**WATERFOWL WOUNDING REDUCTION ACTION PLAN**

**PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2025**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ACTION** | | **DUE DATE** | **WHO** | **STATUS**  **Delayed**  **In progress**  **Completed**  **Yet to commence** | **COMMENT** |
| 1.1 | Hunting organisations and government promote the release of this action plan through their communications channels (e.g. social media, websites, magazines, newsletters) to raise awareness and institute a culture of non-acceptance of wounding behaviours and continuous improvement. | 2025 and ongoing | Key duck hunting organisations, industry, broader hunting community, GMA |  | The Game Management Authority (GMA) has promoted the action plan through its website and social media. Field and Game Australia (FGA) has promoted the release of the plan to members across its communication platforms. Sporting Shooters Association of Australia – Victoria (SSAA), FGA and the GMA will continue to promote the plan, particularly in the lead up to the 2026 duck season. |
| 1.2 | Develop a code of ethics for duck hunters which focusses on continuous improvement and committing to practice behaviours that reduce the chances of wounding. | 2025 | WWRAP working group |  | A code of ethics has been developed by the Working Group. |
| 1.3 | The code of ethics is endorsed by Field and Game Australia (FGA) and the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (SSAA) and other shotgunning organisations are invited to endorse the Code. | 2025 | Duck hunting organisations |  | The code has been endorsed by the SSAA and FGA and will be promoted through duck hunting clubs and on communications platforms. |
| 1.4 | Acknowledge good hunting practice in the field through peer recognition and reward. | 2025 and ongoing | Hunting organisations, general duck hunting community |  | Approaches are currently being considered. |
| 1.5 | Conduct social research into the attitudes, perceptions and behaviours of Victorian duck hunters to identify factors that may contribute to wounding. | 2026 | GMA |  | GMA has held discussions with RMIT on this project, and it is developing a research proposal. |
| 1.6 | Promote the standards required to achieve the action plan’s goal. | 2024 and ongoing | GMA, hunting organisations |  |  |
| 2.1 | Review current educational materials and identify any gaps. | 2025 | WWRAP working group |  | Education materials were reviewed and updated They will be reviewed and updated again for next year. |
| 2.2 | Develop simple, direct and targeted communication and education tools for hunters to raise awareness and encourage behaviour change to address the key causes of wounding. | 2025–26 | WWRAP working  group |  | ‘Reduce wounding’ communications campaign developed and implemented. Further tools to be developed. |
| 2.3 | Review and promote the dispatch guide to raise awareness of how to humanely destroy recovered birds. | 2025 | WWRAP working group |  | The Guidelines on the Humane Dispatch of Downed Ducks was revised and released in May 2025. Videos on each of the methods are currently under development. The guide will be promoted prior to and during the 2026 duck season. |
| 2.4 | Authorised officers to continue to actively enforce game hunting regulations which require hunters to immediately recover downed birds before continuing to hunt. | Ongoing | Government Authorised Officers |  |  |
| 2.5 | Regularly promote consistent and simple key messages on how to reduce wounding through various communications and marketing channels. | 2025 and ongoing | Industry, hunting organisations, GMA |  | Same as for 2.2. |
| 3.1 | Commencing in 2025, all prospective (i.e. new) native game bird hunters (including duck hunters) must undertake online theory training and pass an online test which covers hunting laws and good hunting practice including reducing wounding, before they can obtain a Game Licence to hunt duck and Stubble Quail. Note: regulations are required. | 2025 for new applicants | Responsible  Ministers, DJSIR,  DEECA, GMA, prospective Game Licence holders |  | Education materials were reviewed and updated. The licensing system has been revised to accommodate testing. The testing requirement came into effect in time for the start of the 2025 duck hunting season. Regulations to replace the administrative approach are in development. |
| 3.2 | From 2026, all existing duck and Stubble Quail hunters must undertake the same theory training and testing as described in 3.1 but this will be on renewal of a Game Licence or reapplication if previous licences have lapsed. | From 2026 | Responsible Ministers, DJSIR, DEECA, GMA, existing/previous Game Licence holders. |  | Regulations are in development. |
| 3.3 | Review existing education materials to ensure they are adequate to assist hunters to pass the theory test. Revise existing or develop new materials as required. | 2025-26 | WWRAP working group, hunting organisations, GMA |  | Education materials were revised in preparation for the testing requirement to come into effect. The education material will be reviewed again before the 2026 season in light of new findings/projects that are undertaken this year, e.g. the revised dispatch guide. |
| 3.4 | Conduct a proficiency training pilot. Consider the costs and benefits of introducing mandatory training and/or testing. Provide advice to the Minister on the outcome of the trial by August 2025 for consideration. | 2025-26 | GMA |  | Training and testing pilot with hunting volunteers is currently underway. |
| 3.5 | Hunting organisations with shooting ranges should make them easily accessible, including to non‑members, and establish pattern testing facilities and realistic clay target shooting opportunities that represent flight angles and speeds of ducks to simulate field situations, and distance estimation training facilities. | 2025 and ongoing | Hunting organisations with shooting ranges |  | Commenced. Shooting ranges available to members and others. Pattern testing facilities are available at Eagle Park shooting range. Mobile training units are also available. Hunting organisations will explore equipping other ranges with pattern boards. |
| 3.6 | Hunting organisations and third-party providers to develop and provide easily accessible retriever training programs for gundogs. | 2025 and ongoing | Hunting organisations,  gundog training providers |  | SSAA and FGA have established gundog training programs. The GMA and hunting organisations will promote the availability of these and other gundog training programs. |
| 3.7 | Encourage hunting and dog training clubs to offer the services of trained gundogs to accompany hunters in the field to increase recovery rates of downed birds and provide field experience for gundogs. | 2025 and ongoing | Hunting organisations, gundog training providers |  | SSAA and FGA is offering the services of trained gundogs. GMA will promote dog training clubs that offer this service. |
| 4.1 | Determine, in consultation with experts, appropriate experimental designs to measure wounding rates. | 2025 | GMA |  | GMA has secured an international expert and the Arthur Rylah Institute to develop the study design to guide the research. A project manager has been recruited to lead the research. |
| 4.2 | Conduct research to determine the current wounding rate. | 2026-2028 and periodically thereafter | GMA |  | Field data collection will occur during the 2026 and 2027 duck seasons. |
| 4.3 | In conjunction with the move to adaptive harvest management for waterfowl harvest setting, incorporate wounding losses in order to determine the total annual harvest level and subsequent hunting arrangements. An appropriate proxy rate will be used until research establishes the Victorian rate. | 2025 and ongoing | GMA |  | Wounding losses are being incorporated into waterfowl harvest setting from 2025 – as part of implementing the Victorian Game Duck Harvest Strategy which was released in January 2025. A proxy wounding rate of 23% has been adopted based on historical research until the contemporary Victorian wounding rate is determined. |
| 5.1 | Introduce a wounding monitoring program which uses x-ray to measure pellet infliction (embedded pellet) rates. | Commenced and ongoing | GMA |  | Annual program commenced in 2022. Reports for 2022, 2023 and 2024 are published on the GMA website. Monitoring is ongoing. |
| 5.2 | Explore other approaches to wounding monitoring, such as hunter surveys or machine learning. | 2025 | GMA |  | Hunter surveys will be conducted during the wounding rate research alongside independent observers. Machine learning is currently very expensive and time-consuming but could be adopted in future as technology evolves. The use of independent observers is considered to be the best approach given current technologies. |
| 5.3 | Following the introduction of adaptive harvest management for game ducks, determine the “crippling (wounding) ratio” as a measure of the effectiveness of interventions in this action plan. | 2026 | GMA |  |  |
| 5.4 | Annually publish the results of wounding monitoring programs on the GMA website. | Commenced and ongoing | GMA |  | 2022, 2023 and 2024 reports published on the GMA website. Reports will be published annually. |
| 6.1 | Establish a Wounding Reduction Working Group consisting of relevant stakeholders and an independent chair to further develop aspects of the action plan, monitor its effectiveness and provide advice to the GMA on progress towards achieving the action plan vision and goal. | Commenced. | Identified key stakeholders |  | The Wounding Reduction Working Group has been established. |
| 6.2 | The working group should meet every six months during the life of the action plan and at other times as required. | Commenced | WWRAP working  group |  |  |
| 6.3 | Review the action plan at the end of its five-year period and provide advice to the GMA on performance, achievements and areas for improvement. | 2029 | WWRAP working  group |  |  |