

Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024

Frequently Asked Questions

Contents

General	2
When do the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 apply?	2
What is the purpose of the Regulations?	2
What are the changes made by the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024?	2
What consultation has been conducted on these changes?	3
Where can I view the Regulations?	3
How were the Regulations made?	3
Can I still provide feedback on the reforms?	3
How will the new Regulations be enforced?	3
How do the Regulations apply to Traditional Owner Groups?	3
Is it illegal to hunt at night?	4
What are the new recognised deer habitats?	4
Licensing	4
What are the new game licence fees?	4
Where do I get a hunting licence?	5
What will be done with the revenue from my licence fees?	5
Dogs for Hunting	5
What changes have been made to the inspection of hounds?	5
What new gundog breeds have been added to the Regulations?	6
Game bird hunting	6
When is the open season for duck hunting?	6
Why is the hunting start time being delayed during the first five days of the duck season?	6
Which duck species can be hunted?	6
What other species of game birds can be hunted?	6
Why has the use of electronic callers been banned for hunting Stubble Quail and non-indigenous game birds?	6
Why has the time for non-authorised persons to enter hunting areas been pushed back during the first five days of the duck hunting season?	7
Use of firearms	7
Why is lead ammunition being banned for hunting Stubble Quail and non-indigenous game birds?	7
What are the changes made regarding the exemption that previously allowed the use of toxic shot in muzzleloading, Damascus steel, or twist-barrelled shotguns?	7
What will replace lead ammunition?	7
Why has the decision been made not to ban lead ammunition for hunting deer?	7
Can a spotlight be used for hunting?	8
Can a thermo-imaging device be used for hunting?	8
Proposals that did not proceed	8

Which proposals presented in the Regulatory Impact Statement did not proceed?	8
Why has the reform allowing the use of water points for Hog Deer on private land not progressed?	8
What about Harvest returns, Hog Deer Harvest Returns and Checking Stations?	9
What about other reforms you've committed to deliver as part of the government's response to the Select Committee Inquiry into Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements?	9

General

When do the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 apply?

The Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 (the Regulations) commenced on 7 September 2024.

What is the purpose of the Regulations?

The Regulations support the effective management of game hunting in Victoria. They replace the Wildlife (Game) Interim Regulations 2023 (Interim Regulations) which expired on 6 September 2024.

Changes have been made in the new regulations to:

- improve safety and responsibility
- support sustainable game populations
- improve environment, wildlife and human health protections.

The Regulations outline the procedures for administering game licences, specify the times when game species may be hunted, and detail the methods of hunting, bag limits, and default open season periods for game hunting. They also include key restrictions and offences related to game hunting.

What are the changes made in the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024?

Changes made by the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 include:

- Completing the phase out of toxic shot (e.g. lead ammunition) for all game bird hunting, by:
 - banning the use of lead shot for Stubble Quail and non-indigenous gamebirds
 - removing the exemption for muzzle-loading, Damascus steel or twist-barrelled shotguns from using toxic shot.
- Opening the default duck season on the third Wednesday of March each year instead of the third Saturday of March each year.
- Setting the hunting start time at 8 am for the first five days of the duck season (i.e. Wednesday to Sunday, inclusive).
- Updating the hours that non-authorized people are prevented from entering specified hunting areas to 11am for the first five days of the duck season.
- Updating game licensing fees.
- Removing the requirements for game licence holders to sign a licence and to return a licence to the Game Management Authority (GMA) if they have changed their residential address.
- Adding the West Wimmera and Moyne local government areas to the list of recognised deer habitats to improve the management of illegal spotlighting.
- Enabling the GMA to request a hound to be presented for inspection.
- Banning the use of electronic callers (i.e. electronic acoustic lures) for Stubble Quail and non-indigenous game bird hunting while allowing for their continued use when hunting ducks.
- Introducing a year-round closed season for the Australasian (Blue-winged) Shoveler, to prohibit its hunting while it remains threatened.
- Including two additional gundog breeds, Wirehaired Slovakian Pointer and Murray River Retriever, that can be used for hunting game birds and deer (except for Hog Deer).
- Several administrative improvements and technical changes were also made such as allowing the use of deer decoys for hunting deer and requiring hunters to make all reasonable efforts to immediately kill a deer that is struck but still alive.

Further details on each reform can be found in the corresponding sections of the FAQs below.

For more detail on the reforms please visit: <https://djsir.vic.gov.au/game-hunting/duck-and-stubble-quail-hunting/game-hunting-regulations>.

What consultation has been conducted on these changes?

The Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) for the proposed regulations was exhibited on the Victorian Government's online consultation platform, Engage Victoria, from 1 July 2024 to 29 July 2024.

In total, 5,521 submissions were received via Engage Victoria, including 570 written submissions and 4,951 survey submissions. Around 90 submissions were directly received by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions. Throughout the development of the policy underlying the Regulations, the Department engaged with a wide range of stakeholders including peak body hunting groups, animal welfare animal advocacy groups.

Where can I view the Regulations?

The Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 can be accessed here: [Wildlife \(Game\) Regulations 2024](#).

How were the Regulations made?

The Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 were made under sections 22A, 58C and 87 of the *Wildlife Act 1975* (the Act) and replace the Wildlife (Game) Interim Regulations 2023.

Can I still provide feedback on the reforms?

Public consultation on the reforms in the proposed Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2024 and Regulatory Impact Statement ended on the 30th of July 2024. We thank everyone who made a submission.

For general enquiries regarding the new regulations, please contact the DJSIR Customer Contact Centre on 1800 878 969, between 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday or email customer.contact@ecodev.vic.gov.au to ensure your question is directed to the right team for a response.

How will the new Regulations be enforced?

The Game Management Authority (GMA) is the primary regulator for game hunting on public and private land in Victoria.

GMA Authorised Officers conduct joint patrols and operations with other regulators and land managers including Authorised Officers from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Parks Victoria and Victoria Police.

Authorised Officers, including GMA Game Officers, patrol both public and private land to ensure hunting is conducted safely and responsibly.

The Regulations apply to all lands (public and private) throughout Victoria. If a person suspects illegal hunting, they can report it by submitting an online form to the GMA's website www.gma.vic.gov.au or by calling 136 186. For emergencies, please call 000

Victoria Police is the responsible agency for regulating and licensing the use of firearms and controlled weapons in Victoria under the *Firearms Act 1996* and the *Control of Weapons Act 1990*.

How do the Regulations apply to Traditional Owner Groups?

Members of a Traditional Owner group who are bound by a Natural Resource Agreement and carry out agreed activities in accordance with the agreement, on land to which the agreement applies, are exempt from most of the offence provisions in the Regulations that would otherwise apply to that activity.

Is it illegal to hunt at night?

Yes. The new Regulations continue to prohibit a person from hunting, taking or destroying game at night, being 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise on the next day.

What are the new recognised deer habitats?

The two new recognised deer habitats are areas of Crown land in West Wimmera and Moyne Shire Councils.

The Regulations require hunters to store or carry firearms, ammunition and spotlights in a particular way when travelling through recognised deer habitats 30 minutes after sunset until 30 minutes before sunrise.

A person hunting on public land in recognised deer habitat cannot have a dog that is not a hound, gundog, or deer hunting dog unless the dog is restrained, confined or they have written permission from the Game Management Authority. Exceptions also apply for certain authorised activities.

Requirements vary based on whether you're in a vehicle or on foot.

- In a vehicle: Firearms and magazines must be unloaded and secured, with ammunition also secured. Spotlights must not be in use. You can comply with these requirements by transporting firearms in a padded cover or hard case, unloaded and inoperable, stored out of sight, and kept in separate receptacles for safety.
- On foot: Firearms and magazines must be unloaded, with ammunition stored in a closed case or container. Spotlights should not be fitted to the firearm or attached to any fixture on it.

Licensing

What are the new game licence fees?

The fees will apply to the issuing and variation of game hunting licences, issue of replacement licence cards and conduct of tests. The fees in the Regulations are shown below:

Licence	Previous fees (before 7 September 2024 but after 1 July 2024)		New fees (7 September 2024 and onwards)		
	Prescribed fee units	Value (24-25 fee unit rate)	Prescribed fee units	Value (24-25 fee unit rate)	Increase change
Licence to hunt game birds only (new and renewal)	4	\$65.30	5.44	\$88.80	36%
Licence to hunt game deer only (new and renewal)					
Licence to hunt game birds and deer (new and renewal)	6	\$98.00	9.2	\$150.20	53%
Licence to hunt game birds by a non-resident of Australia	4	\$65.80	5.44	\$88.80	36%
Licence to hunt deer by a non-resident of Australia					

Licence to hunt game birds and deer by a non-resident of Australia	6	\$98.00	9.2	\$150.20	53%
Variation of licence	1	\$16.30	1	\$16.30	-
Issue of replacement licence card	1	\$16.30	1	\$16.30	-
Hunting with Hounds	2	\$32.70	2	\$32.70	-
Waterfowl Identification Test	2	\$32.70	2	\$32.70	-

For more information on the game licence fees please visit: <https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/licencing/apply-for-a-game-licence>.

In 2024-25, the value of a fee unit is \$16.33. For more information about fee units, please visit <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/financial-management-government/indexation-fees-and-penalties>.

Why have game licence fees increased more than previous years?

Game licence fees have increased following a pricing review aimed at recovering a greater share of Government costs associated with supporting safe and sustainable recreational hunting.

This is the first pricing review in over a decade. Game licence fees had not been increased since the wildlife regulations were last made in 2012, other than through annual indexation adjustments. Depending on the licence type, fees have risen by 36-53%.

The proposed fee increases, and justification for the increases, were made public and subject to consultation through the Regulatory Impact Statement during the making of the current regulations.

The changes followed consultation with key stakeholders, including hunting groups, animal welfare and advocacy groups, and traditional owners and apply to various licence types.

Where do I get a hunting licence?

Anyone wishing to hunt game in Victoria, including juniors (12-17 years) and international visitors, must hold a current Victorian Game Licence.

For more information about game licences visit: <https://licensing.gma.vic.gov.au/licences/>. To apply for a game licence please visit: <https://licensing.gma.vic.gov.au/>.

What will be done with the revenue from my licence fees?

Revenue from fees is not retained by the Game Management Authority (GMA) but is paid into the State's Consolidated Fund.

Dogs for Hunting

What changes have been made to the inspection of hounds?

The Game Management Authority (GMA) may request a hound to be presented for inspection.

The GMA can send a written notice to the owner of a registered hound, asking them to bring the hound for an inspection. The notice will include a specific time and place for the inspection.

The time given in the notice must be at least 28 days after the owner receives it.

Failure to present a hound when requested in writing may result in the cancellation of that hound's registration.

What new gundog breeds have been added to the Regulations?

Both the Wirehaired Slovakian Pointer and Murray River Retriever have been added as gundog breeds under the new regulations. These dog breeds can be used to hunt game birds and deer, except Hog Deer.

Game bird hunting

When is the default open season for duck hunting?

The new Regulations made changes to the opening day and hunting times for the first five days of the duck season.

The default season opens on the third Wednesday in March (rather than the third Saturday in March).

For the first five days of the season, the hunting start time will be different from the rest of the season. On the first five days, hunting may start at 8:00 am, differing from the regular start time for the remainder of the season. On the first five days, hunting can occur until 30 minutes after sunset, which remains unchanged.

For the remainder of the season, hunting may occur from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset on each day.

Mid-week openings have been implemented for several years and have been effective in supporting compliance and enforcement efforts during the initial week.

The last day of the default duck season has not changed and remains the second Monday in June. Hunting must cease at 30 minutes after sunset.

Why is the hunting start time being delayed during the first five days of the duck season?

Typically, the opening week of the season sees a significantly higher number of people in wetlands. A later start time will aid in compliance, bird identification and recovery and improve public safety by providing additional daylight before hunting begins.

Which duck species can be hunted?

The Pacific Black Duck, Chestnut Teal, Grey Teal, Hardhead (White-eyed Duck), Australian Shelduck (Mountain Duck), Pink-eared Duck, and Australian Wood Duck (Maned Duck) can be hunted.

Though the Blue-winged Shoveler remains listed as a game bird, a new year-round close season has been imposed, meaning the species cannot be hunted.

What other species of game birds can be hunted?

In addition to the duck species mentioned above, Stubble Quail, species of pheasant and partridge, the European Quail, Japanese Quail and Californian Quail can be hunted.

The Latham's (Japanese or Jack) Snipe remains subject to a year-round close season, meaning this species cannot be hunted. This remains unchanged.

Why has the use of electronic callers been banned for hunting Stubble Quail and non-indigenous game birds?

The use of electronic acoustic lures for Stubble Quail and non-indigenous gamebirds – i.e. species of pheasant and partridge, the European Quail, Japanese Quail and Californian Quail – has been prohibited. Electronic callers for Stubble Quail have been found to be very effective at attracting and concentrating Stubble Quail. The use of these electronic callers could lead to overharvesting and is contrary to the ethic of 'fair chase.'

An exemption has been made for duck hunting, where electronic callers are allowed.

Why has the time for unauthorised and unlicensed persons to enter hunting areas been pushed back during the first five days of the duck hunting season?

The Victorian Government is committed to safe, responsible, and sustainable recreational game hunting in Victoria and there are clear and established rules to support this.

Under the new Regulations, unauthorised and unlicensed persons cannot access certain hunting areas during the first five days of the duck hunting season until 11:00 am each day. This restriction applies to waters of any State Game Reserve and of hunting areas described in Schedule 7 to the Regulations, as well as land within 25 metres of the shore of those waters.

The adjustment has been made to align with the later start times for hunting of 8:00 am for the first five days of the season.

For the remainder of the season, unauthorised and unlicensed persons are able to access the areas from 10:00 am.

Adjusting the time for people who are not engaged in hunting to enter hunting areas will assist with enforcement and compliance activities and improve public safety measures.

Use of firearms

Why is lead ammunition being banned for hunting Stubble Quail and non-indigenous game birds?

Using toxic shot – such as lead ammunition – to hunt, take or destroy Stubble Quail and non-indigenous gamebirds has now been banned because of its harmful effects on the environment, wildlife, and human health.

There are also risks associated with predatory wildlife and human health through the ingestion of lead shot.

The use of lead shot to hunt, take or destroy ducks remains prohibited.

What are the changes made regarding the exemption that previously allowed the use of toxic shot in muzzleloading, Damascus steel, or twist-barrelled shotguns?

All shotguns, regardless of shotgun type and barrel construction, must not use toxic (including lead) shot for hunting any game birds. The previous exemption that allowed specific types of shotguns to use toxic shot has now been completely removed in the new Regulations.

What will replace lead ammunition?

Alternatives like steel shot and other non-toxic ammunition options (e.g. bismuth) are available, providing safe and effective alternatives to lead. These options are becoming increasingly available in various sizes and gauges in the Australian market. Schedule 6 to the Regulations includes a list of shot that is not toxic shot.

Hunters are encouraged to contact their local supplier early to source non-toxic alternatives in advance of the 2025 Stubble Quail season.

Hunters should also pattern test the non-toxic alternatives before the season to ensure they are shooting with effective load and choke combinations.

The ban on toxic shot for hunting non-indigenous game birds is already in place and it must no longer be used to hunt these birds.

Why has the decision been made not to ban lead ammunition for hunting deer?

During public consultation on the proposed ban, significant concerns were expressed by hunters regarding the proposal to ban lead ammunition for deer hunting and further consultation with stakeholders is required.

Can a spotlight be used for hunting?

The use of a spotlight for hunting and taking game is prohibited. A spotlight is defined as a source of artificial light, or an infrared device, or a night viewing device, or a thermo-imaging device. A spotlight does not include:

- A domestic light used for domestic purposes. This could include lights such as torches, lanterns, and work lights used around camps.
- An emergency light used for emergency purposes, such as handheld torches or headlamps used to navigate.
- A light fitted to your vehicle that complies with the Road Safety (Vehicles) Regulations 2021 relating to a light of that kind. This covers all spotlights and work lights that are fitted on your vehicle in a legal manner.

Hand-held thermo-imaging devices can be used by hunters provided they are not mounted to a firearm or a fixture attached to the firearm. Note that these can only be used during the day (i.e. between 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset) as night hunting is prohibited.

Landowners or their managers, permanent employees or agents on private land acting in accordance with the unprotected wildlife order for deer on private land (Unprotection-Order-Wildlife-on-private-property.pdf (gma.vic.gov.au) are permitted to use spotlights.

Landowners/occupiers or their agents or persons accompanying them who are using a spotlight for the purpose of controlling pest animals on private property can be in possession of a spotlight up to a distance of 250 metres outside the property boundary.

Can a thermo-imaging device be used for hunting?

Yes. A thermo-imaging device can be used for hunting on public land and private land during the day only, provided it is not mounted on the firearm.

The thermo-imaging device must be used as a separate tool and not integrated with the firearm.

A licenced hunter may use a thermo-imaging device as a hand-held device, even if it has capability to be mounted on a firearm scope, provided the device is not mounted on a scope attached to a firearm in any way.

As indicated above, landowners and certain others may use spotlights – including mounted thermo-imaging devices - on private land at any time if in accordance with the unprotected wildlife order for deer on private land (https://www.gma.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/492935/Unprotection-Order-Wildlife-on-private-property.pdf).

Proposals that did not proceed

Which proposals presented in the Regulatory Impact Statement did not proceed?

- The proposal to ban the use and possession of toxic (lead) ammunition for hunting deer did not proceed. Further consultation with stakeholders and industry will take place.
- The proposed exemption allowing the use of artificial water points to hunt, take, or destroy Hog Deer on private land did not proceed.
- The proposed requirement for Hog Deer hunters to submit a harvest return did not proceed and the existing requirement to take Hog Deer to a checking station has been maintained.
- The proposal to ban the use of electronic acoustic callers for duck hunting did not proceed.

For more detail on the proposals that did not proceed, please visit here: <https://engage.vic.gov.au/proposed-wildlife-game-regulations-2024-and-regulatory-impact-statement>.

Why has the reform allowing the use of water points for Hog Deer on private land not progressed?

The use of water points for Hog Deer was determined to be challenging to administer and had technical issues which will need to be addressed and will require further consultation with stakeholders.

What about Harvest returns, Hog Deer Harvest Returns and Checking Stations?

The proposal to lodge harvest returns was not adopted in the new Regulations to allow the Government further time to implement the harvest return system, including making necessary IT system upgrades.

The Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions is continuing to work toward regulatory changes that will make this proposal operational for the 2026 Hog Deer season.

Until the necessary changes are made, Hog Deer will need to be taken to checking stations within 24 hours of being taken as previously required under the Interim Regulations and Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012. The government will keep hunters informed of any changes ahead of the 2026 Hog Deer season.

What about other reforms you've committed to deliver as part of the Government's response to the Select Committee Inquiry into Victoria's Recreational Native Bird Hunting Arrangements?

Some of the reforms the Government committed to in response to the Select Committee report recommendations are being implemented through these Regulations, including the banning of the use of lead shot for hunting all game birds.

Other commitments will be progressed from 2025 onwards.