.

Hunters were the ones who restored Victoria's wetlands where game and protected species and tourism now thrive, and it is hunters who are being called upon to control invasive species in Tasmania. It is clear that hunters are the real environmentalists, not the grandstanding Greens. ●





# Tackling the feral pest problem head on



*Water supplies can be rendered unusable through infection by pig droppings.*

**F**eral pests are a huge problem and constant headache for Australia's animal and crop farmers alike. To highlight the extent of the damage they cause, SSAA member and renowned 'Wildlife Man' David Ireland has made feral pigs and goats the focus of his latest instalments on SSAA TV.

David has spoken to farmers in the front line fight against feral pigs and seen firsthand the devastation they leave in their wake. One cattle farmer tells how his main water supply was rendered unusable after

being infected by pig droppings, while another recounts a nightmare nine-day stay in intensive care after contracting the potentially-fatal Q fever.

On the subject of goats, he talks to experts including vet David Jenkins who explains the many parasites carried by feral goats and the risk they pose not only to livestock and native animals, but humans too. Among a variety of exotic diseases, some fatal, spread by feral goats are tetanus, hydatids, and leptospirosis.

Nanny goats can breed at just six

months old and the Wildlife Man highlights this and the fact that, within a 12-month timeframe, a single nanny can double the population of a mob. He shows first hand the devastating impact feral goats are having on native flora.

David demonstrates what it takes to humanely cull the pests and invites SSAA members, via the Farmer Assist program, to become involved in reducing their numbers.

Check out his latest videos at [ssaa.org.au/ssaa-tv](http://ssaa.org.au/ssaa-tv) or visit [www.farmerassist.com.au](http://www.farmerassist.com.au)



*A nanny goat can breed at just six months old.*