

*A Journalist's Guide to*  
**Firearms and the**  
**Shooting Sports**



[www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au)

*A Journalist's Guide to Firearms and the Shooting Sports*

prepared by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) Inc

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***Editorial policy***

To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of shooting sports and hunting.

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Disclaimer: Firearm, shooting and hunting legislation and regulations vary in each Australian state and territory. The information in this guide is correct at the time of writing.

# Contents

- 4 Introduction
- 5 What is SSAA?
- 6 SSAA's 10 golden rules for journalists
- 8 Firearms laws in Australia
- 10 Firearm safety
- 11 Buyback schemes
- 12 Crime facts
- 14 Addressing common firearm myths
- 16 Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport
- 17 Hunting
- 20 SSAA in the community
- 23 Junior shooters
- 24 Firearm and ammunition parts
- 26 Glossary

# Introduction

This guide aims to make it easier for journalists covering firearms-related news stories. It was created by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA National) and has been written by journalists for journalists. It will give you the basic knowledge to deliver your stories accurately.

If you wish to research any of the topics highlighted in this guide, we welcome you to visit the SSAA website at [www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au) or call us on 08 8272 7100.

# What is SSAA?

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) is Australia's premier shooting body representing licensed firearms owners. SSAA was established in 1948 to promote the shooting sports and recreational hunting, as well as protect firearm owners' interests. With 197,000-plus members and many branches and clubs throughout Australia, we are the predominant sports shooting and recreational hunting group in the country.

SSAA has official Non-Government Organisation (NGO) status within the United Nations and also lobbies the state and federal governments on behalf of its members. The Association makes extensive use of its magazines, website, e-newsletter, Facebook page and daily media coverage to encourage grassroots action among its members. Through these mediums, SSAA is able to keep members and supporters informed of legislative developments, media reports and general matters of interest. SSAA is also in regular contact with firearms dealers across Australia.

SSAA publishes a range of national magazines including the monthly *Australian Shooter*, the quarterly *Australian Hunter* and the annual *Australian & New Zealand Handgun*, the *Australian Women's Shooter* and many more.

## ***Try the sport***

There is no better way to understand the sport of shooting than to have a go. Contact your state SSAA and ask for a hands-on experience in shooting. Shooting is safe, fun and a great sport for anyone of any age, gender and ability.

**NSW:** (02) 8889 0400

**QLD:** (07) 3281 3447

**VIC:** (03) 8892 2777

**WA:** (08) 9497 7919

**SA:** 0419 849 452

**NT:** 0402 013 918

**ACT:** 0424 292 115

**TAS:** 0439 949 158

# SSAA's 10 golden rules for journalists

**1.** Avoid photographing sporting shooters or hunters from dangerous positions, such as from in front of the firearm, no matter how good the photograph would be. SSAA's golden rule is never point a firearm, loaded or empty, at anyone.

**2.** There are reputable facts and figures behind every firearm-related issue. If you can't find them, ask us.

**3.** Refer to firearms by their correct name. Unless used as such, they are no more of a 'weapon' than a knife or brick, so check the correct terminology if you need clarification. There is also a big difference between a semi-automatic handgun, a revolver and a shotgun.

**4.** Sensationalising firearms is destructive to a legitimate and legal community. Maintain your credibility by talking to lobby groups, environmental groups, the government, police and SSAA where appropriate.

**5.** Remember that firearms laws do not affect *illegal* firearm activities. SSAA members are licensed firearm owners who adhere to the law to use their firearms in an appropriate manner. These are the people who are affected by initiatives such as firearms buybacks and stringent laws, not criminals.

**6.** Recognise that each Australian state or territory operates under different firearms and hunting laws. While some issues are widespread, other issues such as hunting seasons or the storage or transportation of firearms fall under varied legislation depending on your location.

## SSAA's 10 golden rules for journalists

**7.** Avoid bringing emotion into reporting of animal hunts or culls. Hunting is one of many effective animal population management tools utilised by both governments and landowners in Australia. All methods, including trapping, poisoning and hunting, have their pros and cons, but together, they form part of a necessary measure.

**8.** Do not assume hunters have no respect for the animals they are hunting. Hunting is usually performed as either a pest animal control method or in a hunter-gatherer role similar to fishing. Hunters maintain a close connection with their environment and have a great appreciation for all wildlife.

**9.** Realise the dangers of comparing Australia's illegal firearms issues with those in other countries. Australia has a unique economy, culture, set of firearm laws and criminal element. For example, to warn of Australia mirroring a perceived gun culture in the United States is unwise, considering the stark difference between the countries and the status of the aforementioned elements.

**10.** If in doubt, ask for help. SSAA and its state and territory branches have a number of people who can be interviewed for stories or even to provide advice or clarification on firearms-related issues.

# Firearms laws in Australia

Firearms laws in Australia are unique compared with other Western countries. While the National Firearms Agreement constitutes a national approach to the regulation of firearms, the legal oversight of firearms is state jurisdiction. A full account of the rules and regulations of the various state and territory Firearm Acts can be downloaded from the Australasian Legal Information Institute website at [www.austlii.edu.au](http://www.austlii.edu.au); below are examples of common requirements across Australia.

## ***Genuine reason***

Those seeking a firearm must demonstrate a 'genuine reason' or need. In most states, a genuine reason for firearm ownership is target shooting, primary production, hunting or collecting; self-defence is not considered a genuine reason.

## ***Training***

All states and territories require a particular level of training to obtain a longarm (air rifle, rifle or shotgun) licence, and further written and practical training to obtain a handgun licence.

## ***Waiting periods***

A 28-day waiting period applies to all permits to acquire a firearm in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

In Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia, the 28-day waiting period does not apply to existing licence holders who already have one firearm registered in the particular category and it may be waived for other applicants. In Victoria, the Northern Territory and Western Australia, the 28-day waiting period applies for first-time applicants only.

## ***Purchasing a firearm***

In order to purchase a firearm in Australia, you must be in possession of a valid firearm licence for the category and type of firearm you wish to purchase. All firearms must be purchased through a licenced dealer. You can purchase a firearm online but it has to go through a licensed dealer ie, SSAA Gun Sales.

## ***Club participation***

Throughout Australia, many firearm owners – particularly handgun owners – are required to participate in a certain number of club activities throughout the year; however, the number does vary. In New South Wales, handgun club members must take part in club activities six times per year, while rifle and shotgun shooters must have four club attendances a year.

### ***Compliance with the law***

A range of offences relating to firearms are addressed in state and territory legislation. For example, it is an offence to own or possess a firearm unless authorised to do so by a licence or permit; to buy or sell a firearm unless through a licensed dealer (except in very remote areas where the sale can be witnessed by a police officer); to lend a firearm to someone if they do not have the relevant licence; to sell, buy or possess an unregistered firearm; to not inform your state's firearms registry if your firearm or licence is lost or stolen; and to use a firearm under the influence of drugs or alcohol. It's also an offence to cause any danger with a firearm, fire at a house or building and trespass with a firearm.

### ***Illegal use of firearm***

When the law is broken, the consequences are determined by the rules and regulations of each state or territory. Penalties can include: loss of firearm licence and/or firearm, issue of fine or jail sentence.

### ***Firearms categories by law***

While firearm categories and the associated legislation vary in each state and territory, the following provides an insight into the main firearm categories.

Licence categories include Categories A-E, Category H and an Heirlooms licence. Each firearm licence category refers to a specific firearm/s, and the requirements for obtaining the firearm. For example, a Category C licence refers to airguns, rimfire rifles, shotguns and combination shotguns/rimfire rifles. A Category C licence is only available to primary producers, persons employed or engaged in primary production, or a bona fide firearms collector; Category H refers to handguns, and is only available to members of handgun clubs, persons employed as a firearms dealer, security guards and agents, or a bona fide firearms collector.

### ***Storage and transportation of firearms and ammunition***

The legal storage and transportation of firearms varies in each state and territory and licensed firearm owners must secure their firearms as per state or territory regulations – failure to do so may attract heavy penalties. Random police checks are also conducted to make sure licence holders are complying with the law.

Please refer to the appropriate legislative body for a complete description of legal firearms requirements.

# Firearm safety

During the training required to obtain a firearms licence, shooters are taught the following firearm safety and range rules.

## ***Basic firearm safety***

1. Treat every firearm with the respect due to a loaded firearm.
2. Carry only empty firearms that are rendered safe with the action open or broken.
3. Always be sure that the barrel and action are clear of obstructions.
4. Always carry your firearm so that you can control the direction of the muzzle.
5. Be sure of your target before you pull the trigger.
6. Never point a firearm at anything that you do not want to shoot.
7. Never climb a tree or a fence with a loaded firearm.
8. Never shoot at a flat, hard surface or the surface of water.
9. Do not mix firearms, gunpowder and alcohol.

## ***Basic range rules***

1. The range officer (RO) is in charge.
2. Under no circumstances may a firearm be loaded except when on the firing line.
3. Firearms that are not in bags or cases must be carried with the muzzles

pointed safely, actions open, and bolts and magazines removed.

4. Self-loading firearms with actions that do not remain open must be held open with a breech safety plug.
5. All persons must report any potentially dangerous situation to the RO immediately.
6. Firearms may not be handled behind the firing line unless in a designated safe area.
7. No-one is permitted to approach the firing line until the RO issues permission.
8. You may not touch any firearm until the RO issues permission.
9. On the command "Cease fire" all shooters must immediately open the action, put their firearm down and stand immediately behind the firing line to await the RO for further instructions.
10. No-one is permitted to go down-range until the RO has issued the command to go forward. It is the RO's duty is to ensure no-one approaches the firing line when people are downrange.
11. Firing may not commence until the appropriate warning flags have been erected.
12. Shooting may only be at the proper targets.
13. Hearing and eye protection is strongly recommended.

# Buyback schemes

## **National Firearms Agreement**

The 1996-97 National Firearms Agreement (NFA) in Australia introduced strict gun laws, primarily as a reaction to the mass shooting in Port Arthur, Tasmania in 1996, where 35 people were killed. The agreement included a gun amnesty buyback scheme, which collected more than 600,000 guns at the cost of approximately \$500 million. While various studies assessing the same set of data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics have concluded both for and against the effectiveness of the scheme, 2008 research from the University of Melbourne analysed these studies and concluded "there is little evidence to suggest that it [NFA] had any significant effects on firearm homicides and suicides." Further, the study concluded that while "gun buybacks appear to be a logical and sensible policy that helps to placate the public's fears, the evidence so far suggests that in the Australian context, the high expenditure incurred to fund the 1996 gun buyback has not translated into any tangible reductions in terms of firearm deaths." A different study conducted in 2016 by Griffith University concluded "there may be a notable discrepancy between empirical findings about the efficacy of Australian firearm legislation in regard to reducing firearm homicide, compared with what has been proposed within popular discourse about the impacts of those laws."

The SSAA advocates for evidence-based claims when referring to the tangible success or otherwise of the NFA.

The University of Queensland study '*The Cost of Gun Control for Licensed Firearms Dealers in Australia*' found most dealers reported the reporting and recording duties introduced by the NFA were already taking place before the agreement was implemented. The study also found dealers regularly distinguished between the intent of the legislation and its implementation, with some dealers suggesting the interpretation of the NFA goes above what is legislated.

## **National Handgun Buyback**

The National Handgun Buyback 2003 was prompted by an incident in October 2002 at Monash University, in which a gunman killed two people and wounded five. Under this scheme 70,000 handguns were removed from the community at a cost of approximately \$69 million.

## **References**

Lee, W & Suardi, S 2008, *The Australian Firearms Buyback and Its Effect on Gun Deaths*, Melbourne Institute Working Paper Series, no. 17/08, Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, The University of Melbourne, Victoria.

McPhedran, S 2016, *A systematic review of quantitative evidence about the impacts of Australian legislative reform on firearm homicide, Aggression and violent behaviour*.

Fay, S, Belgrove, E & De Rooy, K 2019, *The Cost of Gun Control for Licenced Firearms Dealers in Australia*.

# Crime facts

## **Australian Institute of Criminology facts**

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), *Homicide in Australia 2012-13 to 2013-14: National Homicide Monitoring Program report*, stated homicide victimisation in 2013-14 at its lowest rate since records began – one per 100,000 Australians. *Trends in homicide, 1980-90 to 2013-14*, reported stab wounds were the most common cause of death at 37 per cent, followed by beatings at 24 per cent, other at 15 per cent and gunshot wound at 13 per cent.

*Since the NHMP began in 1989–90, homicide incidents involving firearms have decreased. In 1989–90, 25 per cent of homicide incidents (n=76) involved the use of a firearm, while in 2013–14 firearms were used in 13 percent of homicide incidents (n=32).*

Since AIC records began, gunshot wound as cause of death has decreased by 63 per cent from 86 to 32. Dissimilarly, stab wound as cause of death has remained relatively stagnant at 103 in 1989-90 and 95 in 2013-14. The AIC report, *The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide*, found that the majority of firearms used to commit homicide were not registered and the offenders who used them were unlicensed.

*This report finds that since 1997 licensed firearms owners were not responsible for over 90 per cent of firearm-related homicides. Most (over 90 per cent) firearms used to commit homicides were not registered and their owners not licensed.*

### **Australian Bureau of Statistics**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) *Suicides, Australia, 2005* has identified the most common method of suicide from 1995-2005 was hanging, accounting for 51 per cent of deaths. Poisoning (all methods) accounted for 28 per cent of deaths. Suicide by firearms accounted for seven per cent of deaths.

*Suicide deaths using firearms have more than halved over the last 10 years, from 389 deaths in 1995, to 147 deaths in 2005.*

The 2010 report *Causes of Death* states that there were 2361 suicide deaths in 2010, and SSAA supports crisis support and suicide prevention network, Lifeline, in encouraging the reasonable and cautious reporting of suicide:

**[www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/media-centre/guidelines-for-safely-speaking-about-suicide](http://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/media-centre/guidelines-for-safely-speaking-about-suicide)**.

### **Crisis helplines**

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

**Suicide Call Back Service:** 1300 659 467

**Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800  
(for young people aged five to 25 years)

# Addressing common firearm myths

**Myth: Individual firearm ownership puts lives at risk in homes, as offenders turn to their firearms in physical assault situations.**

**Fact:** This statement stigmatises legal gun owners and makes an unsubstantiated link between gun owners and domestic violence. A person with a violent background is unlikely to be permitted a firearms license.

**Myth: If gun ownership was better controlled or regulated, there would be fewer killings.**

**Fact:** The AIC report, *The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide*, found that the majority of firearms used to commit homicide were not registered and the offenders who used them were unlicensed.

**Myth: Locking up all firearms in a central storage facility or at the local gun club when not in use would prevent theft and crime.**

**Fact:** Most gun clubs are simply tin sheds and are therefore very susceptible to theft, which is why it would be unsafe for firearms to be housed there. Both Australian police stations and army facilities have been subject to theft and are therefore no safer than keeping personal firearms at home locked in a police-approved safe.

**Myth: Guns cause crime.**

**Fact:** Switzerland provides a good example to dispel this myth. Switzerland has one of the lowest murder rates in the world, yet in the past has required all law-abiding able-bodied males between the ages of 20 and 50 to have military-issued automatic firearms, ammunition and other equipment in their dwelling.

**Myth: People who buy guns are more prone to violence and crime than any other people.**

**Fact:** Licensed firearm owners are law-abiding citizens with legitimate reasons for owning the firearms they have. Rigorous police checks are conducted on an individual before they are permitted a firearms licence.

**Myth: Disarming the public reduces violent crime.**

**Fact:** According to Professor at the Fraser Institute in North America, Gary Mauser, disarming the public has not reduced criminal violence in any country. In his paper, 'The Failed Experiment: Gun Control and Public Safety in Canada, Australia, England and Wales', Professor Mauser says that Australia provides proof that limiting access to firearms does not directly reduce violent crime: "Following the shocking killings in 1996, the Australian government made sweeping changes to the firearm

legislation in 1997. Unfortunately, the recent firearm regulations have not made the streets of Australia any safer. The total homicide rate, after having remained basically flat from 1995-2001, has now begun climbing again.”

**Myth: *Hunting is cruel and unnecessary.***

**Fact:** Hunting is used as a form of pest animal control, for conservation purposes and as a source of food. In the hands of a competent shooter, a firearm is one of the most humane tools to despatch an animal.

**Myth: *Gun control laws keep criminals from obtaining guns.***

**Fact:** The AIC report, *The Licensing and Registration Status of Firearms Used in Homicide*, stated that criminals do not obtain their firearms legally and further firearm restrictions would do nothing to reduce the number of firearms obtained illegally.

**Myth: *Shooting is a dangerous sport.***

**Fact:** There has never been a fatality in an international shooting sports competition in Australia. No other sport on the international calendar has the same safety record.

(Flood, L & Harrison, J 2006, 'Hospitalised Sports Injury, Australia 2002-03', *Injury Research and Statistics Series*, no.27, Research Centre for Injury Studies, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, ACT.)

**Myth: *People don't need multiple firearms – a limit should be put on the number of firearms someone can legally own.***

**Fact:** A licensed owner may own several different firearms for the various targets, positions and styles of different shooting competitions. Another firearm may be owned specifically for hunting small animals, while others again may be for larger animals such as buffaloes, deer and camels. Each firearm requires a permit and 'genuine reason' for purchase.

**Myth: *There is no need for people who live in the city to own firearms.***

**Fact:** Target shooting is a legitimate sport within Australia and city residents may be regular visitors to one of the many inner-city shooting ranges in Australia. Or, a person may travel outside of the city to go hunting – similar to someone living in the city owning a boat, or an off-road vehicle.

**Myth: *Firearm owners were hoarding firearms during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.***

**Fact:** Each and every firearm bought must be individually approved by the police. This can take between 28 days and three months. A genuine reason and need must be proved for each purchase.

# Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport

*Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport* is a SSAA firearms safety campaign and publication. The campaign began in 1999 with SSAA clubs encouraged to promote safe firearm storage with a Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport poster for prominent display at their ranges.

In 2003, we released our Secure Your Gun, Secure Your Sport brochure, which explained the definitions and capacity requirements for different category firearms; provided contact details for each state and territory firearms registry; and highlighted a variety of safes that members could purchase for their security needs. We continue to regularly update and distribute this brochure to our members, as well as our state and territory branches.

In 2008 we developed a National Gun Safe Voucher program in partnership with the firearms industry. This provided firearm owners with access to discounted storage facilities for their firearms, with SSAA National offering member discounts up to \$100 to purchase police-approved safes. The program was highly commended by the then Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon Brendan O'Connor in 2009, and was awarded a Certificate of Merit by the Australian Institute of Criminology in its 2011 annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards.

More broadly, SSAA regularly conducts safety seminars and practical instructions for the safe handling of firearms, and engages with youth groups such as the Scouts and Cadets to promote the safe, fun and all-abilities nature of sports shooting to interested juniors.

# Hunting

A large percentage of SSAA's members are hunters. They vary in age, gender, vocation and location. They travel throughout the country and sometimes even overseas to participate in hunting activities. A CSIRO study into Australia's recreational hunters indicated that the country's estimated 200,000-300,000 hunters contribute \$1billion per year to the economy, while the 2019 Federal Government survey, *Economic and social impacts of recreational hunting and shooting* report, estimated that figure at \$2.4billion.

While hunting may be a controversial media issue, in reality it should be seen as an activity similar to fishing where people go out into the natural environment and harvest the best in organic free-range food. Hunting is also part of the solution in the management of problem animals such as foxes, rabbits and other pest species that cause social, economic and environmental problems.

SSAA promotes safe and ethical hunting. We support adherence to sustainable wildlife management practices, game laws and regulations. We also encourage all hunters to display appropriate firearm handling skills and an appreciation of the natural environment and to participate with and be mindful of the welfare of others.

SSAA also discourages hunters from taking photographs of hunters sitting atop their trophy, as we believe this cheapens the activity of hunting, as well as the animal.

## **Hunting safety and ethics**

SSAA expects members who are hunters to follow these safe and ethical hunting practices:

1. Having first obtained a landowner's permission to shoot on their property, members should consider themselves to be invited guests, so that they will be welcome in the future.
2. Members must obey the rules of safe firearms handling and diplomatically yet firmly insist others do the same.
3. Members must obey all relevant hunting laws and regulations and diplomatically yet firmly insist others do the same.
4. Members should support game conservation programs and the sustainable utilisation of wildlife.
5. Members should pass on to others, including youngsters, the proper attitudes towards game management and conservation and the skills of safe firearms ownerships, which are the hallmarks of the sporting shooter.

## Hunting

### ***Hunting opportunities in Australia***

Australia's rich and varied wildlife provides plenty of opportunities for the recreational hunter. Depending upon legislation, some states allow recreational, sustainable duck and quail hunting and deer hunting during declared open seasons.

While some species are taken for human consumption, hunters may also participate in wildlife management by culling problem species such as rabbits, hares, foxes, feral pigs, feral dogs, feral cats and feral goats. All of these species and more cause a high environmental and economic cost to Australia in general. As reported by the Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre, feral animals conservatively cost Australia around \$720 million per year. Hunters should be congratulated and credited for doing their part in the conservation of Australia's native fauna and flora, as well as protecting valuable farmland and livestock.

### ***SSAA Conservation & Wildlife Management groups***

Within SSAA, there are groups of shooters that assist in the preservation of native Australian species and management of problem species. These members form SSAA's Conservation & Wildlife Management (CWM) branches. Members in these groups undertake an accreditation program consisting of map reading, navigation, firearm safety and handling, wildlife appreciation and management, living-in-the-field, ethical hunting and first-aid courses. The skills developed are more advanced than what most 'professional' shooters require to operate as a private contractor. All SSAA members have \$20 million of public liability insurance cover for the peace of mind of landholders.

Organised culls on both government and private land targeting rabbits, foxes, feral cats, feral goats, feral pigs and feral donkeys have taken place in the past and continue to do so as needed. Some areas include national parks within the Simpson Desert, the Flinders and Gammon Ranges in South Australia, Gregory National Park in the Northern Territory, the Murray-Sunset region in Victoria and various places across Queensland.

In addition to pest animal control duties, CWM members provide vital services that help manage Australian ecosystems. This includes duties such as data collection (assisting with native animal surveys and counts), assisting landholders (by checking fences, dams and stock), undertaking vegetation management, and maintaining ecological communities.

In 2007, South Australian SSAA CWM member Gil Hartwig was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia for his service to the environment through conservation activities, particularly feral animal control, and to the sport of shooting. This highlights the importance of the work CWM members do and the positive impact their activities have on the environment and wider community.

### **SSAA Farmer Assist**

The SSAA Farmer Assist program has been developed to enable farmers with wildlife management issues to seek the assistance of SSAA members. The specially designed, free-of-charge online-only program allows a farmer to choose who they invite onto their properties from the group of accredited members replying to their request for assistance.

SSAA National has worked with SSAA state branches to release SSAA's Farmer Assist program throughout Australia with the only un-serviced area being Northern Territory. In 2014, the ABC's *Landline* program highlighted the success of SSAA's Farmer Assist program and the relationships the program has helped create in an episode titled 'Sharp Shooters'.

# SSAA in the community

## **Western quolls**

SSAA has been integral to the reintroduction of the western quoll (*dasyurus geoffroii*) in South Australia's Ikara-Flinders Ranges. The species was wiped out in the area by historic farming practices and the spread of their main predator, feral cats. SSAA and its members worked with the South Australian Government to operate the 1990's Operation Bounceback which contributed to the eradication of tens of thousands of feral cats, goats, donkeys, rabbits and foxes in the Ranges. More recently, SSAA donated \$60,000 towards the quoll reintroduction program led by the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species (FAME) and the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

## **The University of Queensland Deer Research Project**

Although red deer have existed in Queensland for nearly 140 years, there is no information on their impacts on native vegetation. A considerable number of wild red deer can be found in the north-eastern parts of the Toowoomba region near Cressbrook and Perseverance Dams.

The Deer Research Project is a collaborative project undertaken at Lake Cressbrook by the local council with The

University of Queensland, Biosecurity Queensland, the Environmental Protection Agency, SSAA, the Australian Deer Association, and the Toowoomba Pipeline Alliance to research the ecology of Queensland's red deer and their value as a game species. The information gained from this research project will be very useful in quantifying the costs and benefits of wild deer in Australia and in managing deer as a resource or a pest or both.

## **South East Queensland Koala habitat conservation**

The SSAA rifle range in Ipswich has become a permanent home to koalas as a part of an initiative between the Queensland Government and SSAA to save diminishing habitat for the native animal. As a part of ongoing efforts by SSAA to contribute to environmental conservation, almost 1000 hectares of the range, which is located 30 minutes south-west of Brisbane, has been dedicated as the Stewartdale Nature Refuge.

The Stewartdale property, which is also home to a wetland rehabilitation program, is the largest state-funded koala habitat restoration project undertaken in Queensland. The project included the planting of more than 113,000 trees over 200ha, as a part of ongoing efforts to ensure koalas have suitable habitat into the future.

### **Field to Fork – The Australian Game Cookbook**

In 2011, SSAA published its first commercial recipe book, *Field to Fork – The Australian Game Cookbook*. The book was created to educate and encourage people to reconnect with their environment and really think about where their food comes from. Celebrating the abundance that is Australia and its rich and varied wildlife, the book won the 2012 Gourmand Cookbook Awards Best First Cookbook in Australia award.

### **SSAA National Academic Bursary program**

Australia has a growing number of target shooters and hunters and with this growth comes a need for practical study of topics such as game management, ecology and legislation. SSAA is passionate about supporting Australia's academic community to allow credible non-biased study into aspects of our sport and recreation with a fresh-minded approach.

Launched in 2014, SSAA National Academic Bursary program is an annual grant program aimed at supporting university study into recreational shooting. The ongoing bursary program worth \$10,000 offers support to university students studying a range of topics, such as game and environmental management, psychology, journalism and more.

### **Boundless Canberra sponsorship**

SSAA has always prided itself as being a socially inclusive recreational sports shooting organisation. Indeed, men, women and juniors of all ages and abilities are encouraged to participate and when they do, they can compete on an even playing field in a social and fun competition.

In 2014, SSAA backed an ACT initiative aimed at getting children of all abilities outside, having fun and being active. The National Children's Playground Project, called Boundless Canberra, is an initiative to build an all-abilities playground in the nation's capital, with the help of the community at large. SSAA wholeheartedly supports Boundless Canberra in its initiative to provide a recreational outlet for children of all abilities – a mindset which is consistent with the Association's philosophy of giving everyone a fair go.

### **Supporting conservation and academia**

In 2016 SSAA was the major supporter of the University of Queensland's *Conservation through the Sustainable Use of Wildlife* conference held in Brisbane. This conference was attended by both Australian and international stakeholders to examine the tangible conservation benefits; the data that needed to be collected; the governance structures that were needed; and any impediments to the sustainable use of wildlife. The book *Advances in Conservation through Sustainable Use of Wildlife* was published as one of the outcomes of this conference.

### **Victoria Sambar deer project**

The Victoria Sambar deer project is a joint venture between SSAA's national and Victorian branches and Parks Victoria. The aim is to provide the first objective data on the movements of wild sambar, and thus their ecology, to improve the design and development of cost-effective, targeted control programs to protect key environmental

assets and catchment condition. The project is relevant to improving/increasing the resilience of natural landscapes by diminishing the impact of invasive species on natural systems. In particular, the mitigation of the impacts of deer on sensitive, high value alpine/sub-alpine environments, including alpine peatlands, and catchments.

### **Support of the Conservation and Wildlife Research Trust**

SSAA has been a major supporter of the Conservation and Wildlife Research Trust (CWRT) where it has donated proceeds from the sale of its publications. CWRT provides funding for students and researchers to undertake studies to gain a better understanding of Australian flora and fauna, and assist in the conservation efforts of a number of Australian native species. CWRT has also supported conservation projects to provide new habitat for endangered species, including migratory bird species that travel between Australia and overseas.

# Junior shooters

Shooting is one of the few sports that encourages and caters for the participation of young and old, males and females, the able-bodied and disabled. In fact, target shooting is a family-orientated pastime, allowing all members of the family to compete on an equal footing and in a safe environment.

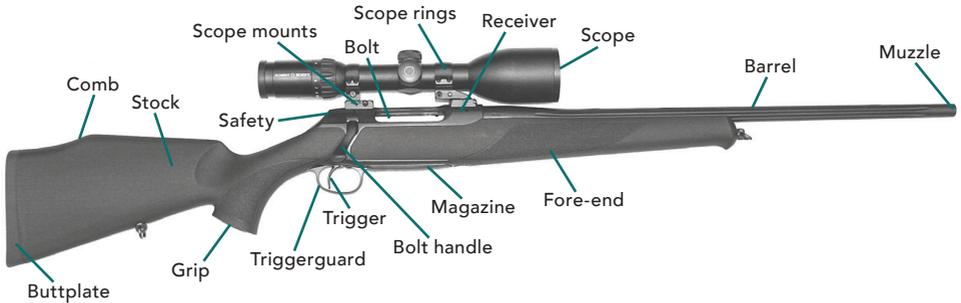
Junior involvement in target shooting and recreational hunting is traditionally heavily criticised by anti-gun groups, but these factions fail to recognise that these pastimes can provide valuable outlets for today's youth. Sports shooting requires a great deal of dedication and commitment, concentration, consistency and above all else, practice. These attributes are just some of the life-skills gained by juniors. Furthermore, SSAA's focus on supervision and safety creates a nurturing environment for youths to grow and develop, while also helping to build their confidence.

Juniors can hunt in the field and target shoot under the supervision of a licensed adult for many years before they are old enough to do so alone. Age specifications vary depending on state and territory legislation.

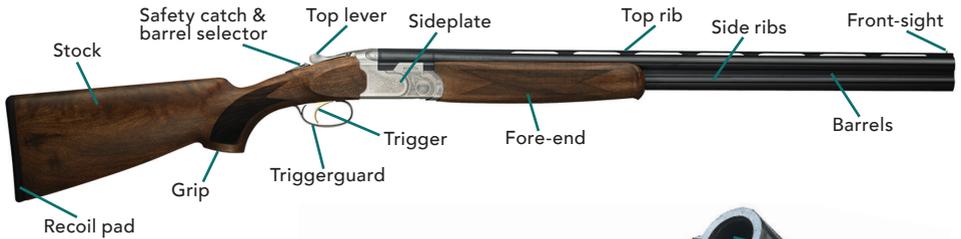
# Firearm and ammunition parts

Familiarise yourself with the correct terms for various parts of a firearm and different types of ammunition.

## Rifle



## Shotgun



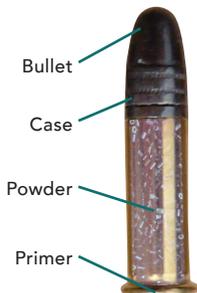
### Handgun



### Revolver



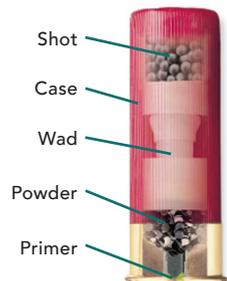
### Rimfire



### Centrefire



### Shotgun



# Glossary

Shooting is a sport filled with terms that are often misunderstood or used inaccurately by the media and general public alike. By using the correct terminology, journalists can play a large role in helping to reduce the public's misunderstanding of firearms, sports shooting and recreational hunting.

**Action:** The combined parts of a firearm that determine how a firearm is loaded, discharged and unloaded. Most handguns are referred to as 'single-action' or 'double-action'. See 'Pistol, Double-action' and 'Pistol, Single-action'.

**Action, Bolt:** A firearm, typically a rifle, that is manually loaded, cocked and unloaded by pulling a bolt mechanism up and back to eject a spent cartridge and load another. Bolt-action firearms are popular for hunting, target shooting and biathlon events. A bolt-action rifle allows the shooter maximum accuracy, but may be too slow or cumbersome for some shooting sports.

**Action, Lever:** A firearm, typically a rifle, that is loaded, cocked and unloaded by an external lever usually located below the receiver.

**Action, Pump/Slide:** A firearm that features a movable forearm that is manually actuated to chamber a round, eject the casing and put another round in position to fire.

**Action, Automatic:** A firearm that loads then fires and ejects cartridges as long as the trigger is depressed and there are cartridges available in the feeding system (ie, magazine or other such mechanism). Note: this type of firearm is rarely owned privately, with the exception of museums and collectors. The

term 'automatic' is commonly confused with the terms 'semi-automatic' or 'self-loading'.

**Action, Self-loading:** A firearm in which each pull of the trigger results in a complete firing cycle, from discharge to reloading. It is necessary that the trigger be released and pulled for each cycle. These firearms are also called 'self-loaders' or 'semi-automatics'. The discharge and chambering of a round is either recoil-operated or gas-operated.

**Ballistics:** The science of studying projectiles. Ballistics can be 'interior' (inside the gun), 'exterior' (in the air) or 'terminal' (at the point of impact). Toolmark investigation is the attempt to microscopically match a bullet or fired cartridge case to a particular firearm.

**Ballistic coefficient (BC):** A relative measure of how well a projectile may be expected to perform in flight, in overcoming air resistance and thus retaining its initial velocity. Mathematically, it is calculated as the ratio of sectional density to coefficient of form (known alternatively as 'form factor') or alternatively, the ratio of bullet weight to diameter squared times form factor I.

**Barrel:** The part of the firearm through which a projectile travels. The barrel may be rifled (with spiral grooves on the interior of the barrel) or smoothbore (a smooth interior barrel with no grooves).

**BB:** Spherical shot having a diameter of .180" used in shotshell loads. The term is also used to designate steel or lead air rifle shot of .175" diameter.

**Bench rest:** A table specifically designed to eliminate as much human error as possible by supporting a rifle for competitive shooting or sighting-in purposes.

**Birdshot:** Small lead or steel pellets used in shotshells ranging in size from No. 12 (less than the diameter of a pencil point) to No. 4 (about .1" in diameter) used for short-range bird and small-game hunting.

**Black powder:** The original propellant made from charcoal, saltpetre and sulphur that was used up until just prior to the turn of the 20th century in all firearms.

**Black powder proof:** The 'proof marks' stamped on a shotgun to designate its suitability to using black powder and not modern-day propellants.

**Boat-tail:** A projectile type having a tapered heel or base to improve ballistic efficiency.

**Bore:** The interior barrel forward of the chamber.

**Bore diameter:** On rifled barrels, the bore diameter is the interior diameter of the barrel from the tops of the lands (the highest point of the grooves). On a smooth barrel, the bore diameter is the interior dimension of the barrel forward of the chamber (not including the choke on shotgun barrels).

**Breech:** The part of a firearm that accepts the loaded cartridges into the barrel when open or 'broken'. Most modern firearms are breechloaders, as opposed to older-style muzzleloaders.

**Bullet:** A non-spherical projectile for use in a rifled barrel.

**Bullet, Hollow-point:** A bullet with a cavity in the nose exposing the lead core to facilitate expansion upon impact. Hollow-point cartridges are used for hunting, police operations and other situations to avoid overpenetration.

**Bullet, Wadcutter:** A generally cylindrical bullet design having a sharp shouldered nose intended to cut paper targets cleanly to facilitate easy and accurate scoring.

**Butt:** On handguns, it is the bottom part of the grip. On longarms, it is the rear or shoulder end of the stock.

**Calibre:** A term used to designate the specific cartridges for which a firearm is chambered. On rifled barrels, it is the approximate diameter of the circle formed by the tops of the lands. It is the numerical term included in the cartridge name to indicate a rough approximation of the bullet diameter (ie, .30-calibre is a .308"-diameter bullet).

**Cant:** The act of tilting the barrels of an over-and-under shotgun beyond vertical due to poor gunfit.

**Cast:** The movement from the centreline of the firearms from the stock centre. For a right-handed person, the stock is considered 'cast off' when aligned to the right of the centreline. 'Cast on' refers to left-handed shooters and stock movement.

**Carbine:** A rifle of short length and light weight originally designed for horse-mounted troops.

**Cartridge:** A single round of ammunition consisting of the case, primer, propellant, powder and one or more projectiles.

**Cartridge case:** The container of brass, plastic or other materials, which houses the primer at the rear, contains the propellant and holds the projectiles at the front. It also functions as a gas seal during firing.

## Glossary

**Cartridge, Centrefire:** Any cartridge intended for use in rifles, pistols and revolvers that has its primer central to the axis at the head of the case. Most cartridges, including shotshells, are centrefire, with the exception of .22-calibre rimfire ammunition. If you were to look at the bottom of a centrefire cartridge, you would see a small circle in the middle of the base, hence, 'centrefire'.

**Cartridge, Magnum:** Any cartridge or shotshell that is larger, contains more shot or produces a higher velocity than standard cartridges or shotshells of a given calibre or gauge.

**Cartridge, Rimfire:** A cartridge containing the priming mixture in the rim of the base. There are a few rimfire ammunition calibres besides the .22, but they are rare and not widely available.

**Cartridge, Big bore:** A general term that refers to larger-calibre cartridges, normally those with bore diameters ranging from .40 to .70" (and larger, should a sporting rifle ever be made with a bore diameter larger than .700"). Big bore rifle cartridges are generally intended for hunting big, tough and dangerous game.

**Cartridge, Smallbore:** A general term that refers to rimfire cartridges, normally of .22-calibre. This ammunition is used for target shooting, plinking and small-game hunting.

**Chamber:** In a rifle, pistol or shotgun, it is the part of the barrel that accepts the ammunition. A revolver has multiple chambers in the cylinder.

**Choke:** The degree to which a shotgun barrel constricts the shot column, thus affecting the spread of the shot or 'pattern' produced.

Chokes may be cylinder, improved cylinder, modified, improved modified or full, to name a few, and may be formed either as part of the barrel at the time of manufacture, by squeezing the end of the bore down over a mandrel or by threading the barrel and screwing in an interchangeable choke tube.

**Chronograph:** An instrument used to measure the velocity of a projectile.

**Cock:** To place the hammer or striker in position for firing by pulling it back fully.

**Cock, Full:** The position of the hammer when the firearm is ready to fire.

**Cock, Half:** The position of the hammer when about half-retracted and intended to prevent the release of the hammer by a normal pull of the trigger.

**Combination (gun):** The term given to a shotgun that has one shotgun barrel and one rifle barrel.

**Cylinder:** The round, rotatable part of a revolver that contains the chambers.

**Deringer:** A general term that refers to many variations of pocket-sized pistols. The name comes from the pistol's original designer, Henry Deringer.

**Discharge:** To cause a firearm to fire.

**Double barrel (also double gun):** A firearm that has two barrels mounted to one frame. The barrels can be vertically (over-and-under) or horizontally (side-by-side) aligned.

**Double trigger:** A shotgun that has two triggers to fire each of its two barrels.

**Ejector:** A spring-loaded mechanism on a shotgun that expels the fired shells clear of the breech.

**Extractor:** A mechanism that raises the cartridges from the breech of the firearm for each cartridge to be removed by hand.

**Firearm:** The legal definition of a firearm in your state or territory will be one that you need to know. Contact your Firearms Registry.

**Firing mechanism:** The part of a shotgun that cocks and releases the firing pin. Commonly called the 'lock' of the shotgun.

**Firing pin:** The part of a firearm that strikes the primer of a cartridge to start the ignition of the primer.

**Flash suppressor:** An attachment to the muzzle designed to reduce muzzle flash. A flash suppressor is not a silencer.

**Flinching:** The act of a person jerking or moving away from the impending recoil of a firearm or simply closing their eyes upon firing.

**Forcing cones:** A tapered area that leads the projectile into a barrel from the chamber once the shotshell is fired.

**Fore-end:** The part of the wooden stock under the barrel/s and forward of the trigger-guard or breech frame to afford a grip.

**Frame:** The basic unit of a revolver, pistol or break-open firearm, which houses the firing mechanism and to which the barrel and stock are assembled. In other firearms, it is called the 'receiver'.

**Front-sight:** The sight that is nearest to the muzzle.

**Gape:** The distance the barrels travel through an arc at the receiver end to fully expose the chambers in the barrel.

**Gauge:** A term used to identify most shotgun bores, with the exception of the .410

shotgun. Gauge relates to the number of bore-diameter-sized lead balls weighing 1lb. For example, a 12-gauge shotgun is so called because 12 lead balls, each of which just fits the inside diameter of the barrel, weigh 1lb. The .410 shotgun is a calibre and refers to the diameter of the barrel.

**Grain:** The unit of weight used for specifying propellant charges and projectile weights. It is often abbreviated to 'gr'. The grain was derived from the weight of a grain of wheat and is now taken as 1/7000 of 1lb.

**Grooves:** Twisted depressions that are cut or swaged into a rifle or pistol barrel to form the rifling (opposite of lands).

**Gun balance:** The peculiar feature of a firearm to feel balanced between the hands of the shooter, to the extent that the firearm becomes an extension of their body. It can also be measured as a pivotal weight point from the hinge pin of a firearm, the point at which the barrels rotate to open.

**Gunfit:** The ability of a firearm to be adopted to suit the shooter as if it were an extension of their body. It includes critical stock measurements for the master eye aligns precisely with the rib of the barrels.

**Hammer:** The part of the firing mechanism that strikes the firing pin, which, in turn, strikes the primer.

**Hammerless:** A firearm having an internal hammer or striker.

**Jacket:** The envelope enclosing the lead core of a bullet.

**Jam:** A malfunction that prevents the action from operating. Jams may be caused by faulty or altered parts, ammunition, poor maintenance or improper use of the firearm.

# Glossary

**Lands:** The ridges that remain after grooves are cut or swaged into a rifle or pistol barrel to form the rifling (opposite of grooves).

**Lead shot:** Shot made from alloying lead with antimony to get varying hardness for various shooting purposes. The more antimony, the harder (but also the lighter in weight) the shot will be.

**Load:** The combination of components used to assemble a cartridge or shotshell. The term also refers to the act of putting ammunition into a firearm.

**Lock:** The mechanical parts of the firing mechanism assembly of the firearm.

**Magazine:** A receptacle on a firearm that holds several cartridges or shells for feeding into the chamber. Magazines take many forms, such as box, drum, rotary or tubular and may be fixed or removable.

**Misfeed:** Any malfunction during the feeding cycle of a repeating firearm that results in the failure of a cartridge to enter the chamber completely.

**Misfire:** A failure of the cartridge to fire after the primer has been struck by the firing pin. A 'hangfire', which is when the cartridge is delayed from firing, is a type of misfire. If the cartridge fails to fire, you should keep the firearm aimed at the target for at least one minute.

**Muzzle:** The front end of a firearm barrel from which the bullet or shot emerges.

**Muzzle flash:** The illumination or flash resulting from the expanding gases from the burning propellant particles emerging from the barrel behind the projectile and uniting with oxygen in the air.

**Muzzleloader:** Any firearm loaded through the muzzle. Muzzleloader firearms are also called 'black powder' firearms. They may be antique, replica or of modified design.

**Nitro proof:** The certification of a shotgun for use with modern-day nitrocellulose/nitro-glycerine-based propellants.

**Nitro propellants:** Propellants or powders that have a base of nitrocellulose (single base) or nitrocellulose and nitroglycerine (double base) as a source of their energy. These propellants are also called 'smokeless' powders.

**Nose:** The point or tip of a bullet.

**Over-and-under:** A firearm with two barrels vertically aligned, one above the other.

**Pattern:** The distribution of pellets/shot fired from a shotgun.

**Pellets:** The small or large balls of certain compounds such as lead, steel, tungsten, tin or bismuth used as ammunition for shotguns.

**Pistol:** A term for a hand-held firearm with a single chamber. A revolver has at least five chambers.

**Pistol, Automatic:** A firearm that will continue to fire so long as the trigger is pressed and held and there is ammunition in the magazine/chamber. A common but improperly used term to describe semi-automatic or self-loading pistols. See Action, Self-loading for a description of how these pistols operate.

**Pistol, Single-action:** A firearm requiring the user to manually pull back the hammer before the firearm can be discharged (like the old Western revolvers).

**Pistol, Double-action:** A firearm requiring the user to either manually cock the hammer or simply pull the trigger to allow the firearm to cock and release the hammer on its own.

**Plinking:** The informal shooting at inanimate targets at indefinite points. Plinking typically refers to casual shooting at pine cones, tin cans or other such objects for fun and practice.

**Powder:** A commonly used term for the propellant in a cartridge or shotshell.

**Pressure:** The force exerted over the surface of the chamber developed by the expanding gases generated by the combustion of the propellant.

**Primer:** An ignition component consisting of a brass or gilding metal cup, priming mixture, anvil and foiling disc. It creates an explosion when hit by a firing pin, igniting the propellant powder. It is the most dangerous component of the cartridge.

**Propellant:** The chemical composition, which, when ignited by a primer, generates gas. The gas propels the projectile.

**Rear-sight:** The sight that is furthest from the muzzle.

**Receiver:** The basic unit of a firearm, which houses the firing mechanism and to which the barrel and stock are assembled. In revolvers, pistols and break-open firearms, it is called the 'frame'.

**Recoil:** The rearward movement of a firearm resulting from firing a cartridge or shotshell.

**Recoil pad:** A buttplate, usually made of rubber, to reduce the recoil or 'kick' from shouldered firearms.

**Reload:** A round of ammunition that has been assembled using previously fired cases.

**Revolver:** A firearm with a cylinder having several chambers so arranged as to rotate around an axis and be discharged successively by the same firing mechanism. A self-loading pistol is not a revolver because it does not have a revolving cylinder.

**Rib:** There are two types of ribs – a side rib, which separates the barrels of an over-and-under shotgun, and the top sighting rib, which provides a flat sighting plane.

**Rifle:** A firearm having spiral grooves in the bore and designed to be fired from the shoulder.

**Rifling:** Grooves and lands formed in the bore of a firearm barrel to impart rotary motion to a projectile.

**Round:** One complete small arms cartridge.

**Safety catch:** A device on a firearm designed to provide protection against accidental or unintentional discharge under normal usage when properly engaged.

**Self-loading/Semi-automatic:** A firearm which fires, extracts, ejects and reloads only once for each pull and release of the trigger.

**Shotgun:** A smoothbore shoulder firearm designed to fire shells containing many pellets or a single slug.

**Shotshell:** A round of ammunition containing multiple pellets for use in a shotgun. The multiple pellets in a shotshell are called 'shot'.

**Side-by-side:** A firearm with two barrels horizontally aligned, one next to the other.

## Glossary

**Silencer:** A device used as an expansion chamber about the muzzle of a firearm, to contain the gases discharged during firing and thus reduce some of the noise produced. Silencers (better referred to as suppressors or moderators) do not actually silence a firearm but merely reduce the overall sound to a level that reduces the chance of hearing damage; they are illegal or restricted in all states and territories within Australia.

**Slug:** A common name for a single projectile fired from a shotgun. Can be of a different shape for differing gauges.

**Small arms:** Any firearm capable of being carried by a person and fired without additional mechanical support.

**Steel shot:** A shot pellet developed from soft iron as an alternative to lead shot when shooting waterfowl due to environmental concerns.

**Stock:** The wood, fibreglass, wood laminate or plastic component to which the barrel and receiver are attached.

**Swing:** The act of moving a shotgun along the trajectory of a moving target in order to shoot it. 'Swinging through' a target refers to catching up to the target and then passing through it to ascertain lead so you do not shoot behind it, so that both the gun and target are then moving in the same direction at similar speed.

**Tang:** A piece of flat metal extending from the receiver of the firearm. It can be the top or bottom tang or both. The top tang usually houses the top lever and safety catch, while the bottom tang often incorporates the rear of the triggerguard.

**Trajectory:** The path of a bullet through the air.

**Trigger:** The part of the firing mechanism (lock) that causes the firearm to fire when it is pulled by the shooter's 'pointing' finger.

**Trigger, Hair:** A slang term for a trigger requiring very low force to actuate.

**Triggerguard:** A metal enclosure that houses the trigger.

**Triggerlock:** A firing mechanism (lock) that can be entirely removed from the bottom of the receiver of a firearm and which also includes the trigger.

**Trigger lock:** An accessory for blocking a firearm from unauthorised use. Most trigger lock manufacturers advise against the use of a trigger lock on a loaded firearm, as shifting the lock against the trigger could fire the gun.

**Trigger pull:** The average force which must be applied to the trigger to cause the firearm to fire.

**Unload:** The complete removal of all unfired ammunition from a firearm.

**Unsingle:** A specifically configured break-action shotgun that is similar to an over-and-under shotgun, but has only one barrel for which to shoot single-barrel target events.

**Velocity:** The speed of a projectile at any point along its trajectory, usually listed in feet per second (fps).

**Wad:** A space device in a shotshell, usually cup-form plastic or paper discs, which separates the propellant powder from the shot.

**Weapon:** An instrument used in combat. The term is never used when referring to sporting firearms.





[www.ssaa.org.au](http://www.ssaa.org.au)