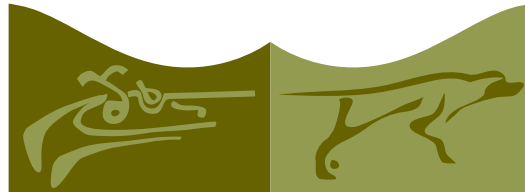


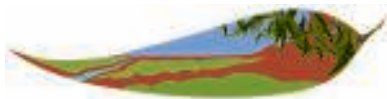
SECTION ONE



CASE



UNIT 1.3 SAFE HUNTING PRACTICES



GAME COUNCIL
New South Wales

CONSERVATION HUNTING

This publication was produced by
Game Council NSW
PO Box 2506
Orange NSW 2800
Phone: (02) 6360 5100 Fax: (02) 6361 2093
Email: info@gamecouncil.nsw.gov.au

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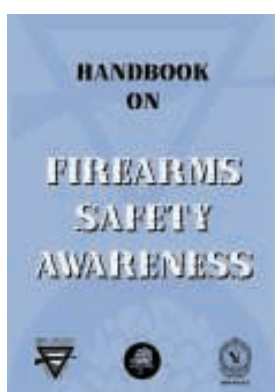
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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Etiquette – A set of social rules.

Trauma – Injury or damage.

Trigger lock – Two-piece locking device that clamps around the trigger making it inaccessible.



INTRODUCTION

Safety is very much a matter of planning ahead and thinking through the consequences of your actions. A person who recognises the importance of safety will ask themselves “what if” questions, and then take the necessary steps to prevent trouble. This unit of study will build on the information you learned in the Firearms Safety Training Council (FSTC) course you undertook to obtain your shooter’s licence.

Hunting poses risk other than the risk directly related to firearms. This unit of study will encourage you to think through a range of safety issues.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On the completion of this unit of study you will:

- Be able to be tested for a Restricted NSW Game Hunting Licence with your nominated hunting method/s.
- Have re-read the NSW FSTC handbook on firearms safety.
- Have written out a hazard analysis for the particular hunting situations you wish to engage in.
- Have written up a safety habit protocol for when you are hunting.
- Have identified a range of hunting safety precautions.

This unit of study assumes that you are thoroughly familiar with the firearm safety rules set out in the NSW FSTC Handbook available on this website:
www.firearmtraining.com.au/html/certificate.htm



HAZARD ANALYSIS

In many situations, both in industry and commerce, HACCP (hazard analysis critical control paths) principles are employed to improve safety and productivity. These principles can also be applied to make your own hunting experience safer.

Think about your next hunting trip. Analyse the potential hazards to yourself, to your equipment and to the community. Write them down. Hazards can occur in transit, in camp, and while hunting. In transit and in your hunting camp your firearms are more vulnerable than in the home gun safe. They may be damaged, stolen or be accessible to children or others.

Exercise 1: identify hazards

Take pen and paper and write a list of all the things that you normally do to get to a hunting area and set-up the hunting camp. Now add in the hazards for each activity.

We know that safety manuals list all sorts of oddball dangers. Make this exercise real. Think about those dangers that are most likely to apply to your particular hunting circumstances. Then for each hazard you identify, list a sensible, practical safety precaution. A lot can go wrong before you even begin hunting. You are now on the way to constructing your personal safety hunting protocol!

Examples

- Is the drive to your hunting area too far to safely do in one day?
Driver fatigue may be a much more serious hazard than any hunting danger.
- If you travel with the family, is it possible that your children could gain access to your firearms while in transit?
- A practical safety precaution may be to apply a trigger lock to your firearm and pack the bolt and ammunition separately. You may decide to do this as a general safety precaution. Your firearms may be more secure if you travel with them in locked, strong, padded gun cases.

You know the firearm safety rules but while hunting your concentration on firearm safety will be distracted by many things; the excitement of a stalk, finding a snake under foot, animals suddenly taking flight, fatigue at the end of a tough hunting day.

To prevent accidents you need to develop a safety routine that ensures that you are failsafe, even when distracted.

Exercise 2: safety checks

Take pen and paper and write down the things that may distract you when hunting. These are the predictable and likely dangers. For each instance think out and write down a safety habit that will overcome the distraction.

Example

A deer spooked just before you fired. Your safety habit routine prompts you to uncock your rifle when not immediately taking a shot. Then you race after the deer on the chance of a parting shot. In this situation, without safe habits, it would be easy to find yourself running through bush with a cocked rifle. What happens then is you slip, fall and a firearm accident follows.

Exercise 3: good hunting habits

Take a pen and paper and write down your intended hunting habits.

Examples

- Do you intend to carry your firearm with ammunition in the magazine, with a round in the chamber, and cocked with the safety catch on? If so write it down. Think carefully on this example!
- In thick scrub, will you tape the muzzle of your rifle to prevent muck getting down the barrel?
- Will you check regularly to see if you have left your firearm cocked?
- Will you require your hunting mate to regularly check to see if their firearm has been left cocked?
- Will you unload your firearm at obstacles such as fences?
- Will you only take the shot when you know that the projectile is going to land in a safe spot or have a safe background?
- Do you intend to hunt in camouflage clothing in an area where there are other hunters?

Your full list will be much longer than these few examples.



When crossing obstacles such as this creek with slippery rocks underfoot, it is safe practice to unload your gun and keep it open.

Photo: G Harle

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FENCE CROSSING PROCEDURES

Photos: M Draisma

Two Hunters



Step 1: Both rifles are emptied of cartridges. The first hunter goes through the fence while his mate holds both rifles.



Step 2: The rifles are carefully handed over the fence one at a time.



Step 3: The second hunter then climbs through the fence.

One Hunter



Step 1: The rifle is emptied of cartridges and placed on the ground while the hunter climbs through the fence.



Step 2: The hunter reaches back through the fence to pick up his rifle.



Step 3: The hunter carefully brings the rifle through to his side of the fence.

Exercise 4: group feedback

Set up a meeting to discuss your list of intended hunting habits with several friends. This way you can check if what you intend to do is really safe. You can work out if there are even better ways of going about it.

Examples

If you wrote down that you intended to hunt relying on your rifle safety catch to prevent an accidental discharge your friends would not be impressed. They would tell you that it is too easy to mistake the on/off position of your safety catch, or that the safety catch may fail to operate properly if the rifle is bumped. They would tell you that it is against the firearm safety rules that clearly require you not to load and cock your rifle except immediately before you take a shot.

This exercise is important, as it will help you and your friends develop safer hunting practices. Most people are happy to plan a future hunt together, to talk about what and where but are often reluctant to talk about each other's safety habits. The emphasis should be – this is the way I do it – can you help me to do it more safely?

ROUTINE SAFE HUNTING PRACTICES

A case study

Max and Peter regularly hunt together. They hunt in rough country on a large sheep property where they are invited to hunt for feral control. Base camp is set up in the shearers' quarters. Their vehicle is a 4WD and takes them a long distance into each day's hunting area. The vehicle then acts as a base station. It is equipped with mechanical recovery gear, meat processing gear, 20L of

drinking water and a comprehensive First Aid kit. On the hunt, both Max and Peter carry a daypack each with 1L of drinking water and snack food. One set of game dressing gear and a basic first aid kit is shared between the packs.

Max and Peter have hunted together for many years and have developed a safety protocol that puts trust in each other but not themselves. During a hunt, each reports to the other on the state of readiness of their firearm. The routine goes - Max to Peter "my rifle has 3 in the magazine, the chamber is empty and the bolt up". Peter then replies "my rifle has 3 in the magazine, the chamber is empty and the breech is open". The routine starts on leaving the vehicle and is repeated at obstacles such as fences, stony creek crossings, cliff faces and always after any hunting action where a round may have been chambered. The final routine, on return to the vehicle, involves confirming with each other that the firearm is clear of ammunition in both chamber and magazine.

Max and Peter always discuss the hunt plan for each paddock, stay just in sight of each other as the paddock is hunted and stay in communication by means of light UHF radios (used with ear plugs for greater effectiveness). The radios ensure that both Max and Peter always know what the other is doing and allow the hunt plan to be quickly altered without risk of separation. The camouflage clothing worn by Max and Peter gives more productive hunts but requires more care and frequent radio communication for each of them to know exactly where their buddy is. They also choose to wear blaze orange caps to supplement this safety routine.



Max and Peter know that once they press the trigger a projectile cannot be called back. They apply two basic rules.

- A shot is never taken unless the animal is identified beyond doubt.
- A shot is never taken unless the projectile will land in a safe background. That is, they can see the general area of impact to be clear of stock, farm equipment, hard surfaces and other people.

Would you be tempted?

You come across a world-class trophy stag only 30 metres away. The stag is on a skyline and unaware of your presence. I cannot miss at this range you think. Possibly true, but you do not know where the projectile will finish up. It may pass through the animal and carry on to end the life of the person innocently bushwalking on the other side of the ridge. There are no exceptions, world-class stag or otherwise. Back off, move around and take the shot from a position where you know your projectile will come to earth safely. Better to lose the stag than risk a tragedy.



A pair of hunters setting out in open country. They are well prepared in both their clothing and equipment. They are wearing strong boots and camouflage gear, complete with hats for sun protection.

Their equipment includes CB radios, a knife each, binoculars, ammunition pouches, backpacks containing food and water and game dressing equipment.

Their rifles are slung over the shoulder pointing skywards, which is a safe method for carrying firearms while walking.

Photo: G Harle

SAFE HUNTING ETIQUETTE

There is more to hunting than being safe. The general public needs to feel safe when hunters are about. There are a number of simple things you need to do. For example:

- You meet a party of bushwalkers in some sort of trouble. Help them out. Tell them you are a hunter.
- You meet a party of bushwalkers who have just left a scent trail through your best deer-hunting patch. It is their right to be there as much as yours. Be friendly, courteous and helpful. Ask where they are headed and assure them that you will not hunt near them.
- Always unload and sling your rifle during chance meetings in the bush. Tell people you meet that your rifle is unloaded and make it clear that you are not actively hunting near them. Ask them where they are going and hunt elsewhere.
- Do not display firearms around farmhouses, or the camp.
- Do not use the telescopic sight on your rifle as binoculars to watch people or look at farmhouses. You know that your rifle is unloaded but the people watching you through their binoculars don't. All they see is a rifle being aimed at them!



ALWAYS POINT YOUR FIREARM IN A SAFE DIRECTION – LOADED OR UNLOADED.

These hunters are walking in single file on a game trail. Safe practice dictates that when they come upon game only the lead hunter will take the shot.

Photo: G Harle

BUSHCRAFT AND SURVIVAL SKILLS

Go to *Section 4* of this handbook to learn more about common bush hazards and how to avoid or survive them.

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EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Example question 1

Safety is very much a matter of planning ahead and thinking through the consequences of your actions. A safe person will ask themselves “what if” questions and then take the necessary steps to prevent trouble.

True or False?

List four steps you would take to make your hunting safer.

1.
2.
3.
4.

Example question 2

Game and feral animals must not be fired at unless they can be clearly seen and identified and the shot when taken poses no appreciable risk of injury to any person or significant damage to any property.

True or False?

List at least four things you need to do to take a safe shot.

1.
2.
3.
4.

REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING AND LEARNING

1. NSW Firearms Safety Training Council (FSTC) Handbook.
2. Smith, G.1992. *Guide to Hunting and Shooting in Australia*. Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Publications, Unley S.A.
3. *The Australian Deerbunter's Handbook*. Harrison, M. and Slee, K. Aust. Deer Research Foundation, Croydon Vic Second Edition 1995.
4. *Firearms Safety Code*. Victorian Firearms Consultative Committee. Victoria Police Unit

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	SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST	True	False
1.	Safety is very much a matter of planning ahead and thinking through the consequences of your actions. A safe person will ask themselves “what if” questions, and then take the necessary steps to prevent trouble.		
2.	Once you press the trigger a projectile cannot be called back.		
3.	A trophy stag is on a skyline but so close that it is impossible to miss. Therefore, it is safe to take the shot.		
4.	It is safe to fire at movement of bushes in thick scrub.		
5.	You can search for your hunting mates using your rifle’s telescopic sight.		
6.	No animal is worth the risk of carrying a loaded, cocked rifle.		
7.	Safe hunting etiquette requires that you not only be safe but are seen to be safe.		
8.	Wearing bright colours, like blaze orange, when hunting deer is a good safety practice.		
9.	Hazard analysis and discussion of critical safety habits with your hunting mates will make your hunting safer.		
10.	Hunting is a risk free sport.		