

# SECTION ONE



# CASE



## UNIT 1.4 ETHICS AND CONSERVATION



# GAME COUNCIL

New South Wales

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## CONSERVATION HUNTING

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Ethics** – Moral principles or code.

**Predator** – A species that hunts and consumes another species.

**Sustainable** – Able to be continually renewed.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this Unit you will:

- Be able to be tested for a Restricted NSW Game Hunting Licence with your nominated hunting method/s.
- Understand your moral and ethical responsibilities to the animals that you hunt.
- Understand the four ‘R’s of hunting in NSW.
- Know the basic elements of modern game management and the principles of sustainable use of game animals.
- Know of several references for further reading to broaden your knowledge.

## INTRODUCTION

Today’s hunter needs to develop personal hunting rules and ethics to maintain community support for this recreational and industry activity.

It means setting boundaries and restrictions as to how hunters are prepared to hunt within the framework of existing laws.

Experience shows that good ethics develop and grow from an understanding of conservation principles, respect and compassion for animals that you hunt and from past practices.

Through the NSW Game Hunting Licensing System - which brings an even higher level of accountability to

hunting in this state the vision of Game Council NSW is to promote these core hunting values to all facets of the hunting fraternity and the wider community.

The major objective of Game Council NSW is to provide for the effective management of introduced animal species, while promoting responsible, ethical and sustainable hunting.

All hunters have an obligation to do the right thing in the way they hunt an animal, respect landholders' properties and interact with the wider community. It is a hunter's behaviour that ultimately shapes community attitudes and perceptions about hunting in NSW.

## HUNTING ETHICS

Every hunter develops personal ethical standards which in fact constitutes a personal code of practice that determines how a hunter approaches his or her hunting activities. What standard of personal ethics or code should it be? How do hunting situations determine how a hunter conducts the hunt?

It is fair to say that hunting practices that are legal in other countries may not be so in others. Within current legal boundaries there may exist some hunting practices that some consider to be unethical when measured against their own personal code of practice. This diversity of opinions and ethics is recognised and respected.

A hunter's personal hunting ethic goes well beyond what is mandatory and extends to the rationale for the 'why' and 'how' of hunting.

Many hunters are very specific in their hunting practices engaging in only one form of hunting. The context of a hunt will also affect how a hunter applies their hunting ethic. For example:

- Is the hunt for pest control or for meat?

- Are the hunted animals abundant or sparse?
- Is the hunt on private or declared public land?
- Is the hunt a commercially guided hunt or a weekend outing with friends?

In NSW the minimum ethical standard and code of practice of all hunters is based on a very sound and proven value – RESPECT.

If we respect a person or a policy, we hold it in esteem. We may aspire to support it and promote it. When it comes to the '4 Rs' of hunting in NSW, hunters are required to affirm their commitment as part of holding a NSW Game Hunting Licence.

## THE '4 RS' OF HUNTING IN NSW

### 1. RESPECT for the Law

#### **Ethical Hunters:**

- Are role models who obey and promote compliance to all laws including game hunting and firearm laws.
- Ensure they have permission before entering any land.
- Obey all legal requirements of the land owner.
- Obey total fire bans and ensure they adhere to fire danger ratings.
- Offer to report to the landowner/police all unusual or suspicious behaviour or illegal incidents.

## 2. RESPECT for the Landowner

### Ethical Hunters:

- Understand that when entering property with permission, they are a guest of the landowner and must treat the property with respect.
- Obey all reasonable requests and directions of the landowner.
- Ensure they gain a clear understanding of property boundaries and the areas they have been given permission to access.
- Look for opportunities to assist landowners for the hunting privileges afforded to them.
- Treat all other people's opinions and property with respect.
- Learn about the likelihood or presence of any traditional owner's sites or place and do not, under any circumstances, disturb any aspect.

## 3. RESPECT for the Environment

### Ethical Hunters:

- Are guardians of the environment.
- Dispose of all litter/garbage and empty shell cases properly.
- Stay on formed tracks/trails and do not drive where their vehicle will cause environmental damage.
- Work to preserve the environment and support the existence and sustainability of non-game and endangered species.
- Take the necessary precautions and safety measures when lighting camp fires.

## 4. RESPECT for the Animals

### Ethical Hunters:

- Learn to shoot accurately, safely and always with the intention of ensuring a humane kill.
- Learn everything they can about the game they hunt, its habitat, habits and life cycle.
- Are skilled in the use of the tools that they use for hunting.
- Transport their harvest in a respectful manner.
- Learn to fully utilise the animals they harvest.

Any hunter breaching one of the '4 Rs' disgraces themselves, places blight on their fellow responsible hunters and most importantly on the activity of hunting.

The spirit of the '4 Rs' is written into a formal Code of Practice contained in the *Game and Feral Animal Control Regulation 2004*. All licensed hunters in NSW are required to obey the provisions of the Code of Practice for Hunting (refer to Section 1, Unit 1.1).

However, the '4 Rs' require more than legal compliance, they require you – the hunter – to actively promote the principles of responsible and ethical hunting. As 'best practice' this means that you should discuss the Code with your hunting buddies and determine how best to implement it on any particular hunt.

As responsible, ethical hunters we should not ever compromise the '4 Rs' of hunting.

## CONSERVATION HUNTING

Aldo Leopold, a hunter and author of the historically significant book on conservation, *A Sand County Almanac*, is considered by many to be the father of modern conservation theory.

Leopold advocates that: “*Conservation is a state of harmony between man and the land.*”

The concept and practice of conservation hunting has always been close to the hearts of responsible hunters.

Until the establishment of the Game Council, the state government had not taken full advantage of the capabilities of private hunters on both public and private land, in an organised, regulated way.

Hunting is an important and legitimate tool in nature conservation management, particularly as it relates to over-populations of introduced species.

By controlling animal populations, public and private landholders will have a greater opportunity to conserve our delicate NSW ecosystems with the help of structured conservation hunting activities.

### Feral animal control

Hunting is an important tool in feral animal control. Pest animal managers have tried every known way from trapping, poisoning, and exclusion by fencing and shooting to eradicate growing populations of introduced species. Unfortunately, this has not been successful and feral and pest animals are as numerous and as widespread as they have ever been.

It is now widely recognised that the complete eradication of these species is almost physically and certainly economically impossible.

The role of the responsible hunter in conservation therefore becomes increasingly important. A 2004 Report for the Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation (RIRDC) noted that ‘hunting relies upon conserving wildlife habitat’. Accordingly, hunters have a long history of conserving and restoring wildlife habitat through their efforts, their funds and their lobbying power.

A further example from the RIRDC report underpins the important role of responsible hunters and is evidenced by estimations that feral pigs cost Australia’s agricultural industries \$100 million a year in lost production, mostly in NSW and Queensland. It has been estimated that hunters kill 15-20% of the feral pig population in accessible country.

Through Game Council NSW, an opportunity exists for licensed hunters in NSW to demonstrate an even greater role in conservation by assisting in the battle against feral animals.

### Conservation as opposed to preservation

The term ‘conservation’ is often used erroneously to refer to preservation. Conservation requires the intent to use a resource, whereas preservation refers to the intent to save the resource from being used on the basis that if things are left alone they will stay as they are. Many examples around the world show this concept is flawed.

Most people would be amazed if they were told that the axe was a conservation tool for the preservation of plants. By cutting away over-abundant or invasive pest species and encouraging the growth of other species, we can restore the ecological balance of a forest community, thus helping more desirable rarer species to survive. Similarly, the firearm and bow has such a role in wildlife conservation.

Many people may see them just as weapons of destruction. Those who know better, recognise them as effective and humane tools of wildlife management. For example, where wild goats aggressively compete for food with less numerous rock wallabies, the firearm or bow can be used as a tool to remedy this imbalance, thereby preventing the more competitive and versatile goats from destroying the wallaby's food supply by over browsing.

The food source often requires much longer to recover from over grazing than the goat population takes to recover after such a cull; so repeated culls are often required.

While hunters choose to hunt for a variety of reasons, over-exploitation of desirable species (especially under commercial pressures) must be controlled and carefully limited so that the harvest does not exceed the capacity of the population to replenish itself.

## THE PRINCIPLES OF GAME MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE USE

In order to manage populations of wild animals we need to keep their living and food producing areas healthy. This in turn will encourage successful breeding and replacement of the individuals harvested by hunters.

We need to know how many there are at the beginning of each breeding season. This can be done by direct count or by doing a sample count and extending this miniature assessment to the whole population.

Hidden animals can be counted by doing sign surveys, that is counting tracks, or droppings or by spotlight counts and by tagging a proportion of the population.

We need to know how many animals are

expected to die from natural causes and how many young are likely to be produced during a certain period of time. We can also determine with experience and science what the maximum, as well as the most suitable carrying capacity of the land. Sometimes this carrying capacity is limited by things other than food. For example, the availability of drinking water in the summer.

All of this information can be combined to calculate the number of animals that can be harvested and yet still retain sufficient numbers to maintain good breeding rates for the following year. This is how sustainable bag limits are set.

The Kangaroo Management Program incorporating licensed hunters, is one example of a response to the presence of very large numbers of these animals, which are now utilised as a sustainable and valuable resource.

However, in the recent past there has been a groundswell of inquiry and discussion on current management practices involving populations of wild animals, resulting in notable shifts in the community's attitude towards the concept of 'wise use'.

This presents an opportunity to the hunting fraternity to experience broader community acceptance by demonstrating considerable environmental, social and economic benefits.

## LAWS PROTECTING ABORIGINAL CULTURE AND HERITAGE SELF LEARNING EXERCISE

Our rich Aboriginal cultural heritage is something to be treasured and respected. As you traverse the landscape it is likely you will come across evidence of past occupiers.

Just as you ask your fellow Australian to respect your hunting heritage, Aboriginal people ask that you respect their cultural sites and heritage. Aboriginal people still retain their rights of traditional hunting on Crown lands and Aboriginal heritage sites are protected by law.

The following are examples of Aboriginal heritage that are protected are under the *Heritage Act 1977* and *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*:

- Scarred trees – Where bark has been removed for canoes, shield or carry baskets.
- Rock painting – Markings or etching.
- Foot holes cut into trees, usually to gather honey.
- Grinding groves – Holes worked on bedrock to grind grain and other materials.
- Stone arrangements, nature does not lay stones in a straight line or circle.
- Middens – mounds of shells, bones or other evidence of camp.
- Hand tools – Sharpe edge tools or hammers. Usually a fine grained rock not of local origin.
- Camping areas – some of which are still used today.

The above items are not to be damaged, removed or altered in any way.

List below the four 'R's of hunting in NSW.

1.
2.
3.
4.

### EXAMPLE ASSESSMENT QUESTION

The balance of sustaining both native wildlife populations and agricultural production poses many challenges for landholders and hunters.

List one example of how hunters and farmers can benefit from conservation hunting.

1.
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## REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING AND LEARNING

1. Harrison, M. and Slee, K. 1995. *The Australian Deerhunter's Handbook*. Australian Deer Research Foundation Ltd. Croydon, Vic.
  2. Leopold. A. 1948. *A Sand County Almanac*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, London, New York.
  3. Leopold. A. 1933. *Game Management*. The Wisconsin University Press. Wisconsin USA.
  4. Moore, G and Mayze, R. 1990. *The Hog Deer*. Australian Deer Research Foundation Ltd. Croydon. Vic.
  5. Smith, G. 1992. *A Guide to Hunting and Shooting in Australia*. Sporting Shooters Association of Australia Publications. Unley S.A.
- Go to Section 4, Unit 4.1, for further information on traditional hunting practices, culture and lessons from the past.*

## ADDITIONAL READING

1. King, M. 1995 *Sustainable Use: a Hunter's Concept in Conservation Through Sustainable Use of Wildlife* Ed G. Grigg, P. Hale and D. Lunney pp282-287 University of Queensland Press.
2. King, M. 1997 *Hunting, Sustainable Use and Conservation. In Sustainable Use of Wildlife: Utopian Dream or Unrealistic Nightmare* Ed B. Diekman pp 103-113. Nature Conservation Council of NSW.
3. Korn, T., Fosdick, M. 1992 *Shooting from helicopters: guidelines for the use of helicopters in NSW for the control of feral pigs*. Dubbo: NSW Agriculture.

	<b>SELF ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST</b>	<b>True</b>	<b>False</b>
1.	It is our sense of doing the right thing that lends the greatest satisfaction to our hunting.		
2.	Sustainable hunting has been responsible for the survival of many game species.		
3.	How we, as hunters, conduct ourselves in dealing with the way we approach or manage our hunting practices is really nobody's business.		
4.	It is fair to say that hunting practices that are legal in other countries are legal everywhere.		
5.	Ethical hunters understand that when they enter upon a property with permission, they are a guest of the landowner.		
6.	Hunters must take reasonable care to ensure that no hunted animal suffers unnecessary pain.		
7.	Hunting has always been the major factor in the massive decline and extinction of native species.		
8.	Aldo Leopold is considered by many to be the author of modern conservation theory.		
9.	It is now widely recognised that it is physically and economically impossible to eradicate pest animal species.		
10.	Understanding that there is a likelihood of encountering traditional owner's sites while hunting is an important consideration of any planned hunt.		