New Zealand Police

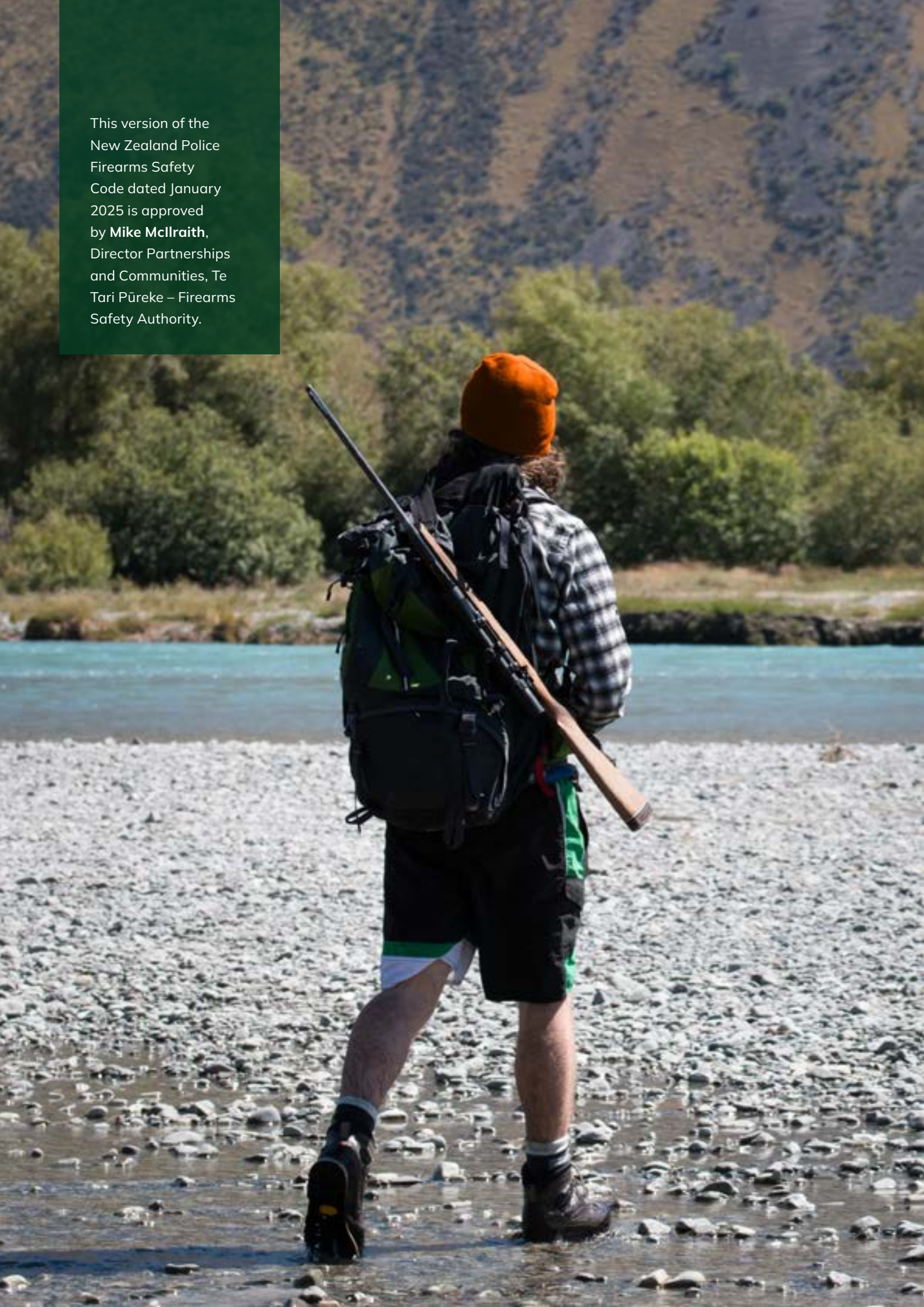
# Firearms Safety Code

Fundamental guide for the safe use of firearms

**Te Tari Pūreke** – Firearms Safety Authority,
a business unit of New Zealand Police.

Version 4.0 | January 2025

Te Tari Pūreke
Firearms Safety Authority



This version of the New Zealand Police Firearms Safety Code dated January 2025 is approved by **Mike McIlraith**, Director Partnerships and Communities, Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority.

Te Tari Pūreke
Firearms Safety Authority

# Message from Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority.

This Firearms Safety Code is New Zealand Police's official guide that details New Zealand firearm safety practices, whether you are using a firearm for hunting, target shooting, pest control or food collection.

Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority, is a business unit of New Zealand Police, whose purpose is to effectively regulate the legitimate possession and use of firearms, to keep all communities safe.

This code has important safety messages you must learn and understand to be able to pass the firearms safety course. It also contains useful supplementary information to help you understand how firearms work, different types of firearms, and safe practices for hunting and using your firearm at a shooting range.

There is also important information about obligations for firearms owners. To keep our communities safe, owners are required to safely store and transport firearms and ammunition according to the Arms Regulations 1992. To understand firearms and ammunition storage and transport obligations this code must be read in conjunction with the Secure Storage and Transportation Guide for Firearms and Ammunition.

It is Te Tari Pūreke's role as a regulator to ensure that only people who are fit and proper are able to access, possess and use firearms, and once licensed, we ensure licence holders are complying with regulatory obligations.

First-time firearms licence applicants must pass a theory test and undergo practical training as part of the process of obtaining a firearms licence. This Firearms Safety Code will help applicants prepare for the theory test and practical training.

Once people have obtained their firearms licence it's important that they gain skills and experience and seek advice from more experienced shooters. That is why Te Tari Pūreke encourages mentoring for new shooters by joining clubs, and/or partnering with more experienced shooters.

Being a firearms licence holder brings with it a great deal of responsibility. Use of a firearm is a privilege that must be treated with the care, safety and respect it deserves.

It's down to all of us to keep ourselves and others safe around firearms.

**Mike McIlraith**
Director, Partnerships and Communities
Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority

January 2025

# Contents

# Seven basic rules of firearm safety

## What is a firearm?

The Arms Act 1983 defines a firearm as "anything from which any shot, bullet, missile or other projectile can be discharged by force of explosive". It includes anything that has been adapted so that it can discharge any shot, bullet, missile or other projectile by force of explosive.

It also includes anything that for the time being is not capable of discharging any shot, bullet, missile or other projectile by force of explosive, but which by its completion or repair would be capable of doing so.*

Some airguns (specially dangerous airguns, see page 49) are also included in the definition of a firearm.

## There are seven basic rules of firearm safety

All firearms users must know, practise and strictly adhere to the **seven basic rules of firearm safety**.

The three most common times when incidents with firearms occur are:

- during initial contact with the firearm, before it is put to its intended use;
- during a hunting trip, when the shooter misidentifies their target; and
- after a shooting or hunting trip, when it is time to return the firearm to the vehicle or storage.

By constantly applying these seven rules every time you are around firearms you will avoid making handling mistakes during the times listed above which, sadly, often lead to serious injury or death.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Rule 1** | Treat every firearm as loaded |
| **Rule 2** | Always point firearms in a safe direction |
| **Rule 3** | Chamber a cartridge only when ready to fire |
| **Rule 4** | Identify your target beyond all doubt |
| **Rule 5** | Check your firing zone |
| **Rule 6** | Store and transport firearms and ammunition safely |
| **Rule 7** | Avoid alcohol or drugs when handling firearms |

### Remember

To play your part in avoiding firearms incidents, learn, practise, teach and promote these rules at all times.

Always follow these rules, and insist others do the same.

You are responsible for ensuring your firearm is always handled and stored properly in accordance with the Seven Basic Rules of Firearms Safety and is maintained to the manufacturer's safety specifications.

*www.legislation.govt.nz

Rule

# 1 Treat every firearm as loaded

This rule is about creating a mind-set so that every time you handle a firearm you treat it as loaded by keeping the muzzle (where the projectile exits the barrel when fired) pointing away from yourself and other people, keeping your finger away from the trigger and being disciplined in controlling the firearm at all times.

**A firearm must be treated and handled with respect at all times** – a lack of care and attention when handling firearms has led to many tragic injuries and deaths that could have been avoided if the basic firearms rules were followed.

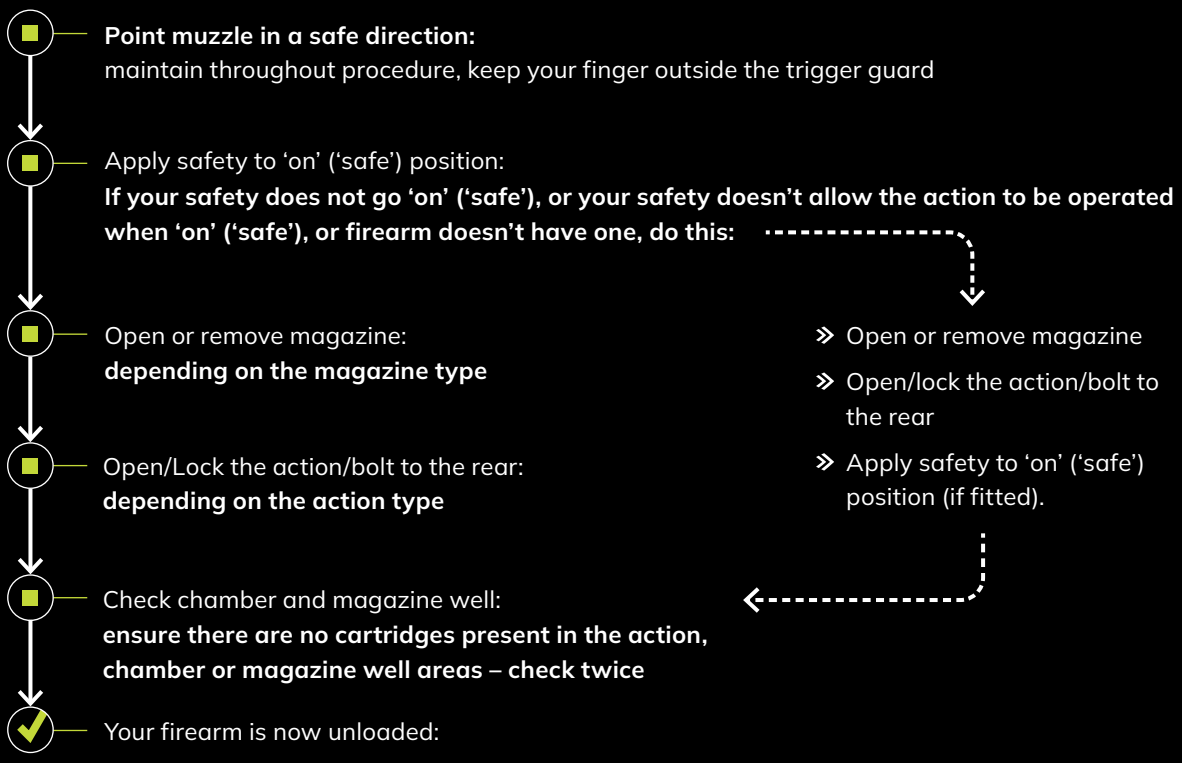
Statements from shooters who have experienced their firearm firing when they didn't expect it to (known as an unintentional discharge) will often contain the comment, "But I didn't know that it was loaded". In reality this means they weren't concentrating, didn't know the state of their firearm, and were not handling it according to the safety rules.

A key part of being safe is knowing the state of your firearm at all times. If you are unsure of its state, or the firearm has been out of your immediate control, you need to treat it as loaded (even if you think it is unloaded) and carry out a procedure called Safety Precautions (defined as "the actions we take to ensure something is safe and not dangerous").

## Carrying out Safety Precautions to ensure your firearm is unloaded

**The following diagram outlines the basic safe-handling actions required to check and prove that a firearm is free from ammunition and bring it to an unloaded state.**

### Safety Precautions process



### How to apply this rule

- No matter how sure you are that your firearm is unloaded, handle it as carefully as you would a loaded firearm and keep your finger off the trigger.
- Always point a firearm in a safe direction. **Never point a firearm at yourself or any other person!**
- Always check every firearm yourself.
  - Do not take anyone else's word that a firearm is unloaded.
  - Follow the correct procedure to ensure the firearm is unloaded.
  - If you do not know how to unload a particular firearm, leave it alone and find someone who does.
- When passing or accepting an unloaded firearm, always ensure the muzzle is pointed in a safe direction.
- If the firearm belongs to someone else, ask them to show you it is unloaded before taking possession of it.
- Never handle a firearm from the muzzle end.
- Never lean firearms against vehicles or in any place where they could slide or fall and negligently discharge.

**Note:**
Refer to **Section 5: Firearm states of readiness** for more information.

### Remember

Never leave firearms loaded – always unload them prior to securely locking them away.

***Figure 1.1.*** *Only pass or accept an unloaded firearm with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.*

Rule

# 2 Always point firearms in a safe direction

Loaded or unloaded, always point the firearm muzzle in a safe direction. This means that if the worst happens and the firearm unintentionally discharges (fires), it cannot harm anyone. Attention to this rule requires constant discipline and focus to avoid injury or worse.

## What is a safe direction?

- A **safe direction** is one in which, if your firearm discharges unintentionally, no one will be injured.
- A **safe direction** may be pointing up towards the sky or down at the ground, **depending upon the environment**. Remember that bullets can travel considerable distances, penetrate walls, ceilings and vehicles, and ricochet off hard surfaces.

***Figure 1.2.*** *Example of a safe direction in the field.*

***Figure 1.3.*** *Example of a safe direction on a range.*

## The Laser Check

A good way to help you keep your muzzle pointing in a safe direction at all times is to practise the Laser Check.

Visualise a bright red laser beam projecting straight out from the muzzle of the firearm; this will help you understand where the muzzle is pointing and what a projectile would potentially hit if the firearm discharged.

Treat any firearm you handle like a laser gun with a beam that's always on – and remember that whatever the beam touches, it can destroy.

***Figure 1.4.*** *Visualising a laser beam projecting from the firearm will help you keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.*

## Why is a safe direction critically important?

Most unintentional discharges are the result of the firearm user making multiple handling mistakes, or not focusing on what they are doing (nearly half of serious firearms-related incidents result from firearm users unintentionally shooting themselves). If for some reason your firearm discharges unintentionally, but you have kept the muzzle pointing in a safe direction, it will not harm you or anyone else.

**Note:** It is particularly important to observe a safe direction when carrying out the following, as there is an increased risk of unintentional discharge when:

- closing or opening the bolt or action;
- releasing the safety catch;
- de-cocking the action;
- the trigger is pressed despite the safety catch being 'on' ('safe');
- slipping, tripping or falling when carrying a firearm; or
- removing a firearm from, or returning a firearm to, a motor vehicle or storage.

**Note:** For more information, refer to **Section 7: Safe handling of firearms**.

### Remember

When handling firearms around vehicles, make sure no one is in front of your firearm or standing on the opposite side of your vehicle.

Never remove a firearm muzzle-first from a vehicle.

### How to apply this rule

- Always be careful about muzzle direction and **NEVER point a firearm at yourself or another person**.
- Keep focused when handling firearms – no daydreaming.
- Never lean your firearm against a vehicle or in any place where it could slide or fall and negligently discharge.
- Be particularly careful when placing firearms in, or removing them from, vehicles, boats and storage.
- Always be aware of the possibility of unintentional discharge when changing the state of your firearm.
- A safe direction is one that you judge the safest depending on where you are.

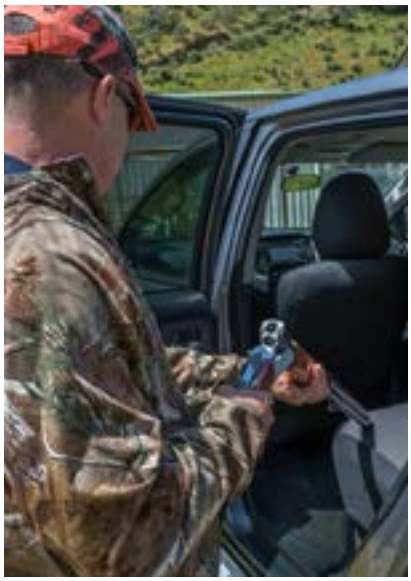


***Figure 1.5.*** *Be extra careful when removing a firearm from a vehicle or replacing it.*

***Figure 1.6.*** *Important! Keep your finger outside the trigger guard.*

Rule

# 3 Chamber a cartridge only when ready to fire

The purpose of this rule is to remind you to chamber a live cartridge into a firearm only when appropriate, such as:

- **only when you have sighted or expect to immediately encounter game animals; or**
- **when you are about to discharge the firearm, for example, on a shooting range.**

Chambering a cartridge and closing the action places your firearm into a state of readiness called the ACTION state.

A firearm in the **ACTION** state is defined as:

- safety catch in the 'on' ('safe') position (if fitted);
- **live cartridge in the chamber;** and
- bolt/action closed.

*"Immediately encounter game animals"* means that you **reasonably** expect to see game animals within close proximity to your actual location.

Chambering a cartridge in your firearm is a **deliberate and conscious decision** and must only be done where you can safely and legally discharge it. Once you are no longer hunting or have finished firing the firearm, remember to unload it.

Knowing the states of readiness of a firearm will help you apply this rule safely and correctly.

### The states of readiness – LOAD, ACTION, INSTANT and UNLOAD

To be a safe firearms user, you must always know the **exact state of your firearm**. You also need to be able to recognise and apply the correct state to your firearm in changing situations.

The table below presents a summary of firearm states of readiness. It is focused primarily on hunting situations. Refer to **Section 5: Firearm states of readiness** for more information.

## Firearm states of readiness

| State | Description | When |
|---|---|---|
| **Carry out Safety Precautions on the firearm before moving to the LOAD state or if you are unsure of the state your firearm is in. Refer to Safety Precautions process on page 6.** | | |
| **LOAD** | • Safety catch on ('safe') (if fitted)<br>• **Live** cartridges in the **magazine**<br>• Bolt/action closed on an **empty** chamber | Only when you have reached your hunting or shooting area; where it can be safely and legally discharged<br>**Note: Chamber must be empty** |
| **ACTION** | • Safety catch on ('safe') (if fitted)<br>• **Live cartridge in chamber**<br>• Bolt/action closed | When you have sighted or expect to immediately encounter game animals or when about to discharge the firearm, for example, on a range<br>**Note: Muzzle in safe direction** |

| State | Description | When |
|---|---|---|
| **INSTANT** | » Safety catch **off** ('fire') (if fitted) | When you have made the **conscious decision** to fire |
| **UNLOAD** | » Safety catch on ('safe') (if fitted)<br>» **Empty magazine** (if fixed), or magazine empty and detached (if detachable)<br>» Bolt fully open/action locked open<br>» **Empty chamber**<br>» Visually and physically check the chamber and magazine area are empty | **Unload** your firearm **completely (including magazines)** before leaving a shooting area, entering a hut or camp area, transporting it, cleaning it or storing it<br>**Note: Muzzle in safe direction**<br>Secure cartridges **away** from the firearm<br>**Make 100% sure that no cartridges remain in the firearm or magazine/s**<br>Consider removing the bolt, inserting a chamber flag or applying a trigger/cable lock |

## How to apply the states of readiness – a deer hunting example

**Follow the story below, as a hunter applies the seven basic rules of firearms safety and the states of readiness on a deer hunt.**

John is going for a quick deer hunt out the back of a friend's farm one afternoon.

While at home, John removes his rifle from the gun safe and carries out **Safety Precautions** to check it's unloaded. He then inspects his rifle to make sure it's in serviceable condition.

The rifle is in the **UNLOAD** state. John places it into a gun case, locks the case and places it in the boot of his vehicle. His bolt and magazine are in his day pack, and the ammunition is secured separately.

When John arrives at the back of the farm, he unlocks his gun case and gets his rifle. He finds a safe direction, inserts the bolt and closes it on the empty chamber of the unloaded rifle, and checks the safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). John then fills the magazine and inserts it into the magazine well.

John's rifle is now in the **LOAD** state. He slings it over his shoulder and heads off up the track towards his hunting area.

John starts to stalk along the game trail and spots two deer feeding on a slip 150 metres away, he then identifies a safe direction, points the rifle muzzle towards it, checks the safety catch is still 'on' ('safe'), then chambers a cartridge - bringing his rifle into the **ACTION** state.

After deciding to shoot the hind for meat and leave the young stag to grow bigger, John gets into a stable shooting position, checks his firing zone and positively identifies the hind beyond all doubt before he pushes the rifle's safety catch to 'off' ('fire'). His rifle is now in the **INSTANT** state. John aims at the deer's vital zone and fires. He successfully shoots it with one shot but chambers a new live cartridge in case another one is needed.

Seeing the deer is down and not moving, John moves the safety catch to 'on' ('safe'), returning his rifle to the **ACTION** state.

After moving up to check the deer is dead, and before preparing it for the carry back to his vehicle, John unloads his rifle by removing all the remaining ammunition from the magazine and chamber areas. He checks no cartridges are in or on the firearm, bringing his rifle to the **UNLOAD** state.

John returns to his vehicle with the deer. He removes the bolt and magazine from his rifle, locks it away in the gun case again, and checks the bolt, magazine, and ammunition are secured separately from the firearm.

John heads for home, happy with the thought of venison sausages on the BBQ.

## How to apply the states of readiness – a duck hunting example

Josh is preparing to go duck hunting, he takes his semi-automatic shotgun from his safe and carries out **Safety Precautions** to check it is unloaded, then inspects it to make sure it's in serviceable condition and prepares it for use by lubricating the action and ensuring the correct choke is fitted.

Next, he fits a trigger lock to the shotgun and places it into a gun bag for transport.

Josh puts the shotgun onto the rear seat of his ute and covers it from sight, he places his ammunition which is in a locked container, into the ute tray, covering it with his jacket and locks the canopy.

At the hunting location Josh removes the shotgun from the bag, takes off the trigger lock, points it in a safe direction and checks that it is unloaded before heading off to his maimai.

Upon entering the maimai Josh places his shotgun into a secure rack which keeps the muzzle pointing in a safe direction. This keeps the firearm out of the way, stopping it being knocked over by excited dogs or other hunters. He puts the cartridges on a shelf in the rear of the maimai.

As dawn approaches Josh readies his shotgun for shooting, he checks the safety catch is 'on' ('safe'), closes the bolt on the empty chamber of the unloaded shotgun, then inserts cartridges into the magazine only. Josh's firearm is now in the **LOAD** state.

As its now legal shooting time, he points the shotgun in a safe direction, checks the safety catch is still 'on' ('safe'), then chambers a cartridge. This brings his shotgun into the **ACTION** state.

A small mob of ducks start circling the decoys, and having checked his firing zone is safe and identified the ducks are the right type and within range, he pushes the safety catch to 'off' ('fire'). His shotgun is now in the **INSTANT** state.

Josh aims and fires, downing several Mallards.

After firing he moves the safety catch to 'on' ('safe'), returning his shotgun to the **ACTION** state.

Its a slow morning and ducks are flying high and showing no interest in his decoys now, so he points the muzzle in a safe direction, removes the cartridge from the chamber, and reinserts it into the magazine, returning the firearm to the **LOAD** state.

Josh decides to leave the maimai with his shotgun and dogs to search for the ducks he has just bagged, but before heading out, he checks his firearm is still in the **LOAD** state.

Later as dusk falls, and with no more ducks around, Josh unloads his shotgun, he points it in a safe direction, checks the safety catch is 'on' ('safe'), removes any remaining ammunition from the magazine and chamber areas. He checks that no cartridges are in or on the firearm, bringing his firearm to the **UNLOAD** state.

Josh then retrieves his decoys, calls to his dogs, and they travel back to the ute.

Once back at the vehicle, and after checking his firearm is unloaded, Josh fits a trigger lock to the shotgun, places it into the gun bag and conceals it on the back seat, he then checks that the ammunition is out of sight and secured separately away from the firearm in the locked canopy area.

When he arrives home, and before doing anything else, Josh locks the ammunition away separate from any firearms, then carries out **Safety Precautions** on the shotgun, checking its unloaded, prior to a thorough clean and finally, securely locking it away in his safe.

### Remember

- Chamber a cartridge only when you have sighted or expect to immediately encounter game animals or when you are about to discharge the firearm, for example, on a shooting range.
- "Immediately encounter game animals" means that you **reasonably** expect to see game animals within close proximity to your actual location.
- In some hunting situations, for example when bush hunting or sitting in a duck blind/maimai, a cartridge may be chambered when game animals are expected to be encountered. In many other hunting situations, including hunting in open country, a cartridge shouldn't be chambered until you are ready to shoot.
- Minimise risk by having a cartridge chambered only when necessary.
- If you are unsure of the state of your firearm, carry out Safety Precautions to ensure the firearm is unloaded.

## Safety catch

A safety catch is a mechanical device fitted to most firearms. Safety catches commonly feature two positions:

1. 'Safe' or 'on' usually marked on the firearm with a 'S' – when the safety is in this position the firearm cannot be discharged.
2. 'Fire' or 'off' usually marked on the firearm with a 'F' – when the safety is in this position the firearm can be discharged by pressing the trigger. See the images below.

**Note:** Safety mechanisms can vary in the way they operate, for example, some lock the bolt when 'on' ('safe'), others have the safe and fire positions reversed and some catches have three positions – 'on', 'off' and a middle position that allows the bolt to operate but still blocks the trigger mechanism. Always familiarise yourself with a firearm's safety before using it with ammunition. Like all mechanical devices, safety catches are subject to wear and tear and should never be relied on by themselves to replace firearms safe handling rules and practice such as keeping the muzzle in a safe direction.

You must control the firearm's muzzle and keep it pointing in a safe direction when applying or releasing the safety catch, as this is a time when malfunctions can occur.

If you have **any doubt** about the safety catch, do not use the firearm, and have it inspected by a gunsmith.

***Figure 1.7.*** *Examples of different types and locations of safety catches.*

## Half-open bolt (excluding semi-automatics)

The semi-ready/half-open bolt is an option that can be used with some bolt-action rifles if you do not wish to carry your firearm in either the LOAD or ACTION state in some hunting environments.

Seek advice and training from an experienced firearm user familiar with this technique or a gunsmith if you want to learn more about this option or to check if your firearm can be safely operated in this manner.

### Remember

- If the situation changes, such as leaving the immediate hunting area, then either return your firearm to the LOAD state or fully UNLOAD it.
- In a hunting group, only the person in the front should have their firearm in the LOAD state.
- If the game gets away after you move the safety to 'off' ('fire') (the INSTANT state), you must return the safety to 'on' ('safe') (the ACTION state) immediately.

Rule

# 4 Identify your target beyond all doubt

This rule is critical for shooters to follow, as the consequences of failing to fully identify your target beyond all doubt can be immediate, tragic and catastrophic.

The firearms and calibres usually recommended for hunting (especially for big game) are capable of causing lethal injuries. This means that if a hunter fails to identify their target and mistakes another person for a game animal, the results are almost always fatal.

You must understand that once a shot is fired there is no calling it back. No target or game animal is worth the life of another person. If in doubt, don't shoot!

From research* we know the following:

- In **80%** of incidents the shooter and victim are members of the same hunting group. Typically incidents occur when the group splits up and members lose contact with each other or move into another hunter's area.
- **76%** of incidents occur in the North Island. They are more prevalent in heavy bush hunting areas, owing to reduced visibility, vs more open areas, for example, South Island high country.
- In **92%** of incidents, the range between shooter and victim is less than 75 metres.
- Reactive-type responses in reduced visibility often lead to incidents.

Research into human behaviour also tells us that we need to be aware of the way the brain functions and processes information, especially when stressed or excited.

The following information will help to explain some of the processes that can lead to misidentification and how you can overcome them.

## What affects perception and target identification?

Several factors can affect your perception and your ability to correctly identify what you are observing. These include light conditions, mind-set, expectations, bias, visual memory recollection and targets blending with the environment.

Important, too, is how your brain perceives situations in circumstances like a hunting trip. It is receiving large amounts of information (including sights, sounds, environmental conditions) and processing it with information already learned (including your experience, habits, memories and personal preferences).

In some situations, if there is not enough sensory information to provide clarity, your brain may make something up and you may 'see' what you want or expect to see, rather than what is actually there. This commonly occurs in poor lighting conditions or if the object is partially obscured.

This is particularly relevant in hunting locations where you have encountered game previously, as your brain is already expecting to see an animal and certainly not expecting to see another person.

**Important**

You must positively identify your target beyond all doubt before you fire.

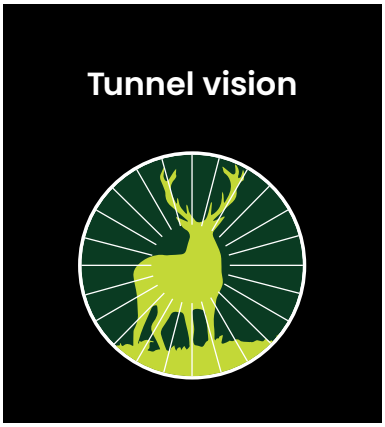
**If in any doubt, don't shoot!**

* From *A Hunter's Tale*. Published by NZ Mountain Safety Council March 2017.

## Human stress responses and how to reduce their effects

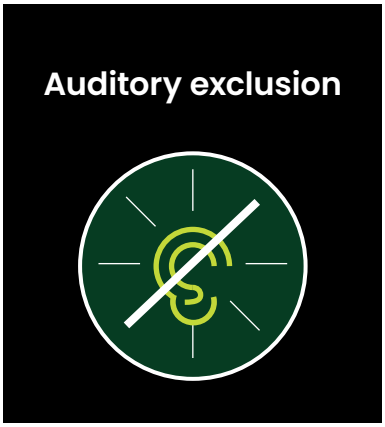
When a hunter is excited about sighting game animals, emotions may override rational thinking. This is often referred to as buck fever or stag fever, which is characterised by elevated stress and heart rate levels and usually results in a lack of situational awareness and rash or poor decision-making.

Buck fever can cause numerous temporary effects, as follows:




Your field of view appears to narrow or shrink (like looking down a thin tube where the area in our front appears clear, but everything else is blurry or dark).


You become so focused on the target or animal that you lose all awareness of your surroundings. This means you may not notice people, vehicles or buildings in your firing zone.




This form of temporary apparent hearing loss occurs under high levels of stress. It is often experienced in conjunction with tunnel vision. Auditory exclusion means you may be unable to hear others trying to communicate with or warn you.

To reduce these effects of stress response when hunting, refer to **A safer process**, on page 18.

## Fatigue and pressure

Sometimes hunters are fatigued, or may feel under pressure from family or friends to get some meat for the BBQ or bag a trophy animal. In these situations, emotions can override rational thinking and lead to impulsive decisions. This is because the reward area of the brain is more active than the planning and thinking areas.

We all know that when we are tired, we don't make good decisions, or are prone to taking shortcuts. It's best if you are feeling the effects of fatigue prior to a hunting trip to postpone it until you are in a better frame of mind. Fatigue not only contributes to issues with decision-making around shooting, but can also affect decisions around the route to be taken, leading to greater risk-taking in the environment – potentially leading to injuries or worse from slips, trips and falls or getting lost.

Pressure (either self-induced, or from others) to bring home a bigger and better trophy or some meat has led to injuries and death, usually from people taking short cuts with the decision-making process. Hunters feeling this pressure to succeed have been driven to react far too quickly to movement, shape and sound, instead of rationally going through the proper target identification process.

***Figure 1.8.*** *Target fixation: the running deer remains in focus while the surrounding environment appears to become blurred.*

## Binoculars as a safer visual aid

It is important to use binoculars (or a spotting scope in more open environments), and not your rifle's optical sight, to scan an area and identify a target. If you use the firearm's scope, you are narrowing your field of view and pointing your firearm's muzzle at everything you observe through that optic, potentially endangering other people.

Binoculars are a safer option as they give you a clearer and wider view of the target and target area, allowing you a much higher likelihood of positively identifying your target.

When you do aim at the identified target through your firearm's optical sight, it's best to shoot with both eyes open, as this can help reduce tunnel vision.

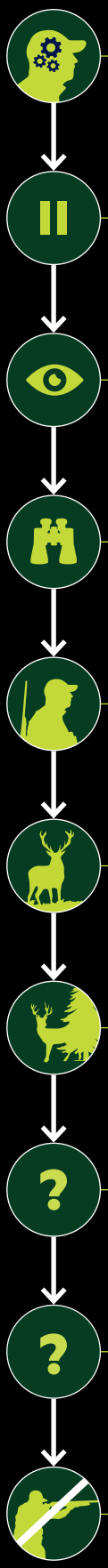
***Figure 1.9.*** *Tunnel vision when using rifle optics. The photo on the left shows this shooter's view through his scope with left eye closed. The wider view on the right shows that his hunting companion has strayed unnoticed into the firing zone.*

# A safer process

**The only way to be completely sure of making the right decision is to avoid shooting. However, following the process opposite can reduce risks substantially.**

### Remember

- Check your firing zone, especially to each side and beyond the target, with unaided vision or binoculars to ensure that no object, such as a person, vehicle, stock or building, is within or moving into your field of fire.
- Learning to shoot with both eyes open can reduce the risk created by tunnel vision.



**Before considering taking a shot:**

Slow down and take a few deep breaths.

Scan by moving your head and eyes around to help break tunnel vision and gain a better view of your environment and the target area.

Then take time to analyse the target (preferably using binoculars) and ask yourself:

Is this a person? Could this be another hunter? Is it possible my hunting partner has strayed into this area?

Is this definitely the type of animal I am hunting? Is it a stag or hind (how old, what species)?

Look at the way the animal is positioned. Does it appear normal or is something not quite right?

Am I fully in control of my actions – not acting on impulse/pressure?

Have I positively identified beyond all doubt what I am looking at?

**Simply stated: if there is any doubt about the target, do not shoot.**

***Figure 1.10.*** *Can you spot the red deer? Is it enough to* ***positively identify beyond all doubt?***

***Figure 1.11.*** *The same deer as Figure 1.10, seen from a different angle. Just seeing animal skin, body shape or antlers isn't enough for positive identification.*

***Figure 1.12.*** *If supervising an unlicensed shooter, the supervisor and shooter must both positively identify the target beyond all doubt.*

Even the sighting of skin and antlers is not positive enough to identify a deer. Consider a whole-of-animal view by analysing the type, sex, age, size and number of antler points of the animal that you are observing; doing this will help you make a much clearer assessment of the object and reduce the risk of a wrong decision.

Positively identifying your target is even more difficult and dangerous when you are hunting at night. Spotlights and other night vision devices may not clearly illuminate the target.

Your perception of size and colour is likely to be affected. Reflections seen in a spotlight have been incorrectly identified as animal eyes, resulting in serious injury or death to others.

See **Section 7: Safe handling of firearms** for more information on shooting in low light.

**Remember**

No meat or no trophy is better than **no mate**.

## How can I reduce the risk of being misidentified?

Many hunters wear 'hi-vis' (high-visibility) clothing and gear when out hunting, as this can help them be properly identified and not mistaken for a game animal. The two most popular colours used in hi-vis hunting gear are blaze orange and blue. The aim is to be as obvious as possible to other hunters. It is the complete opposite of camouflage and concealment.

Just wearing a small hi-vis item doesn't guarantee safety, however – you need to consider how you appear when viewed from a 360-degree perspective. Other hunters may not be able to see your hi-vis item due to the terrain features (tree trunks, foliage or dead ground) or lighting conditions.

If hunting in thick bush, it's recommended that you wear hi-vis over a larger area of your body, due to reduced visibility and often faster target engagements. In open country, less coverage is required due to greater ability to observe and identify objects within the field of view.

Bright-coloured clothing and gear is particularly important in dim or fading light – in the early morning, late evening or under the cover of bush. Wear a colour that stands out from the background and is different from any game animals in that area.

Consider placing a hi-vis item over an animal body if you are carrying it through the bush.

Remember that nothing lasts for ever. Hi-vis items fade with use and washing, so replace these items when the blaze or bright colours begin to fade. Some blaze orange items when old and faded can be mistaken for deer hide, so check any hi-vis items before use and replace as required.

**Warning**

- Do not use a rifle's optical sights to scan the area or to identify a possible target. This is breaking Rule 2 – always point your firearm in a safe direction.
- Keep your finger away from the trigger and your muzzle pointed in a safe direction until you are 100% certain of your target and that it is safe to fire.
- Always identify all of the animal before firing. See the whole animal, analyse it, ensure it's not a hunter carrying an animal.
- Never fire at movement only. Moving bushes or trees might be a person.
- Never fire at colour only. For example, some clothing colours worn by hunters can be similar to deer hide.
- Never fire at sound only. Hunters may be imitating an animal call, such as a deer roaring.
- Never fire at shape only. Your brain may mislead you into thinking the object you are seeing is a game animal.
- Ask yourself, "Where are my hunting companions? Could there be another hunter out there?"
- **If supervising an unlicensed shooter, the supervisor and shooter must both positively identify the target beyond all doubt.**

**Figure 1.13.** *Examples of blaze orange and blue hi-vis items.*

Rule

# 5 Check your firing zone

## What is a firing zone?

A firing zone is the area a projectile travels through and may land after being discharged from a firearm towards a target, taking into account aiming error and the trajectory of the ammunition fired.

Your firing zone depends on many factors, including the type and calibre of firearm, the ammunition fired, the game being hunted (whether on the ground or in the air), the hunting environment, and the hunting strategy being used.

A hunter's firing zone changes with every step as the terrain or conditions change. Equally, as the game that you are tracking with your firearm moves, your firing zone also constantly and often rapidly changes.

If you fire at a target outside of your safe firing zone when hunting, you may unnecessarily endanger persons, animals or property.

If you are checking your firearms zero on a farm, for example, you must ensure your firing zone is free from people, vehicles, buildings, stock and other potential risks. Choose a site that has a suitable bullet catch (an area whose purpose is to capture the fired projectiles), such as a large, steep hill consisting of soft dirt which is free of stones and other hard materials.

**Warning**

If you can't 100% ensure your firing zone is safe – **do not fire.**

**Remember**

Background, target, sights.

To help with checking your firing zone, follow this simple sequence of steps:


Identify and observe the area behind your target and ensure it is free of people/vehicles/buildings/stock and that it's suitable for the range and trajectory of the firearm you are using.

Identify your target beyond all doubt and ensure the immediate area around it is clear.

Place the sights on the target.

## Hunting with others

As noted earlier, **80% of hunting-related shooting incidents involve members of the same party**.

To help avoid incidents, it is critical that members of your party agree in advance on the area they are going to cover, ensure they stick to the plan, and stay within the boundaries they are hunting in. Members must take into consideration their firing zones, to make certain these areas don't overlap and endanger other members of the party.

You must remain alert and aware of your companions' locations at all times. If you lose sight of a hunting mate, assume that they are within your firing zone. **Stop hunting immediately** until visual and verbal contact is re-established and confirmed.

Likewise, if you realise you have unintentionally left your area, **stop hunting**, obtain a fix on your actual location and communicate it with your hunting party immediately.

Make use of radio communications, GPS systems and maps to know where you and your mates are.

Your firing zone changes rapidly when you follow a moving target with a firearm. As you swing the firearm's muzzle around in an arc, be aware of the position of other hunters. Make sure they are not caught in the path between your firearm and the target, or beyond the target. This applies particularly when firing a shotgun at flying or running game.

### Remember

- Have an agreed plan with all members of the group (plan the hunt, hunt the plan).
- If you lose sight of each other, or if unsure of your actual location, stop hunting until contact or position has been re-established.
- Your firing zone is constantly changing, especially when following a moving target.
- Use radios to communicate with other members of your group.
- Know the boundaries of your party's designated hunting area. Use technology to assist with keeping track of your position.
- If you can't 100% ensure your firing zone is safe – **do not fire**.

## Ricochet danger

A ricochet is the change of direction and velocity induced in a projectile, missile or fragment caused by its impact with a surface. Like a skipping a stone across water, or a ball bouncing off a wall – these objects are not always predictable.

Ricochets are mainly caused by a projectile such as a bullet striking flat or hard surfaces, such as rocks, ice, trees, water, steel plates, concrete, log ends, hard timbers and vehicles. However, the type, construction and velocity of the projectile, and the angle at which the surface is struck mean other surfaces, such as flat dirt and sand, can sometimes cause a projectile to ricochet.

Shotgun steel shot and low velocity ammunition (e.g. subsonic cartridges) have an increased risk of ricochet.

***Figure 1.14.*** *Example of potential ricochet paths from water and stones in a stream bed.*

Ricochets are dangerous as they often follow an unpredictable path – which usually falls outside of the target area – and they can still retain sufficient energy to injure or kill.

Be aware that a projectile may not remain intact, but shatter into several fragments. These fragments will travel in unpredictable directions over a radius of up to 100 m or more from the impact point, increasing the danger to people and property.

In fact, shooters themselves may be in danger from ricocheting fragments or a whole projectile, in what is known as 'backsplash'.

**Remember**

Be extra careful around rivers, as hard, flat surfaces, including stones or water, may cause a ricochet.

## Skyline

The skyline is the point at which the earth appears to meet the sky (such as the top of hills or mountain ranges) and is also referred to as a ridgeline.

You will often see game animals on the skyline, especially when they are spooked, as they will often run over the ridgeline to escape. Some hunters risk taking a shot in an attempt to stop the animal – but this can be extremely dangerous, as can be seen in the image below, because the firing zone beyond the deer is completely unknown.

***Figure 1.15.*** *Deer on the skyline.*

Never fire at an object on the skyline, as you are unable to see what is on the other side of the ridge. Your projectile could travel over the ridge and cause injury or damage to persons, animals or property beyond. Remember that most calibres recommended for deer hunting can send a projectile for at least several kilometres from the firing position.

Image 1.16 below shows a shooter simulating firing at an object on the skyline. The arcing red line illustrates a potential path the projectile may follow if it carries on over the ridge.

As you can see, the projectile could hit the unobserved buildings and seriously injure or kill people beyond the ridge.

***Figure 1.16.*** *Buildings and vehicles over the crest of the hill are not visible to the shooter standing at the right.*

**Never** shoot at an object on the skyline, as you are unable to see what is on the other side of the ridge. Your projectile could travel over the ridge and hit persons, animals, or property beyond.

## Maximum and effective range of projectiles

The **maximum projectile range** is the absolute distance (without consideration of accuracy) over which your firearm's projectile can travel when fired at the barrel's optimum angle of elevation.

The **effective projectile range** refers to the terminal ballistics of the cartridge. In a hunting context, this means the distance at which that particular bullet will retain sufficient energy, accuracy and performance to hit and humanely kill the target.

A projectile from a stray shot or a miss may travel many kilometres before its energy is spent and it drops to the ground. Knowing your maximum projectile range, and what is around and behind the target area, will help you assess whether it is safe to fire. Refer to **Section 4: Ammunition: Range and impact potential of your firearm and ammunition** for more information.

Knowing your firearm's maximum projectile range is critical to being a safe and responsible shooter.

## How is my firing zone affected by shotgun pellet spread?

When a shotgun discharges a multiple-pellet cartridge, the pellets exit the barrel and begin to spread into a pattern which increases in diameter the further they travel. When firing a shotgun, be aware that as the spread of the shot widens, it may endanger something other than the target, especially as the distance from shooter to target increases or if you are firing multiple shots at a moving target.

**Note:** The spread of the shot increases with distance.

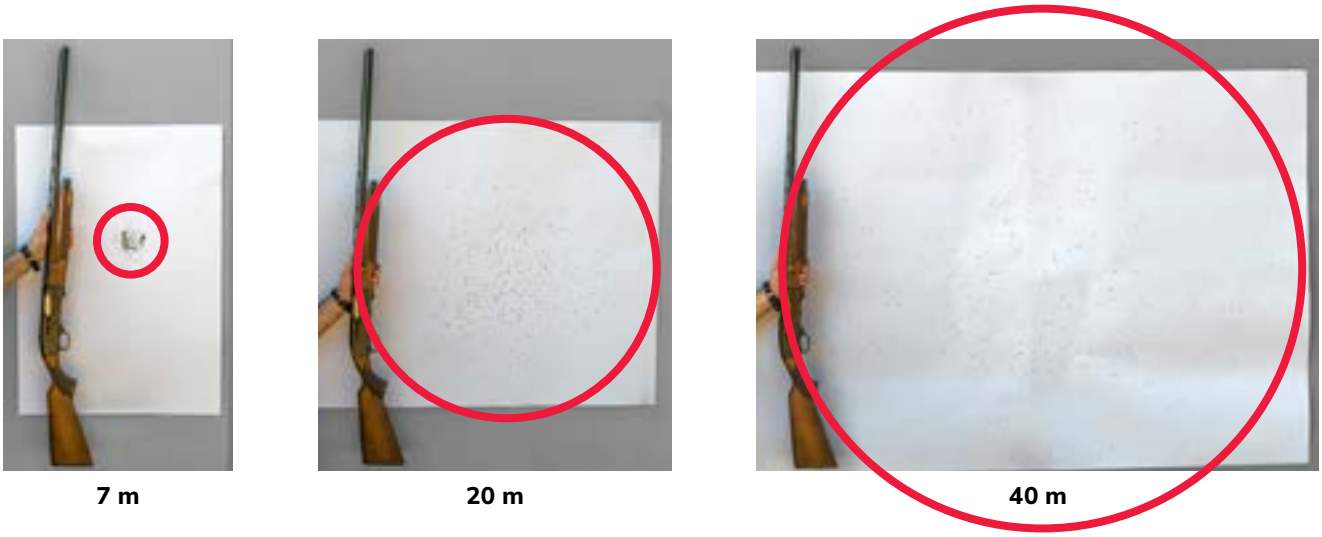



***Figure 1.17.*** *Shotgun pellet spread from seven to 40 metres.*

## How is my firing zone affected when shooting at night?

A significant number of shooting fatalities and injuries have occurred during the hours of darkness.

The maximum range of your firearm's projectile does not change at night, but your ability to assess what may be in your firing zone does. Firing zone, target identification and general safety are particularly important when hunting at night.

Get to know the area you want to hunt in advance during daylight hours, so you know where it's safe to shoot at night.

Common aids that can be used for shooting at night are:

- spotlights/torches; and
- night vision devices.

Spotlights and torches light up only a small part of the firing zone and the projectile's range. This makes it difficult to ensure your firing zone is safe, as you cannot see what is beyond the illuminated area. Strong contrast between light and dark can also affect your ability to identify your target beyond all doubt.

There are two main types of night vision device:

1. **Image intensifiers** – these take the available light in the visible and infrared (IR) spectrums and amplify it.
2. **Thermal imagers** – these take the image from the IR spectrum of emitted thermal energy ('heat signature') and turn it into a visible image projected on a screen in the device.

Both types of devices can enhance a hunter's ability to detect and identify game. The short range of the devices, however, means that it is very difficult to ensure your firing zone is clear. Both have limitations that require specific safety considerations. Low-quality, cheaper models often provide a lower-resolution image, making it even more difficult to identify your target. As with conventional optics, if the night vision scope is mounted on a firearm and you use it for general observation, you are pointing the firearm at everything seen. Use a standalone night optic device to search for and identify game.

Night-time shooting using image intensifiers or thermal imagers is a more advanced skill, and those new to hunting should partner with an experienced hunter to learn to use this equipment safely.

***Figure 1.18.*** *Spotlights and torches illuminate only a small area of your firing zone. The upper photo shows what the shooter sees in the spotlight beam, while the lower photo reveals a house behind the target.*

**Warning**

Do not use a night vision device mounted on a firearm for general observation. **Doing this breaks Rule 2** – always point your firearm in a safe direction.

**How to apply this rule**

- Be aware of anything that may be in the area between you and your target, and in the area beyond your target.
- Never fire when companions are ahead of you, especially when you have lost sight of them.
- Before you shoot, ask yourself: "What could happen if I miss my target?"
- Never shoot at something on the skyline.

**Warning**

It is an offence, under the Conservation Act, to shoot during the hours of darkness in any state forest, forest park or national park. Go to DOC to read full DOC permit conditions.

Rule

# 6 Store and transport firearms and ammunition safely

As the holder of a firearms licence, you are required to have safe and secure storage for your firearms and ammunition. Secure firearms storage prevents firearms falling into the wrong hands.

Every firearms licence is subject to the conditions relating to security precautions set out in the Arms Regulations 1992 (the Regulations).

## Your legal obligations

Regulation 19 states that the holder of a firearms licence must take reasonable steps to ensure that any firearm in the holder's possession is secured against theft.

Regulation 19 also requires that the licence holder must keep every firearm locked in, or immobilised and locked in, their secure storage when the firearm is not under their immediate and personal supervision or that of another firearms licence holder.

## How do I keep firearms in my possession secure?

**A firearms licence holder in possession of a firearm must:**

- ensure young children, or any people without a firearms licence, do not have ready access to firearms and ammunition; and
- ensure that any firearm in their possession is stored separately from any ammunition for the firearm so that a person who obtains access to the firearm cannot obtain access to the ammunition.

These steps must include locking every firearm that is on the holder's premises and is not under the immediate and personal supervision of the holder or some other holder of a firearms licence in:

- a lockable safe, cabinet, container, or receptacle of stout construction (secured to the structure of the premises) in which firearms may be stored; or
- a lockable steel and concrete strongroom in which firearms may be stored; or
- a lockable display cabinet or rack in which firearms are immobilised so that none of them may be fired.

## Transporting firearms and ammunition

When transporting firearms or ammunition in a vehicle on a road or public access way you must ensure:

1. Firearms and ammunition are concealed from view from outside of the vehicle.
2. Firearms are made inoperable if readily possible by removing the bolt or other vital part which should be kept on the licence holder's person or stored out of sight separately from the firearms. If this is not possible (e.g. the firearm is a semi-automatic or lever action), then the firearms must be fitted with a trigger lock or travel in a locked case or carry bag.
3. Firearms are unloaded.
4. Ammunition is stored separately from any firearms and be in a locked glove box or similar storage area where practicable.

Refer to Secure Storage and Transportation Guide for Firearms and Ammunition for more information.

### Secure Storage and Transportation Guidelines

**Secure Storage and Transportation Guide for Firearms and Ammunition** is a document that provides guidance for firearms licence and endorsement holders and applicants on how to comply with security conditions to ensure the safe and secure storage and transportation of firearms and ammunition for all New Zealanders.

Please ensure you have read and understand the information, found at: Secure Storage and Transportation Guide

***Figure 1.19.*** *Ammunition must be stored separately from any firearms.*

***Figure 1.20.*** *This steel gun safe is a good example of firearm security.*

***Figure 1.21.*** *If possible keep the vital parts in your possession.*

Any firearms or ammunition may be left unattended in a vehicle during a break in a journey for up to 60 minutes provided:

(a) The licence holder remains in the immediate area or vicinity of the vehicle.

(b) The firearms or ammunition are still secured and out of sight.

(c) If possible, vital parts of the firearms remain in the licence holder's possession.

(d) The vehicle is locked, windows are closed and keys remain in the licence holder's possession.

**Notes:**

- Every holder of an endorsement for a pistol, prohibited item or restricted weapon must observe the higher level of security precautions described in regulation 28 of the Arms Regulations 1992.
- Every person who has possession of a flare pistol, humane killer or stock-marking pistol must keep it in a locked container unless it is under their immediate and personal supervision.

## Security checks

A Te Tari Pūreke vetter from Police may inspect your security arrangements. This will include on key occasions, such as prior to issuing your licence or any endorsement that you have applied for, or if you have changed address.

Police will carry out more frequent security checks for pistols, prohibited items and restricted weapons.

Police approve security on a case-by-case basis following inspection, which will involve looking at matters such as:

- the materials used;
- the method of construction (including locks, doors and hinges);
- how the storage rack, safe, box or cabinet is anchored to the premises; and
- whether the security is adequate for the number and type of firearm(s).

Police will discuss any weaknesses identified in your security and options for improvement with you. If necessary, they will arrange a time for a follow-up inspection.

Refer to **Section 2: Firearms licensing and obligations** for more information.

Rule

# 7 Avoid alcohol or drugs when handling firearms

Alcohol or drugs must never be consumed before or during shooting or when handling firearms (including cleaning or maintaining them).

There is no safe amount of alcohol you can consume and then handle a firearm safely. When you drink alcohol your judgement, reflexes, balance, coordination, manual dexterity and vision all become impaired, while your emotions are enhanced and distorted.

Some prescription medications dull, slow or otherwise affect your mental and physical reactions, so read the label and seek medical advice. If the information on your medication advises against driving or using heavy machinery, DO NOT handle or use a firearm.

Only consume alcohol or take medications (that may affect your reactions) after you have finished shooting or hunting for the day and the guns are unloaded and securely locked away.

Remember alcohol and some drugs can stay in your system for some time after consumption. Always allow sufficient time for the effects of alcohol or drugs to clear from your system prior to handling firearms.

!

### How to apply this rule

- Do not drink alcohol or use drugs before or while using a firearm.
- Do not shoot with anyone who is, or has been, drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

!

### Important

Alcohol, drugs and firearms **do not mix!** Ever!

# Firearms licensing and obligations

## Who can apply for a firearms licence?

To apply for a firearms licence you need to:

- be sixteen years of age or older; and
- have not had a firearms licence revoked in the previous 5 years (unless the revocation has been reversed by the District Court); and
- not be a disqualified person under section 22H of the Arms Act 1983.

## How to apply for a firearms licence

Go to Te Tari Pūreke website, for the most up-to-date information on how to apply for a firearms licence online. Alternatively, call 0800 844 431.

Once you have submitted your application, you will be required to attend a firearms safety course.

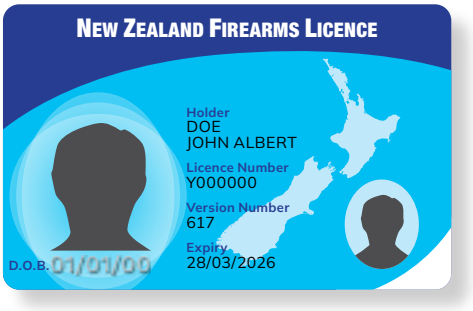
You will then be assessed to determine whether you are a fit and proper person to have a firearms licence. A fit and proper person is a person of good character who can be trusted to use firearms responsibly and to store them securely. When assessing whether you are a fit and proper person to possess firearms or airguns, Police will consider your overall character and history, including information provided by you and your referees, your firearms storage arrangements, and other information held or obtained by Police.

Section 24A of the Arms Act 1983 sets out examples of some of the circumstances in which Police may find that a person is not a fit and proper person to be in possession of a firearm or airgun.

## What is a firearms licence?

A firearms licence allows the holder to have and use non-prohibited firearms. This is commonly known as a standard New Zealand firearms licence.

Sixteen and seventeen-year-olds who wish to have and use airguns while unsupervised also need a firearms licence.



## Licensing periods

A five-year licensing term applies to a person:

- who has never had a firearms licence before;
- whose previous licence was revoked or surrendered; or
- who allowed their licence to expire without applying for a new licence prior to the expiry date.

Current licence holders who successfully re-apply for a new licence before expiry are issued with a licence for 10 years.

If you are an existing licence holder, you should apply for a new licence before your current one expires.

## Possession and use of firearms while under supervision

Everyone who possesses or uses a firearm needs to have a firearms licence, although non-prohibited firearms can be possessed and used under the immediate supervision of a licence holder in most circumstances.

Immediate supervision means that the licence holder:

- is physically present and actively supervising the shooter
- is close enough to be able to take control of the firearm being used by the shooter if necessary, and
- is not using another firearm while providing supervision.

Arms Act 1983, Section 20 – Restriction on possession of non-prohibited firearms

Arms Act 1983, Section 22(2) – Exemptions | New Zealand Legislation website

### When this does not apply

This defence of possessing under immediate supervision does not apply to people possessing firearms where other offences are applicable, for example:

- when their licence has been revoked (that would still be an offence of possessing firearms while revoked)
- contrary to specific bail conditions (which would still be a breach of bail)
- contrary to a protection order (which would still be a breach of the protection order)
- when the person is the subject of a firearms prohibition order (which would still be a breach of the firearms prohibition order).

# Licence holder obligations

## Security of your firearms

Every firearms licence is subject to conditions requiring the safe and secure storage of firearms. There are additional conditions that apply to endorsement holders in relation to pistols, restricted weapons, prohibited firearms and prohibited magazines.

## All licence holders must:

- ensure they don't put a firearm in a place where a young child will have ready access to it;
- ensure that any firearm in their possession is stored separately from any ammunition for the firearm so that a person who obtains access to the firearm cannot obtain access to the ammunition; and
- take reasonable steps to ensure that any firearm in their possession is secured against theft.

The reasonable steps a licence holder is required to take to secure firearms against theft include:

1. Keeping on their premises:
   - a lockable cabinet, container or receptacle of stout construction (secured to the structure of the premises) in which firearms may be stored; or
   - a lockable steel and concrete strongroom in which firearms may be stored; or
   - a lockable display cabinet or rack in which firearms are immobilised so that none of them may be fired.
2. Keeping every firearm that is not under their immediate and personal supervision (or the immediate and personal supervision of another licence holder) locked in, or immobilised and locked in that cabinet, container, receptacle, strongroom, display cabinet or rack.
3. Any firearms or ammunition may be left unattended in a vehicle during a break in a journey for up to 60 minutes provided:
   - The licence holder remains in the immediate area or vicinity of the vehicle.
   - The firearms or ammunition are still secured and out of sight.
   - If possible, vital parts of the firearms remain in the licence holder's possession.
   - The vehicle is locked, windows are closed and keys remain in the licence holder's possession.

Refer to **Rule 6: Store and transport firearms and ammunition safely** on page 26.

**Note too that a firearms licence applicant will need to show Police their security arrangements as part of the application process.**

## When you change address

If you change your address after your firearms licence is issued, you must advise Police in writing within 30 days of moving (section 34). Visit Te Tari Pūreke website, to update your details online using MyFirearms, or call 0800 844 431.

If you have an endorsement to possess pistols, prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines or restricted weapons, you also need to notify Police (prior to your move) of the arrangements you have made for the safe custody of your pistol, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine or restricted weapon during the shift.

## Registry requirements

Licence holders in New Zealand are required to provide information for the Firearms Registry. Find out when you must do this for the first time, and when to update your information by visiting Te Tari Pūreke's website, or call on 0800 844 431 between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

## Lost, stolen, or destroyed firearms

If your firearm, prohibited magazine, prohibited part or restricted weapon is lost, stolen or destroyed you must immediately notify Police. You must provide all information in your possession relating to the firearms and other arms items and the circumstances of the theft or loss. Information on how you can notify Police can be found on Te Tari Pūreke website.

## Disposal of an unwanted firearm or arms item

If you have a firearm, parts or other arms items that you no longer want, you can sell or otherwise dispose of them to a firearms dealer or to another firearms licence holder.

## Family harm (domestic violence)

Police may seize firearms under the Search and Surveillance Act and consider suspending or revoking a person's firearms licence under the Arms Act 1983 if that person is thought to be involved in inflicting family violence.

Where a temporary protection order is issued under the Family Violence Act 2018 against a firearms licence holder, that firearms licence is suspended (section 99(1) of the Family Violence Act 2018).

If a final protection order is made under the Family Violence Act 2018, then the respondent is disqualified from holding a firearms licence for ten years. This means that they cannot apply for a firearms licence, and if they were already a licence holder, their firearms licence is immediately revoked (sections 22H and 27B of the Arms Act 1983). This applies even if the respondent to the protection order has had the standard weapons condition discharged by the Family Court.

## Police safety orders

When a Police safety order is issued against any holder of a firearms licence, their firearms licence is suspended while that safety order is in force, and that person must surrender their firearms licence and any firearms or weapons in their possession (Family Violence Act, sections 37 and 40).

## Physical or mental illness or injury while a holder of a firearms licence

If you experience the symptoms of a physical or mental illness or injury that adversely affects your ability to safely possess firearms, you need to inform Police (section 24B(1)(e) and 24A(1)(h) Arms Act 1983). At the same time, you can proactively make arrangements to surrender your licence to Police and to (with Police approval) dispose of your firearms to another licence holder. Once your health condition has improved, you may wish to consider re-applying for a firearms licence and should contact Police to discuss this. It is good practice to make arrangements ahead of time for disposal or retention of your firearms in the event of your incapacity.

If Police have to revoke your firearms licence, there will be a five-year stand-down period before you can reapply for a firearms licence (section 23(1)(b)).

## Surrendering your licence

You may surrender (give up and hand in) your firearms licence to Police at any time before it expires if you no longer wish to possess firearms (section 27(1)). If you surrender your licence, you will cease to be licensed to possess firearms. If you have not already disposed of your firearms to a dealer or an appropriately licensed person prior to surrender, you will need to deliver them to Police, after which you will have three months to arrange to dispose of them to another licence holder with Police approval (section 28).

## When a licence holder dies

Firearms licence holders need to make provision for the disposal of their firearms before the event of their death.

When licence holders are not able to arrange the disposal of firearms prior to their death, they should ensure that the next of kin or legal representative knows how to legally dispose of the firearms by:

- Advising Police of the licence holder's death;
- Transferring possession of the firearms to a dealer or another licence holder (with the appropriate endorsement and by permit to possess, in the case of pistols, restricted weapons, prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines or pistol carbine conversion kits) for safe keeping until provision can be made for final disposal; or
- Temporarily surrendering the firearms to Police until provision can be made for final disposal, or surrendering them to Police for destruction.

In addition, where the licence holder held any pistols, prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines or restricted weapons, Police need to be notified of the location of those items.

## Other legal duties applying to firearms licence holders

Firearms owners and users have certain other obligations under the Arms Act 1983 and Arms Regulations 1992. Failure to follow these requirements can lead to your licence being suspended or revoked, and in some cases result in prosecution.

If you want further information you should contact Te Tari Pūreke – Firearms Safety Authority (Police) or a solicitor, or obtain a copy of the Arms Act 1983 and Arms Regulations 1992, which can be obtained online.

To find a local Arms Office or Police Station visit Te Tari Pūreke website.

To update your firearms licence details or notify a change in your circumstances, please visit Te Tari Pūreke website, and update your details online using MyFirearms, or call **0800 844 431**.

Legal duties include but are not limited to:

| The Arms Act requires you to: | Details |
|---|---|
| **Use firearms safely.** | When using a firearm, a licence holder must act in a way that does not pose a risk to themselves or others. |
| **Produce any firearm you are carrying.** | A licence holder must produce any firearm that the licence holder is carrying to a member of the Police on demand. |
| **Produce your licence for inspection when required to do so by Police, and keep your licence in an undefaced and legible condition.** | If you do not have your licence with you when asked, you will be given 7 days within which to produce it, at a place specified by Police. |
| **Give your full name, address and date of birth if requested by the Police when you are in possession of any arms item or ammunition.** | Refusal to give these details, or giving false details, once a caution has been given is an offence and can lead to arrest. |
| **Permit Police to inspect all firearms in your possession, and places where they (and the ammunition) are or will be kept, and for that purpose, permit Police to enter the premises where those things are kept/to be kept at all reasonable times (and to inspect security arrangements in a vehicle).** | Police need to:<br>» give at least 7 days' notice of the proposed inspection;<br>» identify themselves on arrival, tell you that they are exercising this power; and<br>» if not in uniform, produce evidence that they are a member of the Police when they first enter (they will show you their Police identification card), and again later on during the inspection if you request it. |
| **Inform Police if any of the circumstances in section 24A(1) become applicable after you have been issued with a licence.** | These are circumstances specifically listed in the Arms Act, and where one or more of them exists, a person may no longer be fit and proper to possess firearms or airguns (Section 24A(1)). For example if:<br>» you have been charged with or convicted of an offence against the Arms Act or that is punishable by imprisonment (in New Zealand or overseas);<br>» you have been charged with or convicted of an offence against the Game Animal Council Act, Wildlife Act or Wild Animal Control Act;<br>» you have had a temporary protection order or a restraining order made against you, or you have inflicted family violence against another person;<br>» you are showing (or have recently shown) symptoms of a mental or physical illness or injury that may adversely affect your ability to safely possess firearms;<br>» you have been abusing alcohol or using drugs in a way that detrimentally affects your judgement or behaviour;<br>» you become a member of, or form close affiliations with, a gang or organised criminal group. |

| The Arms Act requires you to: | Details |
|---|---|
| **Inform Police if your health practitioner changes.** | You need to provide the name and contact details of your new health practitioner. |
| **Ensure that any person to whom you sell or supply a non-prohibited firearm or ammunition to is the holder of a firearms licence or a dealer licence.**<br><br>**If you are disposing of the firearm where you are not dealing with the person face-to-face (for example, a sale by internet or mail order), there needs to be a written order signed by Police (section 43A(1) and (2)).** | You need to take reasonable steps to ascertain whether the person is a licence holder. You can do this by sighting the person's licence before handing over possession if you are meeting face-to-face for the transfer. You can also use the Firearms Licence Checker when selling firearms, parts and ammunition to check if the person you're selling to has a valid New Zealand firearms licence. The Firearms Licence Checker instantly confirms if a licence card is current and legitimate. The tool only confirms the information available on the licence card. No other personal information is required or revealed. Follow this link to access the licence checker.<br><br>Persons aged 16 or 17 require a firearms licence to buy or use an airgun.<br><br>Persons selling non-prohibited firearms or ammunition by mail order or internet need the purchaser to complete a mail order purchase form and have it signed by Police confirming that the purchaser's firearms licence has been inspected and that Police are satisfied the person is fit and proper to purchase the specified firearm or ammunition. The mail order form is available on Te Tari Pūreke website. The signed form will be sent to the seller by the Police. |
| **If you want to supply your prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine, pistol, restricted weapon or pistol carbine conversion kit to another person, only transfer to a person who has first obtained a permit to possess from Police.**<br><br>**In addition to a permit to possess, if you need to send the prohibited item, pistol or restricted weapon by courier (for example, because you are completing a sale arranged by mail order or internet), the courier must be specified in the the permit to possess or, (in the case of a prohibited part), on a form specified by Police.** | Persons wishing to take possession of pistols, restricted weapons, pistol carbine conversion kits, prohibited firearms, or prohibited magazines require the appropriate endorsement(s) and a permit to possess that has been issued by the Police. |

| The Arms Act requires you to: | Details |
|---|---|
| **If you cause injury or death by using a firearm, airgun, pistol, or restricted weapon, report the incident to Police (section 58).** | The report must be made in person to a member of the Police at a Police station and as soon as reasonably practicable. |
| **Notify Police of arrangements for the safe custody of pistols, prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines and restricted weapons prior to a shift to a new address (section 34(2)).** | The licence holder must advise Police, **before** the move, of the details for the safe custody of arms items so that the security provisions at the new address can be inspected. |

**Note:** For further information about firearms offences go to Appendix 1.
For more information on the Firearms Licence Checker go to Te Tari Pūreke website.

# Basic firearm types

This section presents information on the most common types of firearms found in New Zealand, including rifles, shotguns, pistols, antique firearms and airguns. Some safety concerns unique to the particular firearm type are presented.

## What is a firearm?

The Arms Act 1983 defines a firearm as "anything from which any shot, bullet, missile or other projectile can be discharged by force of explosive" (for a fuller definition, see the definition at the beginning of **Section 1: Seven basic rules of firearm safety**).

When you are choosing a firearm, remember that no single firearm, and no single type of ammunition, will suit all purposes.

### What are the common parts of a firearm?

While the action, calibre, design and even the location or placement of parts of firearms vary, there are some common features found on most firearms, as detailed in figure 3.1.

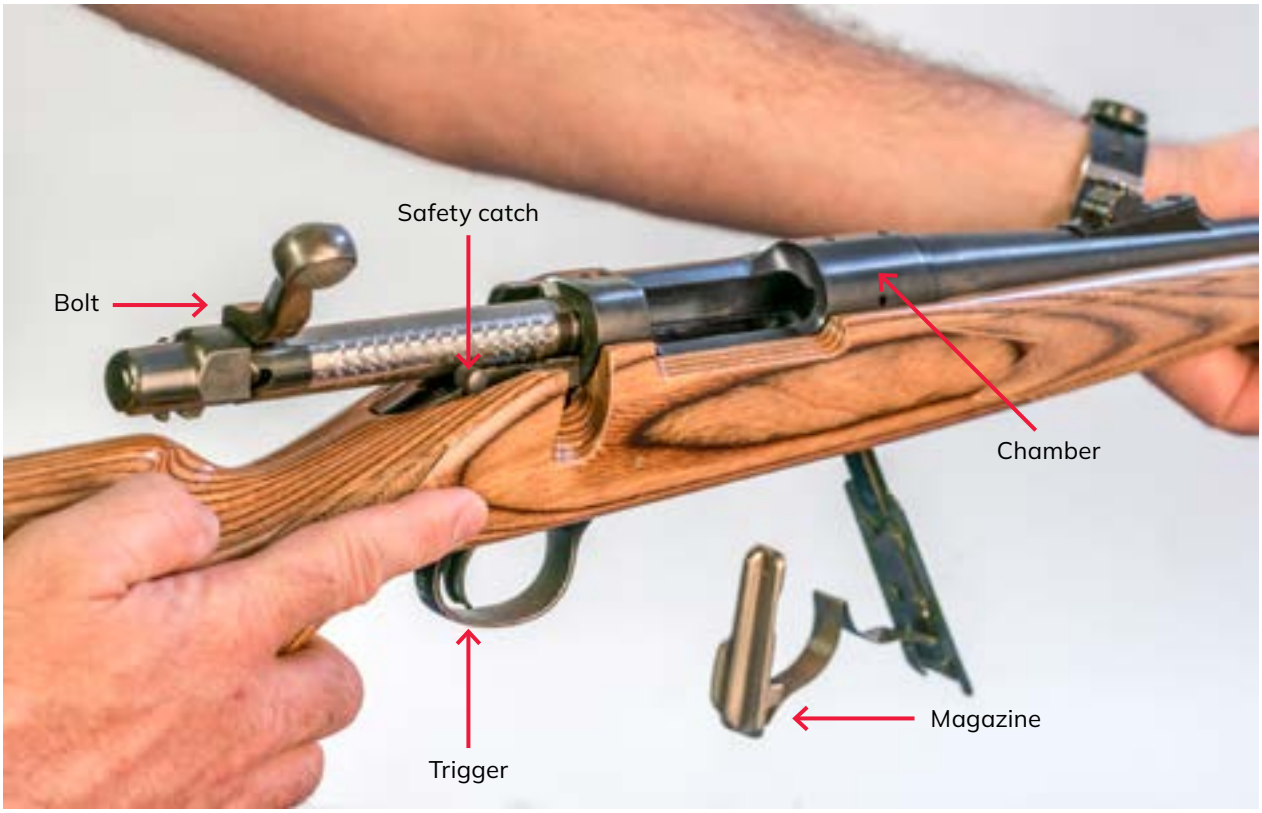



***Figure 3.1.*** *Close up of rifle action area showing common parts.*


***Figure 3.2.*** *Bolt-action rifle showing common parts.*

| Common firearm parts | |
|---|---|
| **Action** | The mechanism that handles (loads, locks, fires, extracts and ejects) the ammunition, or the method by which that mechanism works. |
| **Barrel** | The metal tube portion of a firearm through which a projectile or shot charge is fired and travels through during the acceleration phase of its journey to the target. May be rifled or smooth bore. |
| **Bolt** | A mechanism controlled by an attached lever that rotates or tilts, engaging locking lugs in complementary recesses. It usually contains a firing pin, extractor and ejector and becomes the breechblock of a bolt-action firearm. |
| **Butt** | The rear portion of the stock that rests against the shoulder, providing the shooter with support and a firm point of contact to control the firearm during aiming and firing. Often fitted with a recoil pad. |
| **Chamber** | The portion of the barrel that holds the cartridge ready for firing (located at the action end of the barrel). |
| **Choke** | A tapered constriction of a shotgun barrel's bore at the muzzle end. Chokes are almost always used with modern hunting and target shotguns to improve performance. |
| **Forend** | The forward end of the stock. It provides protection for the barrel and is held by the non-dominant hand. |
| **Magazine** | A spring-operated container holding cartridges for a repeating firearm; often removable. |
| **Muzzle** | The end of the barrel through which the projectile (bullet or shot) exits. |
| **Receiver** | The part of the firearm housing the components that fire the projectile, such as the hammer, bolt or breechblock, firing pin, extractor and trigger mechanism. It has threaded interfaces for attaching ("receiving") other parts, such as the barrel, stock and action. It usually carries the firearm's serial number. |
| **Safety catch** | A mechanical device that blocks the firing mechanism to prevent firing when in the 'on' ('safe') position. When the safety catch is in the 'off' ('fire') position it allows the mechanism to release if the trigger is pressed. |
| **Stock** | The supporting structure of a long firearm to which the receiver, barrel, trigger and other components are attached. The forend is the forward part of the stock. The butt is the rear portion of the stock. The term normally applies to rifles and shotguns, but it can also refer to the grip on a handgun. |
| **Trigger** | The small lever on a firearm which, when pressed, causes the firing mechanism to release the firing pin. |
| **Trigger guard** | Protects the trigger from unintentional activation. |

# Cycling of a firearm

## How does my firearm cycle (operate)?

It is important to have a thorough understanding of how a firearm cycles (the cycle of operation) to ensure that you are always aware of the state of your firearm.

The following table outlines the loading and firing sequence of most metallic cartridge firearms.

| Typical loading and firing sequence – rifles, shotguns, pistols | |
|---|---|
| **Feeding** | The insertion of cartridges from the magazine towards the chamber. |
| **Chambering** | Fully inserting a cartridge (the ammunition) into the chamber. |
| **Locking** | The action (either manual or automatic) of locking or supporting the bolt of a firearm immediately prior to firing. |
| **Firing** | When the bolt is fully locked into the action, pressing the trigger mechanically operates the firing pin release. |
| **Unlocking** | Positioning the fired case for extraction from the chamber (this is the reverse of the locking process). |
| **Extraction** | Withdrawing a cartridge or cartridge case from the chamber of a firearm. |
| **Ejection** | Fully expelling a cartridge case from a firearm. |
| **Cocking** | Placing a firing mechanism under spring tension. |

For more information access the basic types of firearms module.

## What are common action types found in firearms?

Firearms come in a variety of action types. The action (located in the receiver) is the mechanism that handles the ammunition, or is the method by which that mechanism works. Firearms are often referred to by the type of action they have, for example, 'bolt-action' or 'pump-action'.

Rifles and shotguns are available as **bolt, lever, pump, semi-automatic** and **break-open actions**.

# Rifles

In simple terms, a rifle is a firearm designed to be fired from the shoulder that discharges a single projectile through a rifled bore for each individual press of the trigger.

Rifles are available in many different action types and calibres; the following are commonly used in New Zealand.

## Bolt-action rifle

The bolt-action is one of the simplest firearm actions. Once a round is chambered, a press of the trigger will fire one round, and the rifle won't be ready to fire again until a new cartridge is manually chambered.

- Starting from the load state, the action is unlocked by lifting the bolt handle and pulling it back. A cartridge is fed into the chamber by pushing the bolt forward. The bolt handle is then turned downwards, locking the bolt and cartridge in place.
- The firing pin is usually cocked by movement of the bolt or bolt handle, and when the trigger is pressed, the pin is released, firing the cartridge. The empty cartridge case is then extracted from the chamber and ejected by manually lifting the bolt handle again and pulling the bolt fully back.
- A bolt-action rifle is manually operated and available as single-shot or magazine-fed from an internal or detachable box-type magazine.

***Figure 3.3.*** *Bolt-action rifle.*

**Warning**

Magazines for bolt action rifles (whether detachable or not) are prohibited if they hold more than 10 cartridges.

**Important**

**Centrefire pump-action rifles**

Centrefire pump-action rifles that are capable of being used with a detachable magazine, or that have a non-detachable magazine (tubular or otherwise) that is capable of holding more than 10 cartridges commensurate with that firearm's chamber size are prohibited firearms.

## Lever-action rifle

The lever-action rifle works on the same basic principle as the bolt-action, except that a lever is manually pushed down to unlock the bolt and move it backwards. This movement also cocks the action. When the lever is pulled upwards again it feeds a cartridge into the chamber and locks, ready to be fired. After the cartridge is fired, the empty case is ejected by once more pushing the lever down.

A lever-action rifle is manually operated and usually features a tubular magazine.

***Figure 3.4.*** *Centrefire lever-action rifle.*

**Warning**

A lever action rifle is a prohibited firearm if the magazine holds more than 10 cartridges.

**Important**

Many lever-action and pump-action firearms, and some semi-automatics, have a tubular magazine in which the cartridges are placed end-on, one behind the other.

Ensure you only use ammunition that is specifically made for tubular magazines.

Take extra care when unloading a tubular magazine to ensure it is completely empty of cartridges.

A tubular magazine can be dangerous if the tube has been dented, or the spring inside it has not been maintained, as the cartridge can stick temporarily. If it later becomes free the cartridge can be fed into the action without you realising. In the event of any issue, take the firearm to a gunsmith to be repaired.

## Semi-automatic rifle

- A semi-automatic action, also known as a self-loading action, operates in much the same way as the firearms described above. However, chambering and ejecting is carried out automatically by the force of either the recoil or gas pressure.
- Because of the automatic reloading, a new cartridge is loaded ready to be fired each time the trigger is pressed (assuming cartridges remain in the magazine).
- Each press of the trigger will fire one round; this will continue for each trigger press until the firearm runs out of ammunition.
- The only semi automatic rifles that can be used with a standard firearms licence are those that:
  - can only fire .22 calibre or lower rimfire cartridges;
  - have a magazine (whether detachable or not) that can hold no more than 10 cartridges; and
  - have a lower receiver that cannot be attached to a centrefire upper receiver and still function.
- Many semi automatic firearms are prohibited firearms and require an endorsement and can only be used in very limited circumstances.

For the definition of prohibited firearms and other items, go to the Arms Act 1983.

***Figure 3.5.*** *Semi-automatic rifle.*

**Warning**

- Any semi-automatic rifle with a calibre greater than .22 calibre rimfire is a prohibited firearm.
- By putting a magazine which holds more than 10 cartridges into a .22 calibre rimfire (or lower rimfire calibre) semi automatic rifle, it changes that firearm into a prohibited firearm and makes it illegal to have or use as a standard firearms licence holder without the appropriate endorsement and permit.
- A centrefire semi-automatic rifle is a prohibited firearm; it is illegal for a standard firearms licence holder to have or use one without the appropriate endorsement and permit.

# Shotguns

A shotgun is a firearm intended to be fired from the shoulder and, for each single press of the trigger, fires either a number of pellets or a single projectile (depending on the cartridge) through a smooth-bore barrel.

Shotguns can be manufactured with a permanent fixed choke or they can have the muzzle of the barrel machined in a way to accept interchangeable or adjustable choke tubes.

The choke plays an important role in the rate at which the shot pellets spread as they travel away from the shotgun. A full-choke barrel will tend to shoot smaller shot patterns at a given distance than a barrel with a modified choke or no choke at all.

## Break-open shotgun

A break-open shotgun is a firearm in which the barrel or barrels hinge downward when opened by a lever. They are available in either single or multiple barrel configurations.

***Figure 3.6.*** *Double-barrel over-and-under break-open shotgun.*

## Pump-action shotgun

A pump-action shotgun is a firearm in which the pump slide (also known as forend) is manually pulled backwards to open the action and cock it. When the slide is pushed forward, the action feeds a fresh cartridge from the magazine, locks and is ready to fire. Moving the slide in a backwards and forwards manner ("pumping") is where this action type gets its name.

**Warning**

Pump and semi-automatic shotguns are prohibited firearms if capable of being used with a detachable magazine or if they have a non-detachable tubular magazine capable of holding more than five cartridges commensurate with the firearm's chamber size.

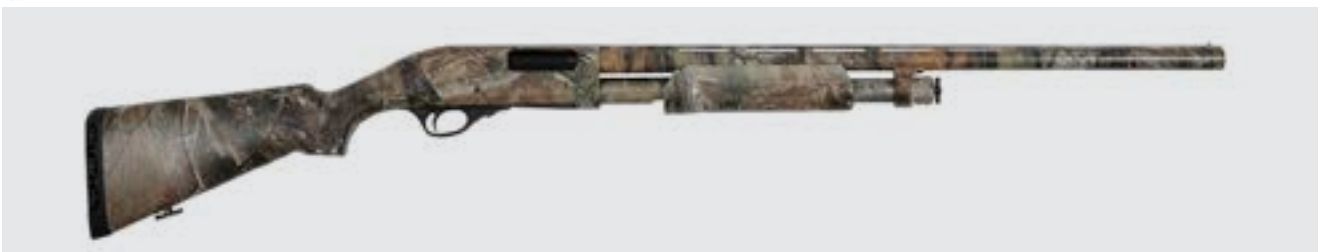


***Figure 3.7.*** *Pump-action shotgun.*

## Old shotguns, especially if Damascus barrelled

Many old shotguns in New Zealand are not considered safe for use with modern high-velocity, high-pressure cartridges, especially steel shot cartridges. The chambers may not be sized correctly for modern loads, and neither the action nor the barrels may be sturdy enough to handle modern ammunition pressures.

Damascus-barrelled shotguns (usually identified by their distinctive patterning on the barrel) are an old style of shotgun intended for use with black-powder loads. The barrels of these firearms are weak, due not only to the materials and method of manufacture, but also to rust and pitting from age.

The risk of using modern ammunition in these old shotguns is that they may blow up, potentially causing serious injury or death.

***Figure 3.8.*** *Example of a nineteenth-century 12-gauge break-open exposed-hammer shotgun.*

***Figure 3.9.*** *Close-up of the distinctive pattern on a Damascus-barrelled shotgun.*

**Warning**

- Modern ammunition must not be used in old shotguns.
- Seek advice on the correct ammunition and have the firearm inspected by a gunsmith before you intend to use it.

## Pistols

A pistol (commonly referred to as a handgun) is any firearm that is not a prohibited firearm or restricted weapon that is designed or adapted to be held and fired with one hand, and includes any firearms (other than a prohibited firearm or restricted weapon) that is less than 762 millimetres in length.

Pistols also include any firearm that has a folding or telescopic stock and measures less than 762 millimetres in length when the stock is in the folded or closed position.

To possess a pistol you must have a target pistol shooting, heirloom/memento, theatrical/broadcasting or bona fide collector endorsement on your firearms licence and a permit for each item.

***Figure 3.10.*** *Examples of handguns (revolver, pistol and single-shot).*

### Target pistol shooting

If you wish to possess and use a pistol for target pistol shooting purposes you must belong to, and be an active member of, a pistol club that holds a certificate of approval from the Commissioner of Police, hold a target pistol shooting endorsement on your firearms licence and a permit for each pistol.

Target pistol owners are only permitted to take their pistol from their home for the purposes of transporting it to the pistol club range or to a gunsmith or dealer.

If you wish to find out more about target pistol shooting, contact your local club.

# Muzzle-loading and antique firearms

### Antique firearms

An antique firearm is any firearm that is held in the possession of any person solely as an antique (but not as a copy or replica of an antique) and does not include any firearm manufactured after 1899 and is not designed for, and is not capable of, firing rimfire or centrefire cartridge ammunition.

An antique firearm is normally only suitable as a collector's item, an heirloom, for display, or kept because of its special significance.

### Muzzle-loaders and black-powder firearms

A muzzle-loader is any firearm into which the projectile, and usually the propellant charge, is loaded into the muzzle. Muzzle-loaders may have rifled or smooth-bore barrels, and are available as rifles, shotguns and pistols.

The majority of people use muzzle-loader firearms for target shooting at clubs. However, some use muzzle loading rifles or shotguns for more traditional style hunting. There are clubs that specialise in target shooting with muzzle-loading firearms of all types.

Black powder refers to the common propellant of a muzzle-loader. Shooters usually fire replicas of the original firearms. The replicas are working models made of suitable materials and can be fired safely with the correct ammunition components.

***Figure 3.11.*** *Modern replicas of black-powder firearms.*

# Airguns

- An airgun is any air rifle, air pistol or weapon that uses a gas or compressed-air firing mechanism (and not the force of explosive) to discharge any shot, bullet, missile or other projectile.
- Airguns include air rifles, air pistols, BB guns, soft air pellet guns, automatic electric airguns (AEGs) and paintball guns.
- Airguns are used for target shooting at clubs and national or international competitions. More powerful airguns may be used for bird and small pest control.

***Figure 3.12.*** *A basic single-shot air rifle.*

## Conditions for having or using an airgun

To have or use an airgun:

You must be 18 years of age or older.

- If under 18 years of age you may use an airgun if you hold a New Zealand firearms licence or are under the **immediate supervision** of a firearms licence holder or a person 18 years of age or older.
- If under 16 years of age you must always be under the 'immediate supervision' of a firearms licence holder or a person 18 years of age or older.
- Specially dangerous airguns (see page 49) are treated as firearms and can only be possessed with a firearms licence.

'Immediate supervision' means:

- the licensed or older person is within reach and in control of the person using the airgun;
- the person providing the supervision must be able to take control of the airgun; and
- the person providing the supervision cannot be in possession or control of another firearm or airgun at the same time.

**Note:** On a range, airsoft or paintball field, the rules in place, the fenced field, and the supervision by umpires, referees or a range officer collectively meet the requirement of immediate supervision.

## Paintball and airsoft airguns

Paintball airguns generally operate by utilising either compressed gas or air to propel a gel-filled ball out of the barrel.

Organised games and competitions are available in New Zealand, usually at commercial game fields.

**Note:** The operators of these fields adhere to a voluntary code of practice, including the application of strict safety measures.

Airsoft airguns are often very close imitations or replicas of the original firearm but operate via springs, batteries or gas to propel a small-diameter plastic pellet out of the barrel. They are often used in organised games, following safety measures similar to those in paintball.

Because airsoft guns often look exactly like the original firearms from which they are copied, be mindful of where you use them: carry them in a suitable container and don't treat them like a toy.

***Figure 3.13.*** *A paintball gun, showing compressed gas canister bottom left, magazine on top.*

***Figure 3.14.*** *An airgun can be easily mistaken for a real firearm; be careful where you use it. Actual Glock 9mm pistol on top, airsoft replica bottom.*

### Specially dangerous airguns

Some airguns are declared to be *specially* dangerous airguns and are treated in the same way as firearms under the Act. The airguns currently declared to be specially dangerous airguns are:

1. Specified pre-charged pneumatic air rifles; and
2. Larc International Model 19A and the Larc International Model M19-AMP.

***Figure 3.15.*** *A pre-charged pneumatic air rifle.*

### Safe storage of airguns

An airgun can cause serious injury or death if used incorrectly. When you are not using your airgun, it should be locked away in a safe place, inaccessible to unauthorised people.

Seek advice from a relevant club or organisation, or consult the police, before buying or importing any of these firearms.

Refer to **Section 2: Firearms licensing and obligations** for more information on the purchase and possession of airguns.

## Prohibited firearms and prohibited magazines

The Arms Act 1983 was designed to increase the safety and security of New Zealanders by reducing the risk of death or injury from firearms, and in particular the extreme harm that can result from the misuse of prohibited firearms.

Prohibited items include certain classes of semi-automatic firearms, pump-action shotguns and centrefire pump action rifles and large capacity magazines. These arms items are subject to greater licensing controls than standard firearms.

To possess a prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine you must acquire an endorsement on your firearms licence as well as a permit to possess or import the specific prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine.

Some types of ammunition are now prohibited under the Arms (Prohibited Ammunition) Order 2019. Follow this link for more information on prohibited ammunition. For more information on prohibited firearms and other items, go to the Arms Act 1983.

# Ammunition

Ammunition for your firearm is like the fuel you use for your car. For your own safety and the best results, you must ensure that you have the correct type of ammunition for the firearm you are using.

## Why is it important to use the correct ammunition?

If you use ammunition that isn't correctly matched to the firearm, you could damage the firearm or suffer serious injury due to the high pressures involved when a cartridge is discharged.

If the wrong ammunition is chambered, it may be too big to allow the action to close. If it is too small, it can slide through the chamber and block the barrel.

It's also possible that a similar-sized cartridge to the one your firearm uses will chamber and the action will close on it and fire, but it has the incorrect calibre projectile. This could cause a breech explosion, or it could burst the barrel and cause serious injury to the shooter.

It's therefore vital you know **exactly** the correct and full description of the cartridges your firearm requires.

If you are new to shooting, talk to your gunsmith, your dealer or an experienced shooter to check that you have the right ammunition for your firearm.

### Commonly available ammunition calibres and gauges

The names and references of ammunition can appear to be an inexact and often confusing topic for the new shooter. This is due to different countries creating standards and measurements over many years that don't always align or match mathematical measuring.

The term 'calibre' describes the internal diameter of a firearms barrel (the bore) and is also applied to the diameter of a projectile. It is measured in millimetres or inches. The term is also used to describe a cartridge that the firearm is chambered for. The bore measurement is often followed by the name of the company (or some other descriptor) that designed the cartridge, for example, .308 Winchester.

Shotguns are measured slightly differently. Instead of using the word 'calibre', they are referred to using 'gauges'. This is an old system where a number of lead balls fitting the bore of the barrel are weighed until they reach a pound (453 grams). In a 12-gauge shotgun, 12 balls that fit inside the diameter of the bore equals 1 pound, hence '12 gauge'.

Ammunition calibres commonly available for use in New Zealand are on the following page.

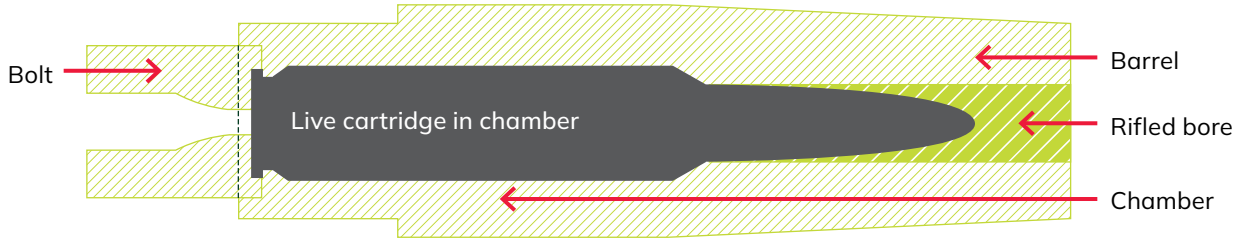



***Figure 4.1.*** *Cutaway of a rifle barrel showing live cartridge in the chamber, rifled barrel bore.*

| Type | Calibre |
|---|---|
| **Airgun** | .177–.25 calibre pellets |
| **Rimfire** | .17 Hornady Magnum Rimfire (HMR); .22 Short –.22 Magnum |
| **Centrefire** | .17 Remington–.50 calibre, e.g. .223 Remington; .243 Winchester; .270 Winchester; .308 Winchester; 30–06 Springfield; .303 British; 300 Winchester Magnum |
| **Shotgun** | .410 gauge–10 gauge, for example, 20 gauge; 28 gauge; 12 gauge |


***Figure 4.2.*** *Selection of common calibres.*


***Figure 4.3.*** *Headstamp showing calibre (6.5 Grendel) and manufacturer (FC Federal Cartridge).*

## How do I know if I have the correct ammunition?

Even if you have the right calibre, it still may not necessarily be the correct ammunition for your firearm. The calibre that you are using may come in different variations, for example, the ammunition below is all .22 rimfire, yet they are not all suitable for every .22 rimfire rifle.

- .22 short
- .22 long
- .22 long rifle
- .22 magnum

The cartridge base of your ammunition is usually stamped with numbers and letters that show the calibre and sometimes other letters or symbols to identify the manufacturer. These markings are commonly called the ‘headstamp’.

It is recommended for new shooters to use only factory-made ammunition purchased from a gun shop. Make sure that the cartridge headstamp, calibre marked on the ammunition box and your firearms barrel stamp, **match exactly**. If you are unsure, seek expert advice.

Avoid using reloaded ammunition from others as many experienced shooters reload their own cartridges and they may not be safe to use in your firearm. Another potential risk with reloaded ammunition is it may have been reformed with specialised tooling to become a calibre different from the original, for example, a .308 Winchester cartridge case can be resized down to .243 Winchester, or resized up to .358 Winchester. This means that the headstamp of reloaded ammunition may not be correct.


***Figure 4.4.*** *Cartridge identification information matching on the box, cartridge headstamp and barrel stamping.*


***Figure 4.5.*** *Cartridge identification information (on the box) and cartridge headstamp match.*

# Cartridge types and how they work

Below is a description of cartridge types and their component parts. Knowing and understanding what ammunition consists of and how it works will help you to make informed decisions when selecting the ammunition to use with your firearm.

## Modern cartridges

**Rimfire and centrefire**

Modern metallic cartridges are available in either centrefire or rimfire types. The difference between the two is that the whole base of the rimfire cartridge is the primer, whereas the centrefire has the primer centrally located on the base of the cartridge.

Rimfire Centrefire

Fired cartidge cases showing the different placements of the primer strike.

The strike is on the rim of the rimfire cartridge (left) and in the centre for the centrefire cartridge (right).

***Figure 4.6.*** *Rimfire and centrefire cartridges showing the different primer locations.*

## Common projectiles

Projectile types commonly used in centrefire cartridges include Full Metal Jacket (FMJ), Hollow Point (HP), Soft Point (SP), Polymer Tip (PT) and lead projectiles. As a general guide, FMJ and lead projectiles are used for target shooting, while HP, SP, PT and some lead projectiles are used for hunting. Rimfire cartridge projectiles are typically lead or polymer tip.

***Figure 4.7.*** *Commonly available projectile types. L-R PT, FMJ, SP, HP, Lead, 12 ga slug.*

## Components of a modern cartridge

| Part | Description |
|---|---|
| **Cartridge case** | The container that holds all the other ammunition components together. It's usually made of brass, steel, plastic or copper. |
| **Projectile** | The object expelled from the barrel. Can be Full Metal Jacket, Jacketed Hollow Point, Soft Point, etc. These can be made from lead, copper, zinc and other materials. Often called 'the bullet'. |
| **Primer** | A sensitive chemical compound contained within a metallic cup that ignites the propellant when struck by a firing pin. Primer may be placed either in the rim of the case (rimfire) or in the centre of the base of the case (centrefire). |
| **Propellant** | A chemical mixture that burns rapidly and converts to an expanding gas when ignited by the primer, forcing the projectile through the barrel. Often called 'gunpowder'. The two main types are 'smokeless' and 'black powder'. |

***Figure 4.8.*** *Components of a centrefire rifle cartridge.*

***Figure 4.9.*** *Shotgun shells showing different 12-gauge chamber lengths. Left: 2 ¾"; Middle: 3"; Right: 3 ½".*

## Shotgun ammunition

Shotgun ammunition (also known as Shotshell ammunition) is mostly used for game birds, small game hunting and target shooting. These cartridges usually contain many small pellets (shot) rather than a single projectile like rifle ammunition.

However, they are also available in Buckshot (large pellets) and Solid Slug (single projectile), which are mostly used for hunting large animals such as deer and pigs.

Shotgun cartridges are generally available in steel or lead shot in various shot sizes, chamber lengths and power ratings relating to the targets and/or animals being hunted.

It is important to check what chamber your shotgun has; this information is usually stamped on the barrel or found in the instruction manual. If you are unsure seek expert advice.

## Components of a shotshell

| Part | Description |
|---|---|
| **Shell case** | The container that holds all the other ammunition components together. It is usually made of plastic. |
| **Shot/Slug** | The object expelled from the barrel. Can be multiple pellets of differing sizes (shot) or a single projectile (slug). |
| **Primer** | A sensitive chemical compound contained within a metallic cup that ignites the propellant when struck by a firing pin. All shotshell primers are placed in the centre of the base of the case (centrefire). |
| **Propellant** | A chemical mixture that burns rapidly and converts to an expanding gas when ignited by the primer, forcing the projectile/s through the barrel. Often called 'gunpowder'. The two main types are 'smokeless' and 'black powder'. |
| **Wad** | The wad protects the shot and/or barrel and seals the gas behind the shot charge. |

***Figure 4.10.*** *Components of a shotshell cartridge.*

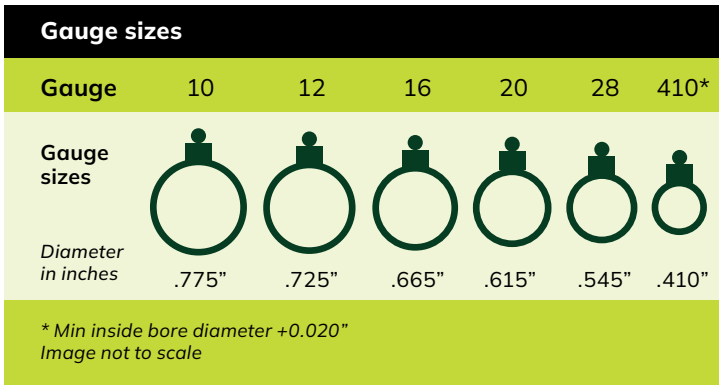



***Figure 4.11.*** *Comparison of shotgun gauges.*

| Lead shot sizes | No. 12 | No. 9 | No. 8 | No. 7.5 | No. 6 | No. 5 | No. 4 | No. 2 | No. BB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pellet diameter | | | | | | | | | |
| *(Inches)* | .050 | .080 | .090 | .095 | .110 | .120 | .130 | .150 | .180 |
| *(mm)* | 1.27 | 2.03 | 2.29 | 2.41 | 2.79 | 3.05 | 3.30 | 3.81 | 4.57 |

| Buck shot sizes | No. 4 | No. 3 | No. 2 | No. 1 | No. 0 | No. 00 | No. BB |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pellet diameter | | | | | | | |
| *(Inches)* | .24 | .25 | .27 | .30 | .32 | .33 | .36 |
| *(mm)* | 6.10 | 6.35 | 6.86 | 7.62 | 8.13 | 8.38 | 9.14 |

***Figure 4.12.*** *Comparison of shot sizes based on American Standard shot sizes – not to scale.*

## Drill rounds and snap caps

These cartridge types are inert (non-firing) and are designed to safely check and test for correct functioning, for example, they can be used to perform a function test or to safely dry-practise marksmanship techniques.

A drill round consists of a cartridge case (often grooved/fluted to differentiate from a normal case) with a projectile **minus** the primer and propellant. They are available either as a brass case cartridge or moulded from plastic/polymer in the shape of a cartridge.

Snap caps are normally made from plastic/polymer and have a false primer and internal spring to absorb the impact from the firearm's firing pin. They are often used to avoid firing pin damage when storing shotguns.

They are both safe non-firing cartridges and are the only cartridges recommended for you to use when checking a firearm's function in a non-live firing environment.

***Figure 4.13.*** *Drill round showing the orange polymer projectile, fluted case and no primer.*


***Figure 4.14.*** *Snap cap for a shotgun showing internal spring system and false primer.*

**!**

**Warning**

For safety, drill rounds and/or snap caps **must be kept separate from live ammunition**.

## Blank cartridges

This ammunition usually consists of a cartridge case made from metal or plastic, with a live primer and propellant, but no projectile. Blanks are used for bird scaring, training or theatrical purposes.

Although they don't fire a projectile, blanks can still be harmful at close range and can inflict wounds, burns and hearing damage from the propellant discharge.

***Figure 4.15.*** *Blank rifle cartridge showing plastic case (left) and live primer (right).*

# Range and impact potential of your firearm and ammunition

## Maximum and effective range of projectiles

Knowing the maximum projectile range of your firearm is critical to being a safe and responsible shooter.

The **maximum projectile range** is the absolute distance (without consideration of accuracy) that your firearm's projectile can travel when fired at the barrel's optimum angle of elevation. This optimal angle is usually around 30 degrees from horizontal. For example, at this angle, a projectile fired from a .308W hunting rifle could travel up to 4 kilometres before hitting the ground.

The **effective range** refers to the terminal ballistics of the cartridge. In a hunting context, this means how far that particular bullet will retain sufficient energy, accuracy and performance to humanely hit and kill the target. The same projectile from the .308W hunting rifle mentioned above is usually **effective** out to approximately 700 metres – a reduction of 3.3 kilometres from the maximum range.

A projectile from a stray shot, or a miss, can travel many kilometres outside of your intended firing zone before it returns to earth, potentially causing injury or damage to people, animals or property. A knowledge of **maximum projectile range** can help a shooter assess whether it is safe to fire.

The following table contains approximate figures for the maximum range of common rifle cartridges.
**Note:** These figures are not exact and are subject to multiple variations.

| Calibre | Effective range | Maximum projectile range* |
|---|---|---|
| **.177 Airgun** | 50 metres | 300–400 metres |
| **.22 Long Rifle** | 100 metres | 2.5 kilometres |
| **.44 Magnum** | 200 metres | 2.5 kilometres |
| **.223 Remington** | 400 metres | 3.5 kilometres |
| **.308 Winchester** | 700 metres | 4 kilometres |
| **300 Winchester Magnum** | 1,000 metres | 5 kilometres |
| **338 Lapua Magnum** | 1,500 metres | 6 kilometres |
| **.50 BMG** | 1,900 metres | 7 kilometres |

* N.B. Maximum range is achieved if fired with the optimum barrel elevation (approx. 30 degrees).

### Remember

- The effective range of your firearm will always be less than the maximum projectile range.
- Knowing your firearm's maximum projectile range and your effective range are key parts of safe firearms use.
- The maximum range is important for knowing whether it is safe to fire. **Remember Rule 5: Check your firing zone.**

## Terminal ballistics

The study of ammunition lethality is commonly referred to as terminal ballistics. Lethality means the capacity to cause death. This is the science of the behaviour and effects of a projectile when it impacts its target.

Projectiles kill primarily through massive and rapid blood loss, as well as damage to the brain, organs, tissues and nervous systems. A bullet's design and impact velocity play a huge role in what happens when the bullet hits its target.

Terminal ballistics describe effects, usually in varying combinations, of:

- kinetic energy transfer;
- wounding/damage potential – including the temporary and permanent wound cavities that a projectile creates when it passes through a target; and
- penetration – how deep a projectile will travel into a target.

**Important**

To ensure the humane and ethical killing of game animals, you must know how to choose the correct combination of firearm and cartridge for the animal you are hunting.

If you are a hunter, it is important that you have a good knowledge of terminal ballistics so you can choose the most appropriate cartridge power and projectile type for your intended game.

For example, a .22 Long Rifle rimfire cartridge would be considered inappropriate for hunting red deer, as the cartridge is lacking in the range, power, penetration and kinetic energy to reliably and humanely kill such a large animal.

A secondary benefit of this knowledge is to highlight the risks and dangers associated with the use or misuse of firearms. Knowing what a projectile will do when it strikes the body of an animal is a strong reminder to use safe handling skills.

To test the performance of projectiles, scientists will often use a specialised product called ballistic gel, which replicates animal tissue. The images below show the impact of the expanding projectiles on ballistic gel blocks.

***Figure 4.16.*** *.308W 175gr* ***Hollow Point (HP) projectile****. Left: Prior to penetration of the projectile; Middle: Initial expansion; Right: Final expansion.*

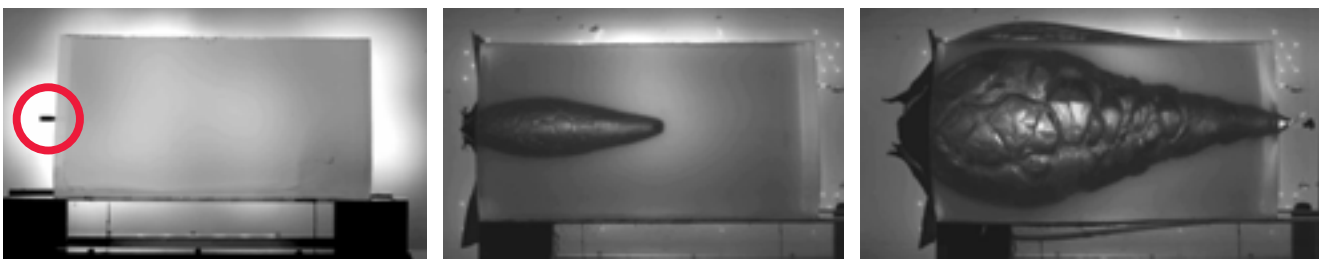
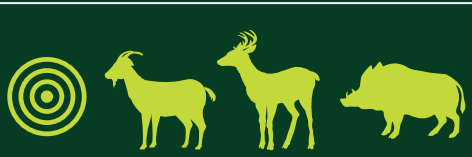


***Figure 4.17.*** *.308W 165gr* ***Soft Point (SP) projectile****. Left: Prior to penetration of the projectile; Middle: Initial expansion; Right: Final expansion.*

| Calibre | Recommended usage |
|---|---|
| .177–.25 Calibre Airgun |  |
| .17 HMR– .22 Magnum |  |
| .223 Rem– .243 Win |  |
| .243 Win– 50 cal. |  |
| .410-gauge shotgun |  |
| 28–16 gauge shotguns |  |
| 12–10 gauge shotguns |  |

If you are unsure which calibre or ammunition type you require for your chosen sport, consult a relevant club/organisation or experienced shooter, or ask a gunsmith for recommendations.

Seek advice from experienced and knowledgeable hunters on ethical and humane practices when hunting game animals.

Department of Conservation permit conditions for hunting on public conservation land state that hunting with any shotgun, rimfire rifle, 17 or 22 hornet calibre, air rifle, or tracer and incendiary type ammunition is strictly prohibited.

Go to DOC to read full DOC permit conditions.

# Safely dealing with ammunition faults and malfunctions

While modern factory ammunition is highly reliable in properly functioning firearms, you still need to know about malfunctions that occasionally occur with both factory and reloaded ammunition, and how to safely deal with them.

The three main ammunition faults covered here are: misfires, hang fires and squib loads.

## Misfire

A misfire is the complete failure of a cartridge to fire when the trigger is pressed. Typically, you will hear a click instead of a loud bang.

## Common causes of misfires:

| Type of fault | Possible causes |
|---|---|
| **Faulty primer** | » Failure of the priming mixture to be initiated when struck a proper blow by the firing pin<br>» Failure of the primer to ignite the propellant (may also be faulty/contaminated propellant) |
| **Faulty cartridge case** | » No flash hole in cartridge case to allow primer to ignite propellant |
| **Light primer strike** | » Hard primer cup (primer fault)<br>» Weak firing pin strike due to faulty, dirty or over lubricated working parts (firearm fault)<br>» Tolerances out of specification due to wear or incorrect assembly (firearm fault) |

In the case of a misfire due to light primer strike, the primer is not struck with sufficient force and the priming compound is not compressed enough to cause ignition. When the misfired cartridge is removed from the firearm, a shallow indentation of the primer cup will usually be seen.

In most cases it is difficult to identify the cause of the misfire, therefore misfired rounds should be disposed of appropriately (refer to **Destruction of unsafe ammunition** later in this section).

***Figure 4.18.*** *A centrefire cartridge showing light primer strike on left, normal strike on right.*

**Warning**

Misfires should be treated with caution, as it is impossible to initially distinguish a misfire from a hang fire. Therefore, whenever there is a failure of a cartridge to fire, assume for the moment that a hang fire has occurred and use the recommended safety procedure for dealing with them (see next page).

## Hang fire (delayed discharge)

A hang fire is when there is a noticeable delay between the impact of the hammer or firing pin on the primer and the actual discharge of the firearm. The duration of the delay can vary from a fraction of a second to 30 seconds or more.

Typically with a hang fire, the shooter will press the trigger, causing the hammer or firing pin to fall, but no shot is produced immediately. Inside the case however, the ignition process has been initiated, and after an unpredictable delay period, the gun discharges.

A hang fire can be produced by the use of deteriorated ammunition or by an ammunition's contaminated primer or propellant.

The danger of a hang fire is that the shooter often mistakes it for a misfire. There are two serious situations that can occur if a hang fire is mistaken for a misfire:

- A shooter assumes that a non-firing round is a misfire and immediately opens the firearm's action to remove the malfunctioning cartridge. If the cartridge ignites when the action is opened it may cause serious injury to the shooter and damage to the firearm.
- A shooter assumes that a non-firing round is a misfire, when it's actually a hang fire. The shooter then doesn't keep the firearm in the firing position (with the muzzle pointed in a safe direction for 30–60 seconds). This may cause an unsafe situation if the firearm discharges without control of the muzzle.

If a firearm that is normally reliable produces hang fires, or if it misfires with a particular ammunition (especially if the ammunition isn't new), immediately discontinue use of that ammunition and dispose of it safely. It may also be wise to have your firearm checked by a gunsmith.

**Important**

Any time the hammer or firing pin falls and your firearm fails to fire, you must assume that it is a hang fire.

## Squib load

A squib load is when a fired projectile does not have enough force behind it to exit the barrel and becomes stuck.

Usually the shooter will be aware of a squib load, as the shot does not produce the expected level of noise and/or recoil. You will likely hear a pop instead of a loud bang, and feel greatly reduced recoil from normal.

A squib can be caused by a number of factors:

- use of old or deteriorated ammunition
- contamination of the primer or propellant
- a cartridge with an insufficient amount of propellant.

***Figure 4.19.*** *Damage caused by firing a cartridge into a barrel that was blocked by a squib load projectile that hadn't been removed from the barrel.*

**Warning**

- If the shooter fails to recognise that they have experienced a squib load and fires a successive shot with the barrel obstructed, serious injury to the shooter and major damage to the firearm may result (see photo above).
- If you detect something unusual about a particular shot, for example, reduced recoil, reduced muzzle blast or the failure of the shot to cycle the action of a semi-automatic combined with the lack of a bullet hole on the target, then a squib load should be suspected.

## What to do when you experience an ammunition fault

| Fault | Description | What to do |
|---|---|---|
| **Misfire** | A misfire is the complete failure of a cartridge to fire when the trigger is pressed and the hammer or firing pin falls. Typically you will hear a click instead of a loud bang. | » Do not open the firearm's action.<br>» **Treat all misfires initially as hang fires.** For a modern cartridge, remain in your firing position with your muzzle pointed in a safe direction for 30–60 seconds. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction for two minutes for a muzzleloader.<br>» If after 30–60 seconds the firearm has not discharged, unload the firearm and inspect the cartridge and/or firearm for faults.<br>» Consider using a different batch of ammunition or have a gunsmith inspect the firearm. |
| **Hang fire** | A hang fire occurs when there is a noticeable delay between the impact of the hammer or firing pin on the primer and the actual discharge of the firearm. | » Do not open the firearm's action.<br>» For a modern cartridge, remain in your firing position with your muzzle pointed in a safe direction for 30–60 seconds. Keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction for two minutes for a muzzleloader. This should be enough time for a hang fire to complete ignition.<br>» If after this time the firearm has not discharged, unload the firearm and inspect the cartridge for faults.<br>» Consider using a different batch of ammunition. |
| **Squib load** | A squib load is when a fired projectile does not have enough force behind it to exit the barrel and becomes stuck. You will hear a pop instead of a loud bang and feel reduced recoil. | » Completely unload the firearm.<br>» Following safe firearms handling practices, carefully inspect the bore visually and physically (with a cleaning rod) to ensure there is no obstruction.<br>» If a projectile is stuck in the barrel, carefully remove it or consider having it removed by a gunsmith.<br>» Once the barrel is clear, consider using a different batch of ammunition until the fault is identified. **Do not use the firearm until the bore obstruction has been removed properly.** |

**Important**

» Never attempt to fire a cartridge that requires more than the usual force to close the bolt or action on. Repetitive loading and unloading of the same cartridge can cause damage to the round. This could lead to misfire or misfeeds or it could dangerously increase chamber pressure.

» Do not use old or corroded ammunition. It can burst cases, block the barrel or cause misfires.

» Wet or damp ammunition can increase the pressure in the firearm and may cause damage or serious injuries. Ammunition that has been submerged may leak water past the primer and affect the propellant; outwardly it may appear fine, but if you are in doubt, do not fire. Ammunition that is suspected of being wet internally should be discarded.

» Never attempt to dry wet ammunition by heating it.

### Destruction of unsafe ammunition

Always inspect your ammunition prior to use and properly dispose of any that have obvious signs of damage or corrosion. Unsafe, water-damaged or old ammunition can be handed in to any Police station to be safely disposed of.

If you have found ammunition you suspect is of a military nature, leave it where it is and report it to Police, who will have military experts remove it. Military ammunition often has explosive projectiles that can deteriorate and become unstable if moved or mishandled.

## Safe ammunition storage

There are two considerations for safe ammunition storage storage: the first relates to security, and the second relates to environmental conditions.

### Security of ammunition

The law requires you to have a safe and secure place to store firearms and ammunition separately at your home.

Licence holders need to take reasonable steps to ensure that ammunition is not stored in such a way that a person who obtains access to the firearm can also obtain access to the ammunition.

Refer to the online Secure Storage and Transportation Guide for Firearms and Ammunition for your legal obligations regarding the secure storage of ammunition and firearms.

***Figure 4.20.*** *Ammunition stored in separate compartment from firearms.*

***Figure 4.21.*** *Locked ammunition tin in cupboard prior to covering up.*

***Figure 4.22.*** *Locked ammunition tin concealed from view.*

### Correct storage conditions

Proper storage conditions include leaving the ammunition in its original packaging, away from extreme temperatures (hot or cold), in a dry and non-humid environment and away from solvents, other chemicals, open flames and heat sources.

Failure to store ammunition correctly can result in the propellant or primer deteriorating or becoming contaminated, potentially leading to misfires, hang fires or squib loads.

Do not leave ammunition in a vehicle, as temperatures can reach very high levels. This can lead to the deterioration of cartridge components.

# Firearm states of readiness

If you are new to shooting, this section will introduce you to the four states (conditions) of your firearm. Learning the states of readiness will help you prepare for your firearms safety course, as well as contributing to safe firearms handling.

Note that shooting clubs may use other terms for these states. Learning and understanding the information in this section will nonetheless provide you with a common reference when participating in shooting activities.

## What are firearm states?

LOAD, ACTION, INSTANT and UNLOAD are all firearm states. To be safe, you need to know when it is appropriate to LOAD and when to UNLOAD your firearm, when you can chamber a round in your firearm (the ACTION state), and when you can put the firearm into the INSTANT state.

As a firearms user, you must be able to recognise and apply the correct state in different situations – for example, to ACTION your firearm only when you expect to immediately encounter game, or you are about to fire on a range and you have received the appropriate command or clearance to do so.

You can determine the firearm's state at any time if you are unsure, by carrying out the Safety Precautions procedure, as detailed on page 6 in **Section 1: Seven basic rules of firearm safety**. Completing this procedure will also result in your firearm being in the UNLOAD state.

The states of readiness described in this section are primarily focused on hunting situations. Different procedures may be required depending on the firearm you use or your situation, for example, on a shooting range. Nonetheless, they are applicable across almost all commonly available firearm types and designs. Note: some firearms may not have every listed feature – safety catch, magazine, etc. – so you will have to seek expert advice on your specific firearm if unsure.

## Firearm states of readiness

| State | Description | When |
|---|---|---|
| **Carry out Safety Precautions on the firearm before moving to the LOAD state or if you are unsure of the state your firearm is in.** | | |
| **LOAD** | » Safety catch on ('safe') (if fitted)<br>» **Live** cartridges in the **magazine**<br>» Bolt/action closed on an **empty** chamber | Only when you have reached your hunting or shooting area, where it can be safely and legally discharged<br>**Note: Chamber must be empty** |
| **ACTION** | » Safety catch on ('safe') (if fitted)<br>» **Live cartridge in chamber**<br>» Bolt/action closed | When you have sighted or immediately expect to encounter game or when about to discharge the firearm, for example, on a range<br>**Note: Muzzle in safe direction** |
| **INSTANT** | » Safety catch **off** ('fire') (if fitted) | When you have made the **conscious decision** to fire |
| **UNLOAD** | » Safety catch on ('safe') (if fitted)<br>» **Empty magazine** (if fixed), or magazine empty and detached (if detachable)<br>» Bolt fully open/action locked open<br>» **Empty chamber**<br>» Visually and physically check the chamber and magazine area are empty | **Unload** your firearm **completely (including magazines)** before leaving a shooting area, entering a hut or camp area, transporting it, cleaning it or storing it<br>**Note: Muzzle in safe direction**<br>Secure cartridges **away** from the firearm<br>**Make 100% sure that no cartridges remain in the firearm or magazine/s**<br>Consider removing the bolt, inserting a chamber flag or applying a trigger/cable lock |

# LOAD state

## What is the LOAD state?

The LOAD state is when you introduce ammunition into the empty firearm, generally into the magazine. The chamber remains empty, so:

- the chamber is empty;
- the bolt or action is closed on the empty chamber;
- the cartridges are in the magazine only; and
- the safety catch is 'on' ('safe').

***Figure 5.1.*** *Firearm in the load state. Note cartridges are in the magazine, but the chamber is empty.*

## When should I use the LOAD state?

Bring your firearm to the LOAD state only when you have reached your hunting or shooting area, where it can be safely and legally discharged.

On a shooting range you may be directed by a range officer, who will let you know where and when it is safe to bring your firearm to the LOAD state.

**Note:** Return the firearm to this state from the ACTION state if you decide not to fire it.

## How do I bring my firearm to the LOAD state?

The table below details the steps for bringing a firearm to the LOAD state, and lists variations to the steps based on the firearm's magazine type.

**Before starting, ALWAYS identify your safe direction.**

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Point firearm in a safe direction, ensure safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). | Ensure the muzzle is kept pointing in a safe direction at all times. |
| **2** | Open bolt/action fully to the rear, remove chamber safety flag if fitted. | |
| **3** | Physically and visually check the chamber and magazine area twice. | Ensure you know the state of your firearm.<br>Use the chamber flag to assist. |

## Detachable magazine

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Close bolt or action on empty chamber. | Keep muzzle in a safe direction.<br>Safety is 'on' ('safe'). |
| **2** | Insert correct magazine into the firearm. | Ensure it is firmly attached. |
| **3** | Ensure safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). | Live cartridges in the magazine **only**. |

## Tubular magazine

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Close bolt or action on empty chamber. | Safety catch is 'on' ('safe').<br>Muzzle in a safe direction. |
| **2** | Insert correct number and type of cartridges. into the magazine. | |
| **3** | Ensure safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). | |

## Internal magazine – with bolt open

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Insert correct number and type of cartridges into the magazine. | Safety catch is 'on' ('safe').<br>Muzzle in a safe direction. |
| **2** | Depress top cartridge down with fingers of non-dominant hand. | Ensure the cartridges are kept pressed down far enough for the bolt to go over the top of them. |
| **3** | Slowly close bolt on empty chamber. | Keep pressing down on the cartridges as you push the bolt forward over the top of them.<br>Observe closely as you are closing the bolt to ensure that a cartridge isn't being chambered. |
| **4** | Ensure safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). | |

# ACTION state

## What is the ACTION state?

The ACTION state is when you introduce a cartridge into the action of the firearm, also known as chambering a round. In this state:

- the safety catch is 'on' ('safe');
- a cartridge is in the chamber;
- the bolt or action is closed on a cartridge; and
- remaining cartridges are in the magazine.

***Figure 5.2.*** *Cartridge is being inserted into the chamber, causing the firearm to be in the ACTION state.*

## When should I use the ACTION state?

Bring your firearm to the ACTION state only when you have sighted or immediately expect to encounter game or when about to fire the firearm. On a shooting range, you may be directed by an officer on duty as to where and when it is safe to do this.

You **MUST** handle the firearm with extreme care when it is in the ACTION state.

Carry the firearm in both hands, with your trigger finger outside the trigger guard and the muzzle in a safe direction – do not carry the firearm in a slung position in this state.

In a hunting group, only the shooter at the front of the party should be in the LOAD state (or the ACTION state only if sighted or immediately expect to encounter game animals); all others should have their firearms in the LOAD or UNLOADED state.

## How do I bring my firearm to the ACTION state?

**Before starting, ALWAYS identify your safe direction.**

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Point firearm in a safe direction, ensure safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). | Ensure the muzzle is kept pointing in a safe direction at all times.<br>**Note: some firearms don't allow the action to operate with the safety 'on', if this is the case, ensure you are using a safe direction when carrying out these actions.** |
| **2** | Open the bolt/action. | This depends on the action type. |
| **3** | Close bolt/action, chambering a cartridge. | Muzzle must be in a safe direction as this is a potential time for an unintentional discharge to occur. |
| **4** | Ensure safety catch is 'on' ('safe'). | Handle the firearm with extreme care. |

# INSTANT state

## What is the INSTANT state?

The INSTANT state is achieved by moving the safety catch to the 'fire' position. It reflects the conscious decision made to fire the firearm. In this state:

- the safety catch is 'off' ('fire');
- a cartridge is in the chamber;
- the bolt or action is closed on a cartridge;
- remaining cartridges are in the magazine; and
- if the trigger is pressed the firearm will fire.

***Figure 5.3.*** *Bolt is closed on a chambered cartridge, safety catch is 'off' ('fire'), causing the firearm to be in the Instant state.*

## When should I use the INSTANT state?

Bring your firearm to the INSTANT state only when you have made the **conscious decision** to fire it either at a target or at a game animal that you **have identified beyond all doubt**.

You must handle the firearm with **extreme care** when in the INSTANT state.

## How do I bring my firearm to the INSTANT state?

**Before starting, ALWAYS identify your safe direction.**

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Point firearm in a safe direction. | Remember **Rule 5: Check your firing zone**. |
| **2** | Using the trigger finger, move the safety catch to the 'off' ('fire') position. | The safety should never be moved to 'off' ('fire') unless you are 100% certain of your target and are directly aiming at it. |
| **3** | Immediately move the safety catch back to 'on' ('safe') (return to the ACTION state) if you decide not to fire. | Remember **Rule 4: Identify your target beyond all doubt**.<br>Consider returning to the LOAD or UNLOAD state if the animal has got away or no longer shooting. |

# UNLOAD state

## What is the UNLOAD state?

In the UNLOAD state, you can safely remove cartridges from the chamber and magazine areas of the firearm and must check and prove that your firearm is completely free from ammunition.

Upon completion of this procedure, your firearm should be chamber flagged or the bolt removed – especially if it is to be stored. Consider a trigger lock on the trigger or a cable lock through the action if the bolt/action cannot be easily removed. In this state:

- the safety catch is 'on' ('safe');
- no cartridges are in the magazine – which is open, or removed if possible;
- the chamber is empty;
- the bolt or action is open to the rear; and
- a chamber flag is inserted into the chamber.

## When should I use the UNLOAD state?

Use the UNLOAD state:

- when leaving the shooting area;
- when the game you were hunting gets away or you have otherwise finished with the firearm;
- when handing your firearm to another person;
- when you are about to cross a fence or similar obstruction;
- when you are about to enter a hut, camp or dwelling;
- when you are about to place your firearm into a bag or box for transport;
- prior to checking your firearm after you suffer a trip or fall;
- prior to performing any maintenance or cleaning of a firearm; and
- before storing your firearm.

***Figure 5.4.*** *Top: cartridges removed from the magazine; Middle: physical check of the chamber; Bottom: chamber flag inserted.*

## How do I bring my firearm to the UNLOAD state?

**Before starting, ALWAYS identify your safe direction.**

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Point the muzzle in a safe direction. | Make sure the muzzle is pointing in a safe direction at all times.<br>Keep your fingers away from and outside the trigger guard.<br>Keep your trigger finger (index finger of master hand) pointing straight along the side of the firearm. |
| **2** | Apply the safety catch (if fitted) to the 'on' ('safe') position. | If the safety is set to 'off' ('fire') move it to the 'on' ('safe') position.<br>If the safety will not go to 'on' ('safe'), or the safety doesn't allow the action to be operated when on safe ('on'), open or remove the magazine, lock open the action/bolt, move the safety to 'on' ('safe'), then proceed to step 5. |
| **3** | Open or remove the magazine. | This depends on the magazine type. |
| **4** | Open the action/bolt fully and lock it to the rear. | This depends on the action type. |
| **5** | Check the chamber and magazine well areas visually and physically, using a chamber flag or finger. | Make sure there are no cartridges present anywhere within the action, chamber or magazine well areas.<br>**Always check twice.**<br>If you find ammunition anywhere within the firearm, remove it safely. |
| **6** | The firearm is now in the UNLOAD state. | If not planning to use the firearm immediately, insert a chamber flag if you have one (recommended). Remove and secure any remaining ammunition from detachable magazine/s.<br>A chamber flag is a physical and visual indicator that the firearm has been checked; it also stops any ammunition from being inserted into the chamber and inhibits the action/bolt from closing. |

### Important

Too many people have been seriously harmed or killed by mishandled firearms. After the tragedy, the guilty party commonly states, "I didn't know it was loaded."

Such incidents are a direct result of the user not knowing the state of their firearm, usually combined with failing to observe Rule 2: Always point firearms in a safe direction.

If the shooters involved had carried out the correct procedures and followed the safety rules, far less of these careless and negligent incidents would have occurred.

# Preparing your firearm for use and zeroing

Checking that your firearm is in good working order and zeroing it correctly will help to keep you safe and increase your chance of accurately hitting your intended target.

## Preparing your firearm for use

### When should I check my firearm?

Check that your firearm is in good working order and condition **each time you are planning to use it**, especially if it has been in storage or is a new purchase.

You need to bring a similar mind-set to that of checking a motor vehicle prior to a trip. Before you set off, it's good practice to check that everything on your vehicle is in good working order – the same mind-set applies to your firearm prior to use.

Finding out that you have safety or function issues with your firearm means you can resolve any problems you find before you leave on a long trip.

Hunters tell us that by checking out the firearm at home before use, they have avoided potential problems by finding a faulty part or an obstruction in their firearm's barrel.

If in any doubt, get your firearm checked by a gunsmith before you use it.

**Important**

- Never assume your firearm is in good working order – always check it before you use it.
- Familiarise yourself with the specific parts and functions of your firearm before you use it with live ammunition.
- Check you have the correct ammunition for your firearm. Always seek advice if you are unsure.

### Owner's manual

Read your owner's manual thoroughly; it will explain vital information about your firearm. If your firearm didn't come with a manual, you can find most manuals online from the manufacturer's website. The manual should detail the recommended cleaning and maintenance schedule specific to your firearm.

### How do I prepare my firearm for use?

To prepare your firearm for use, complete the steps listed in the table on the next page to ensure it is safe to use prior to taking it on a hunting trip or to the range. Those new to handling firearms should partner with experienced shooters or visit their local dealer or gunsmith for advice.

**Important**

- Ensure your work area is free of any ammunition.
- ALWAYS identify your safe direction and always keep the muzzle pointed towards it.
- If you are in any doubt about the safe operation and performance of your firearm, have it checked by a gunsmith.

## Preparing your firearm for use

| Step | Procedure | Key points |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Carry out safety precautions procedure (refer **Safety Precautions process** page 6). | Be certain the firearm is unloaded. |
| **2** | Disassemble the firearm as per the owner's manual. | Only disassemble or take the firearm apart to the recommended level in the owner's manual. |
| **3** | Using the correct cleaning equipment, clean the barrel and chamber. | Check the firearm barrel is not obstructed. Remove old residue. |
| **4** | Clean and lubricate the action, bolt and working parts. | Inspect the parts for wear or damage, such as cracks or breaks.<br>**Note:** This ensures correct functioning and reduces malfunctions. |
| **5** | Check the serial numbers for matching components (bolt, barrel and receiver should match). | You may have similar types of firearms – check the serial numbers to make sure parts are not mixed up between firearms. |
| **6** | Reassemble and carry out a functions test.* | As per the owner's manual. This ensures correct reassembly and identifies faulty or damaged parts. |
| **7** | Check all major screws, for example, stock to action screws, sling fittings, suppressor mount and optics mounting screws. | Ensure all parts are fitted correctly.<br>» Loose optic/mounts result in poor accuracy.<br>» Loose suppressor mounts could be dangerous/harmful.<br>» Loose action and stock fit can reduce accuracy.<br>» The barrel should be in good condition for safety and accuracy.<br>These items need to be checked, if not described in the functions test. |
| **8** | If any faults are identified, remedy them before using the firearm. | You may be able to resolve any issues – or take your firearm to a gunsmith. |
| **9** | Once the firearm is secured in its bag or box, verify the ammunition to be used for the shoot or hunt is the correct type and calibre, and that it is in good condition. | » Confirm that only the correct and safe ammunition is packed to prevent potential harm.<br>» Only handle the ammunition once the firearm is secured. |

* **Note: Functions tests** are designed to check for correct reassembly and function of the main operating parts of the firearm. Refer to your owner's manual or seek help before you attempt a functions test.

***Figure 6.1.*** *Proper preparation prevents problems – always check your firearm before use.*

**Warning**

Never plug your barrel. Serious injury may occur if the firearm is discharged while plugged.

# Zeroing your rifle

Once you have prepared your firearm for use or had it checked by a gunsmith, the next step is to set up the sights correctly for the type of activity you plan to use it for.

## What is zeroing?

Zeroing ('sighting-in' or 'sight adjustment') can be defined as: 'aligning the sights on your firearm so the fired projectile hits where you aim at a certain distance'. For example, you aim your sighting system at the centre of a target at 100 metres, fire a carefully aimed shot and then adjust the sight/s until subsequent shots fired hit on the point of aim on the target.

For a new shooter, the skill of zeroing can take some time to learn. If you are unsure how to proceed safely with zeroing, seek the advice of experienced and knowledgeable shooters. For safety and accuracy reasons, its recommended to zero your firearm on a certified shooting range with a stabilising aid such as a bench rest or bipod and sandbags. You can also zero a firearm on private land as long as you have permission from the property owner, observe the safety rules such as a safe firing zone and use a safe bullet catch area suitable for the firearm you are zeroing.

If you have optical sights fitted, your gunsmith should be able to set your firearm's optical sight to a rough initial zero, a process referred to as 'bore sighting'. Typically, this means the centre of the optic is centre with the firearm's bore (centre of the barrel). However, this doesn't mean your firearm is zeroed; you will still need to go to a shooting range and team up with an experienced shooter to learn how to zero the firearm for the distance you wish to use it at.

**Warning**

If your firearm is not zeroed, then every shot you fire is potentially outside the target area and could have unintended and serious consequences such as striking people or property.

For more information on shooting ranges and shooting on private land go to:
Te Tari Pūreke website.

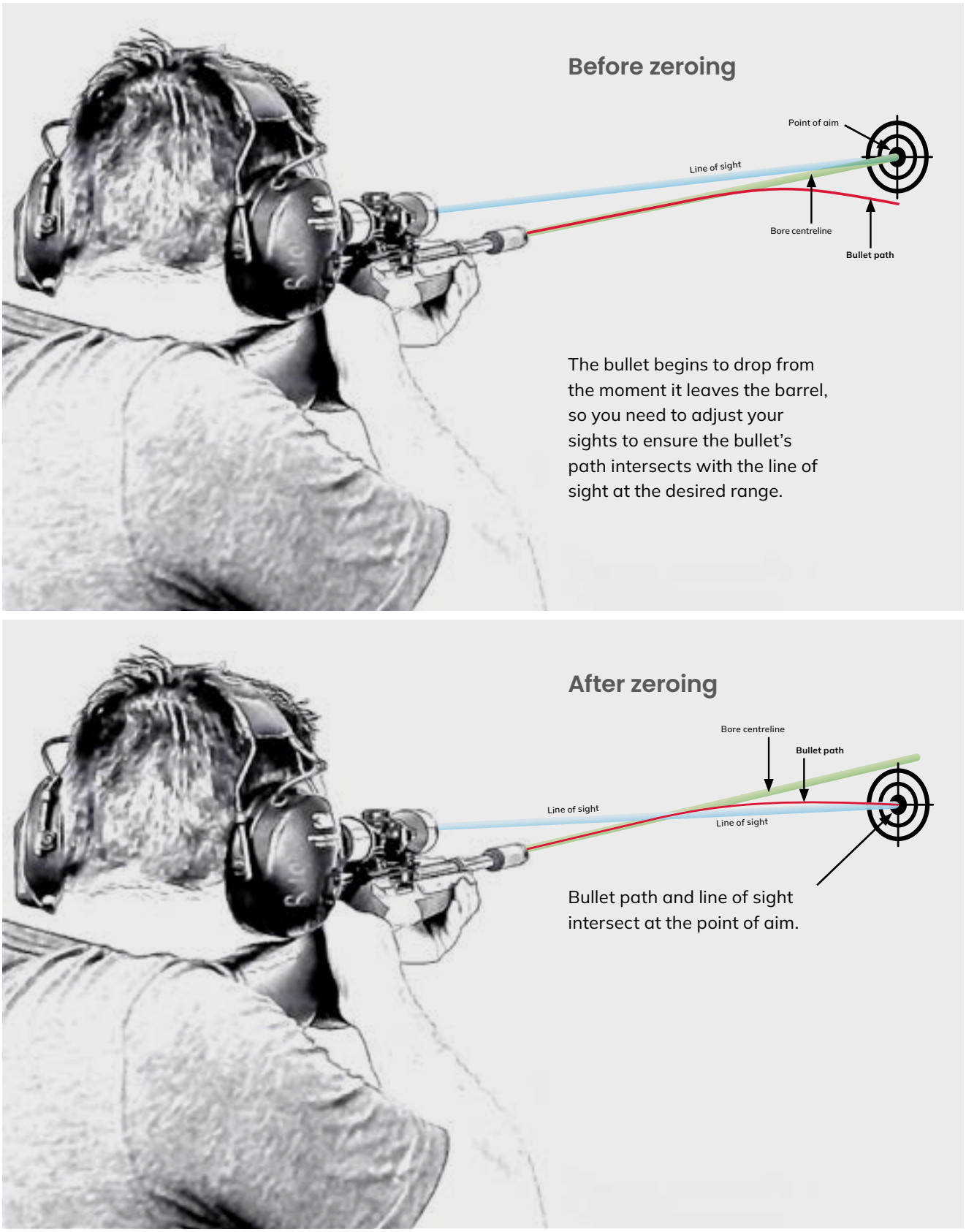



***Figure 6.2.*** *Zeroing – aligning the line of sight with the bullet path.*

## Shotgun patterning

Patterning a shotgun is generally similar to zeroing a rifle – you fire your shotgun with the ammunition type required for the activity it will be used for at fixed targets to establish where the shotgun is placing the centre of the shot 'pattern'.

Not all shotguns shoot to the same point of impact. This is because of differences in stock length and angle, rib height, choke, ammunition and how you mount the gun. These differences impact on where the pellets will strike the target.

It is recommended that you 'pattern' your gun with the load and choke you wish to use. This is usually done by firing your shotgun at large white paper targets set up at 20 metres for small gauges and 40 metres for 12 gauges.

***Figure 6.3.*** *Shotgun pattern – modified choke at 20 metres.*

If you are unsure how to proceed safely with patterning, seek the advice of experienced shooters on a certified shooting range.

You may discover your shotgun places the centre of the shot patterns above, below, left or right of the point of aim. This may require a modification to the firearm which could simply mean using the stock shims or spacers that come with most modern shotguns to change the point of impact. If your shotgun doesn't come with these, you may need to have the stock of your shotgun professionally altered by a gunsmith to change the point of impact.

# Safe handling of firearms

Whether you are on a shooting range or out hunting in the hills, the safe handling and carrying of a firearm is a fundamental skill that greatly reduces or eliminates the risk of serious harm or death to you and others.

## What is safe handling?

**Safe handling** is the creation and maintenance of a safe mind-set, attitude and discipline, along with strict procedures, whenever you use firearms. Safe handling starts before you first pick up a firearm, carries on as you use it, and continues until it has been stored away securely.

A recommended safe handling practice is to use chamber safety flags. These are a visual indicator to show the firearm has been cleared; they are a physical barrier to the chamber and action area, and can assist in the physical inspection of a firearm's action/chamber area to ensure it is unloaded.

***Figure 7.1.*** *Chamber safety flags in use.*

## Handing a firearm to another person

### What must I do before handing over my firearm?

There are several occasions where it may be necessary for you to hand your firearm to another person, for example when you are about to cross a fence or when showing a companion that your firearm is unloaded. Prior to handing your firearm over, you must always:

- identify your safe direction;
- keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction; and
- carry out the unload procedure as detailed in **Section 5: Firearm states of readiness**, to ensure the firearm is in the UNLOAD state.

This process ensures your firearm is safe before you hand it over to the other person.

**Warning**

Never hand over or accept a firearm from another person without first ensuring the firearm is in the **UNLOAD** state.

# Dealing with fences, obstacles and rough terrain

## Fences

When hunting in rural New Zealand you may need to cross fences or negotiate other obstacles. If you have to cross a fence, the safest method is to find and use a gate. If you have to cross a fence without using a gate, the methods below should be used.

The following safety techniques can be used, on your own or in a group, when crossing a fence or other obstacles such as ditches or small streams.

## How to cross a fence when alone

If you must climb a fence of any type, follow the steps below to remain safe.

1. Identify a safe direction.
2. Bring your firearm to the UNLOAD state.
3. Pass your firearm through the fence, keeping the muzzle pointed in the safe direction.
4. Carefully lay the firearm on the ground, ensuring the muzzle remains clear of dirt, etc.
5. Climb the fence away from the firearm (especially the muzzle).
6. Pick up the firearm.
7. Return it to the required state of readiness.

**Warning**

Injuries and fatalities have occurred when a shooter has climbed a fence with a cartridge chambered in their firearm, and they have slipped or fallen during the crossing and their firearm has discharged.

**NEVER** attempt to cross a fence with a loaded firearm.

***Figure 7.2.*** *Safely crossing a fence when on your own.*

## How to cross a fence when in a group

Follow the steps below to remain safe when crossing a fence in a group.

1. First person to cross identifies their safe direction.
2. First person unloads their firearm.
3. First person shows their firearm is unloaded to their companion and then hands it to them.
4. First person crosses the fence without a firearm.
5. Companion hands the unloaded firearm over the fence to the first person.
6. Companion identifies their safe direction.
7. Companion unloads their firearm.
8. Companion shows their own firearm is unloaded, then hands it over the fence to the first person.
9. Companion crosses the fence without a firearm.
10. Process repeats until all members of the group are safely across.
11. Each person returns their firearm to the required state of readiness.

***Figure 7.3.*** *Safely crossing a fence in a group.*

**Note:** The process repeats until all members of the group are safely across. Each person (once over the fence) returns their firearm to the required state of readiness.

# Trips or falls in rough terrain

## What should I always do after I trip or fall in rough terrain?

Safe handling is paramount when moving about in rough and challenging terrain. Hunters are particularly susceptible to trips and falls, which can result in injuries to the hunter and damage to the firearm. If your firearm is damaged or the barrel is obstructed as a result of a trip or fall, and you fire without checking it first, you could seriously injure or kill yourself or a companion.

If you trip or fall when moving about with a firearm you must attempt to:

- **control the safe direction of your firearm** at all times, stopping it from pointing at others or from striking the ground; and
- keep fingers away from the trigger guard, especially if you are in either the ACTION or the INSTANT state.

Likely results of a serious fall with your firearm are that:

- the barrel could be obstructed with dirt, mud, stones, water, snow or vegetation;
- the muzzle may be damaged or the barrel may be bent;
- the sighting system could be knocked out of alignment; and/or
- the stock may be cracked or damaged.

**Note:** Do not fire your firearm until you have satisfied yourself that it is undamaged and free of obstructions.

***Figure 7.4.*** *Images of a barrel damaged due to obstruction at the muzzle.*

**Note:** It's a good idea to always carry a compact cleaning kit and basic tools, including a rod and patches, to assist with ensuring your barrel is unobstructed.

## Thick vegetation

When hunting in dense foliage or vegetation, your barrel may get obstructed by small twigs and other debris. If you suspect this has happened, stop, unload your firearm and carefully check the barrel is unobstructed and safe.

Also be aware that your movement past branches and twigs may disengage the safety catch without you realising it, or jam inside the trigger guard pressing the trigger, or cock exposed hammers (for example, lever actions). Pay close attention to the carriage and passage of your firearm through vegetation as you move.

# Carrying your firearm

How you carry a firearm depends on:

- the type of terrain you are moving across;
- your expectation of firing a shot; and
- whether you are with other people.

**Remember**

- The muzzle must be kept in a safe direction - this could be pointing up or down, depending on the environment.

# Methods of carriage

## Two-handed across body hold

This method is generally recommended for most situations, and provides good control of the firearm. **The muzzle can be held up or down depending on the terrain and vegetation.**

***Figure 7.5.*** *Holding the firearm two-handed across the body.*

## Slung

The slung method is used for firearm carriage across open terrain, when you have little to no expectation of seeing animals.

Your firearm must be in the LOAD or UNLOAD state (with no chambered cartridge). Hook your thumb under the sling or hold it with your hand to stop it slipping off your shoulder.

***Figure 7.6.*** *Slung rifle.*

***Figure 7.7.*** *Single hand carry when alone and need to use non master hand.*

# Moving as a group when carrying firearms

Extra care must be taken when you are in a group situation with firearms. The safe direction of every muzzle is critical and requires constant monitoring. If you lose sight of anyone in your group, then hunting must stop until contact is re-established.

**Warning**

If an animal is sighted, only the shooter in front should consider taking the shot – under no circumstances should the following shooters attempt to fire past their companions.

## How does my group stay safe, hunting in single-file formation?

Single file is where shooters move in a line one behind the other. If you are moving as a group in a single-file formation, only the shooter in front should be in a position to fire a shot. The shooters following behind must be:

- in the LOAD or UNLOAD state;
- either carrying their firearms slung or in the two-handed hold; and
- aware of safe muzzle direction at all times.

***Figure 7.8.*** *Moving in single-file formation.*

## How does my group stay safe, hunting in a line formation?

Line formation is where shooters, standing or moving beside each other, form a line. If moving in line formation, it's recommended that your party consist of no more than three shooters and that each shooter has an agreed arc of fire (see orange highlight in the image below). An arc of fire is defined as: the area covered by the shooter's firearm from a given position, usually with defined left and right limits.

This formation is best used in very open terrain where all shooters can see each other. All shooters are in the LOAD or ACTION state.

***Figure 7.9.*** *Arcs of fire when in a line formation, showing each shooter's firing zone.*

**Warning**

- If shooters lose sight of each other, hunting must stop until contact is re-established.
- Pointing every muzzle in a safe direction, communication, managing arcs of fire and target identification are all critical to safe practice.

# Safety in a Maimai

## How does my group stay safe inside a Maimai?

A Maimai is a simple structure near a waterway or pond that provides concealment and shelter for hunters when duck hunting. Multiple shooters at close quarters inside a Maimai can be dangerous due to:

- close proximity to other hunters;
- poor muzzle control when game birds can appear from any direction;
- variable light conditions; and
- ignoring safe firearms handling skills, or using incorrect states of readiness.

It is critical to everyone's safety that all shooters agree at the start on the direction they will shoot, and strictly adhere to this throughout the day. So when a game animal is about to cross into another shooter's arc of fire while you are tracking it with your firearm, you must make the conscious decision to stop and not fire at it.

Swinging your muzzle into another shooter's area while following game often leads to people being shot at close range, particularly when firing multiple shots from a semi-automatic.

You must always be aware of where your companions or other users of the hunting area are located.

Never lean firearms against the wall of the Maimai as they could be bumped or knocked and could discharge a shot causing injury or death.

To reduce the risk of an unintentional discharge, shotguns that are not in use should be in a firearm holder/rest, preferably unloaded, and with the muzzle pointing in a safe direction.

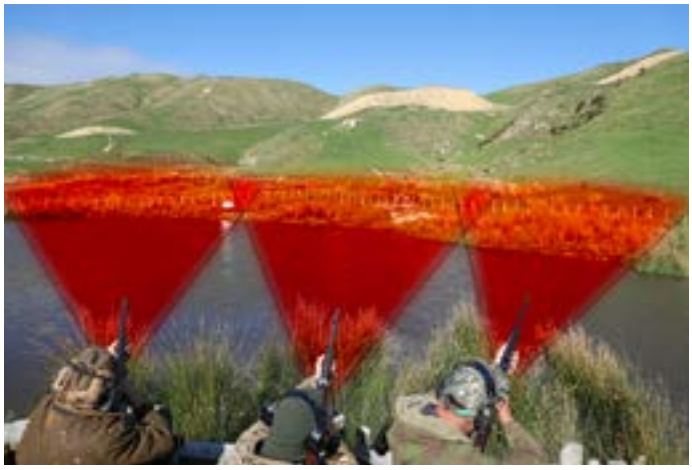


***Figure 7.10.*** *These hunters are in a line across; this is a good, safe set-up, as no one is in front of or behind another shooter. Each shooter has an agreed arc of fire, as highlighted in orange.*

***Figure 7.11.*** *Example of safe firearms rests in a Maimai.*

# Transporting firearms

## How can I safely transport my firearm to and from a shooting area?

Transporting a firearm to and from your shooting area must be done with caution.

(a) Firearms and ammunition must be concealed from view from outside the vehicle.

(b) Firearms must be made inoperable if readily possible by removing the bolt or other vital part. The part should be kept on the licence holder's person or stored out of sight separately from the firearms. If this is not possible (e.g. the firearm is a lever action or semi-automatic or single shot firearm), then the firearms must be fitted with a trigger lock or travel in a locked case or carry bag.

(c) Firearms must not be loaded with ammunition in the breech, barrel chamber or magazine.

(d) Ammunition must be stored separately from any firearms and be in a locked glovebox or similar storage area where practicable.

For more information refer to Te Tari Pūreke website.

**Remember**

- It is illegal to drive on public roads with a loaded firearm.
- It is dangerous to have a loaded firearm in or on a vehicle, or to get in or out of a vehicle with a loaded firearm.
- You may only leave a firearm in an unattended vehicle for a short period and in limited circumstances (refer page 26 for more information).
- Ammunition must be stored separately from any firearms and be in a locked glovebox or similar storage area where practicable.

***Figure 7.12.*** *Lockable transit case.*

***Figure 7.13.*** *Soft transit case/bag.*

***Figure 7.14.*** *Trigger and cable locks shown fitted to firearms.*

## How to safely get firearms in and out of a vehicle

Getting your firearm safely out of and returning it to a vehicle requires following the seven basic firearms rules and carrying out the unload procedure.

- When you are about to remove your firearm from the vehicle, ensure no one else is in front of your firearm. If necessary, ask people to move away.
- Remove your cased firearm from the vehicle, identify a safe direction, move away from the vehicle and follow the unload procedure.
- If a firearm is not in a bag or case, never remove it from the vehicle by the muzzle/barrel.
- When returning to your vehicle, you must bring the firearm to the UNLOAD state before putting it back into its case. If you are with someone else, have them inspect it also.
- Never lean a firearm against a vehicle or other object – always unload it and place it on the ground with the muzzle in a safe direction.

***Figure 7.15.*** *Be extra careful when moving a firearm into or out of a vehicle. Never handle it from the muzzle end.*

***Figure 7.16.*** *Move away from the vehicle to check your firearm.*

***Figure 7.17.*** *Ammunition must be stored separately from any firearms and be in a locked glovebox or similar storage area where practicable.*

**Warning**

Projectiles can deflect off hard surfaces such as vehicle bodies and seriously injure or kill you or someone else. Conversely, projectiles can also penetrate into or pass through a vehicle, seriously injuring or killing any occupants or bystanders.

Leaning firearms up against the side of a vehicle has led to serious injuries and deaths from firearms sliding off and firing when they hit the ground.

# Shooting in low light

## Night vision devices (NVD)

Shooting in low light is common for pest control in New Zealand as many target animals are more active during the hours of darkness.

Tools to assist with low-light shooting include spotlights and NVDs, such as image intensifiers and thermal imagers.

While these tools are helpful to the hunter, the use of them carries **serious potential risks** which you must be fully aware of. It is recommended you seek expert advice and guidance on the correct use of these items.

**Warning**

Shooting in low light carries serious potential risks, for example:

- Identifying your target beyond all doubt
- Checking your firing zone is safe

**If in doubt – DON'T SHOOT.**

**Image intensifiers**

1. Take in small amounts of available light (such as from the moon or stars) and amplify it to produce a visible image on a screen.
2. These are affected by differing light conditions, which means you will have limited range (unable to identify your firing zone) and contrast (target identification problems).

***Figure 7.18.*** *Example of a night vision rifle scope (image intensifier).*


**Thermal imagers**

1. Detect differences in heat (infrared or thermal) radiating off objects to create an image, which is displayed in white/black or various colours.
2. While thermal imagers can detect a heat source, it is often difficult to identify your target beyond all doubt due to low resolution.

***Figure 7.19.*** *Example of a thermal imager.*

## Safety considerations with NVDs

It's important to understand that while the use of image intensifiers or thermal imagers enables you to observe objects in the dark, they also come with limitations and increased risks.

- Both have limits on range, making it harder to check your firing zone.
- **Both have issues with positive target identification**, caused by low resolution, poor contrast, or similar heat signatures in the environment/thermal crossover problems.

When considering the use of these devices, ensure you are completely familiar with their operation and safety issues.

Get to know the area you want to hunt at night, in advance during daylight hours, so you know where it's safe to shoot.

## Spotlights

A spotlight used for hunting is typically a handheld battery-powered device that emits a strong beam of light emitted from a lamp/bulb to illuminate a specific area of focus.

Similar warnings and considerations for NVDs also apply to the use of spotlights:

- The beam may illuminate the target but not the area behind it, making it difficult to check your firing zone.
- Spotlights can illuminate the eyes of an animal, but you may not be able to positively identify your target beyond all doubt.
- Reflections from headlamps have been mistaken for animal eyes, resulting in people being seriously injured or killed.

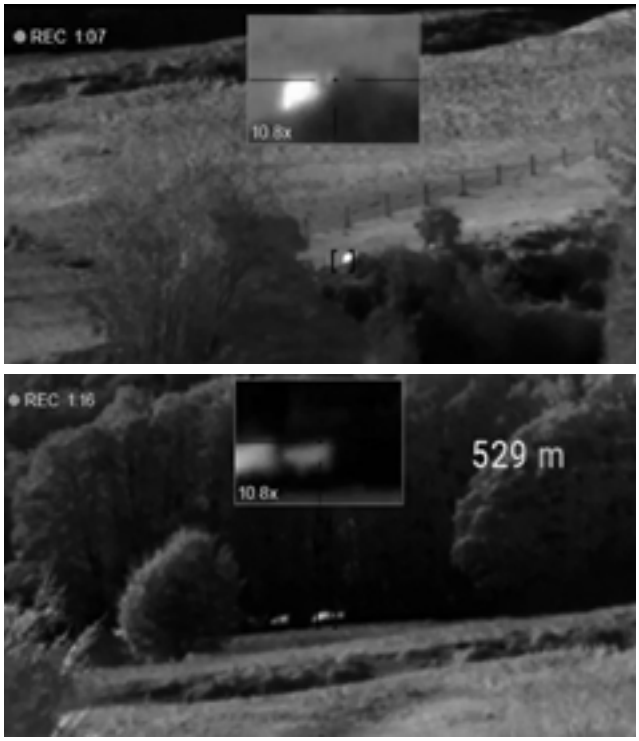



***Figure 7.20.*** *Examples of animals viewed through a thermal imager – it shows the heat source, but what type of animal is it? Can you identify them beyond all doubt?*

**Warning**

**If in doubt – DON'T SHOOT.**

**Remember**

**Note:** The Department of Conservation permit conditions for hunting on public conservation land state that the following activities are strictly prohibited:

- Hunting or discharging a firearm during the hours of darkness (half an hour after sunset to half hour before sunrise).
- Hunting or discharging a firearm that has thermal imaging equipment attached.
- Hunting with thermal imaging equipment that can be clipped onto the firearm.
- Hunting with spotlights, torches, night vision equipment, vehicle headlights, or any other artificial light source.

Follow DOC to read full DOC permit conditions.

The Department of Conservation have updated the permit conditions to allow:

Hand-held monocular and binocular thermal imaging equipment are permitted for use when spotting, locating, and identifying wild animals only.

# Safety equipment and first aid

## Protecting your hearing

### Protecting your ears when shooting

Almost all common types of firearms produce gunshot sounds that are harmful or dangerous to human hearing. It is recommended that you always wear earmuffs when shooting to avoid permanent hearing loss.

### What does sound mean for the shooter?

Sounds at high levels and/or sounds that are partnered with prolonged exposure can cause permanent hearing loss or effects such as tinnitus (ringing in the ears).

» The loudness of sound is measured in units called decibels dB(A), for example, the loudness of a lawnmower is ~100 dB(A).

The likelihood of hearing damage is related to the amount of time spent exposed to the sound and the decibel level of the sound. However, this is not a simple relationship. For example, a gunshot at 163 dB(A) is about as much noise exposure as listening to 40 hours of a sound at 90 dB(A).

See the table on the right for examples of sounds listed according to their dB(A) rating (figures are averages and subject to multiple variables).

As shown in the table, **gunshots from commonly-used firearms are all in the permanent hearing loss range**. To prevent this, it is recommended that you wear appropriate hearing protection equipment such as earmuffs and/or earplugs.

The recommended standard of protection is indicated on the next page around different ‘classes’ or ‘grades’ for protection, with Grade 5 being the most suitable for protection from gunshot sounds. For very high dB(A) firearms, or for situations involving long-term exposure to gunshot sounds, it is recommended that you use both earplugs and earmuffs together for maximum protection.

| Sound source | Decibel level |
|---|---|
| Normal conversation | **60 dB** |
| Vacuum cleaner | **70 dB** |
| Beginning of hearing-damage range | **85 dB** |
| Lawnmower | **100 dB** |
| Chainsaw | **120 dB** |
| **Permanent hearing loss can result** | **127 dB** |
| Threshold of pain, all frequencies | **140 dB** |
| Rock concert, near speakers | **120–150 dB** |
| .22LR Rifle high-velocity cartridges | **145 dB** |
| 9mm Glock pistol, 12ga shotgun | **160 dB** |
| .308 Rifle | **165 dB** |
| Jet airplane, e.g. Boeing 727 at take off | **165 dB** |
| **Human eardrums can rupture** | **195 dB** |

**Warning**

Without protection, exposure to a single gunshot is likely to result in permanent hearing loss.

There are several types of protection devices available:

| Ear protection devices and how they work | |
|---|---|
| **Electronic earmuffs** | These earmuffs allow some sounds such as conversation, range commands, etc. to be heard clearly, but 'shut off' when a gunshot is detected thereby protecting your hearing from damage. |
| **Standard non-electronic earmuffs** | These earmuffs are designed to reduce all sound and are available in many different styles and protection levels. They can make conversation or commands difficult to hear. |
| **Earplugs** | Earplugs are designed to be compressed (rolled) and inserted into the ear where they expand and block the canal. They are usually made from foam, but custom fitted plugs made from silicone are available from an audiologist. |

!

### Warning

Using firearms in the following circumstances can increase your exposure to higher levels of sound and therefore increase your risk of hearing damage:

- when fitted with certain types of muzzle devices;
- with shorter than standard length barrels;
- in an environment that sound can reverberate (echo) or be amplified.

# Suppressors

Safety guidelines stress that all efforts should be made to reduce the sound's original source. As well as hearing protection, suppressors offer a method for reducing the sound level you are exposed to from your firearm.

Suppressors (often mistakenly called 'silencers') are usually hollow metal tubes containing baffles that mount to the muzzle of a firearm to reduce the sound level of the muzzle blast.

- Suppressors are excellent at reducing the original source of the harmful sound impulse. Good quality suppressors usually reduce the sound of a gunshot to below 140 dB(A).
- Suppressors can reduce recoil especially with larger calibre firearms.
- It is recommended that you purchase from reputable manufacturers that publish their products' sound suppression levels, as there are products on the market that do not reduce the sound pressure level adequately and can still be harmful to your hearing.

## Regular hearing checks

As you progress in the shooting sports, remember to have your hearing checked annually to ensure:

- you are not experiencing hearing damage from exposure to gunshots; and
- that your hearing protection is performing adequately.

**Important**

Because sound exposure is harmful, both in terms of peak levels (the gunshot) and the duration of exposure to the sound (shooting for long periods of time/lots of ammunition fired), it is STILL recommended that you wear hearing protection even if your firearm is fitted with a suppressor.

***Figure 8.1.*** *Left, various suppressors; Above, suppressor mounted on rifle muzzle.*

# Protecting your eyesight

Good eyesight is important because you must be able to identify your target beyond all doubt and shoot with accuracy. Even colour blindness can cause problems, so if you have any doubts visit an eye specialist.

If you do have an existing sight impediment, discuss the implications with your specialist. With their assistance, you may still be able to safely pursue shooting as a sport.

## Protect your eyesight when shooting

Alongside earmuffs, safety glasses are extremely important items of personal protection when using firearms.

If you (or shooters near to you) are not wearing quality eye protection and experience a firearms incident, the result can be serious eye injuries or total loss of vision.

Safety glasses are designed to offer protection from harm caused by:

- malfunctioning cartridges;
- malfunctioning firearms;
- ricochets or backsplash (fragmentation or target debris thrown back towards the firer as a result of projectile impact).

**Remember**

- Safety glasses can be replaced – your eyes can't!
- It is recommended that you have your eyesight regularly checked by an optician to ensure you maintain your vision at a standard suitable for shooting sports.

There are two common standards to look for when considering safety glasses:

| Safety standards for eye protection | |
|---|---|
| **The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) ANSI/ISEA Z87.1-2015** | This prescribes the design, performance specifications, and marking of safety eye and face products, including safety goggles, spectacles, face-shields and welding helmets. Compliance is noted with a Z87 on the glasses or packaging. A 'Z87+' indicates high-velocity impact, and 'Z87' alone means basic impact protection. |
| **AS/NZS 1337.1:2010** | Australia/New Zealand Standard Personal Eye-Protection Part 1: Eye and face protectors for occupational applications. Specifies minimum requirements for non-prescription eye and face protectors. |

# First aid

Using firearms, whether hunting or target shooting, carries the risk of serious injury or death.

As a firearms owner or user, it is your responsibility to provide first aid either to yourself or to another if the worst happens.

The main benefit of first aid skills is that you can prevent a situation from becoming worse. Providing even basic help can keep the condition of the victim from deteriorating until professional medical help arrives or the victim can be transported to a hospital.

You may be required to use these skills when out hunting or at the shooting range, so be prepared.

However, you cannot buy a first aid kit and expect to be able to deal with serious, life-threatening injuries.

**Important**

If you know how to provide first aid for gunshot wounds or other serious injuries that can result from firearms use, you may save your or someone else's life.

## Trauma training

Most first aid training programmes will provide training on how to deal with a reasonably severe wound.

Find a recognised and accredited training provider for first aid training. When attending the training course, consider asking the instructor for more information on matters relating to first aid in a hunting or range shooting scenario.

Keep your training up to date – most courses are valid for a period of two years. Ensure your first aid certificate stays current so that you can refresh the fundamentals and learn any changes to techniques.

## Self help

It is worth planning ahead for events in which you need to deal with injuries by yourself.

Think about:

- How to use a tourniquet one handed.
- Do you have communications to call for help? A Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) could save your or someone else's life, especially if you or they are injured when hunting in rough and/or isolated terrain.
- Where will you carry your first aid trauma kit? Can you access the contents when injured? Could another person coming to your aid identify and locate it? Make it easy to access so that you, or someone that needs to help you, can find it quickly. It should be carried on your person, not in your pack. Some kits are available with pull tabs and other features to enable single-handed use.

## First aid kits

When assembling your kit, take into account the activities you will be doing and the environment you will be in. For example, hunting in alpine environments carries a greater risk of falling, resulting in sprains and breaks. Alternatively, pig hunters are more at risk of bite/puncture wounds.

- Start with a basic 'off-the-shelf' kit, and add the extra items you will need for serious trauma.
- Remember that some items will have an expiration date – replace out of date or used items.
- Also check that any sterile products remain sealed correctly.

See recommended items for your first aid kit in Appendix 3.

| Guidelines for choosing a first aid kit | |
|---|---|
| **Compact and easy to carry** | Choosing a suitable compact pouch means that you will be more likely to carry it at all times. A waterproof container will protect the contents from the environment. |
| **Identifiable** | It should be clearly marked as a 'first aid kit' so others can identify it when they are under stress. |
| **Accessible** | Consider its placement so you or others can locate it even when injured or stressed. |


***Figure 8.2.*** *Example of a compact first aid kit.*

### Important

- When applying a tourniquet, ensure its applied approximately five centimetres above the wound, applied tight and not directly over the wound or on a joint.
- Bleeding Control – Using a clean cloth, apply firm and direct pressure to the injury site, do not take the pressure off at all.
- Knowing your GPS Co-ordinates when calling Emergency Services is very beneficial.

**The Emergency Number in New Zealand is 111**

# Personal Locator Beacons (PLB)

A PLB is an electronic distress device which can be activated in an emergency. This sends a signal via satellites which will alert the Rescue Coordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ), along with your location coordinates.

It is essential (and a legal requirement) that your beacon is registered so emergency responders know who they are looking for, and to contact your nominated distress contacts who can tell them a little more about you. This will help them tailor their search for your needs, and can speed up the process of their response.

## PLB vs mobile phone

Phones are useful in certain circumstances, but even in towns and cities, they can be unreliable. Consider the environment you will be hunting or shooting in; there are many remote areas in New Zealand that have little or no cell phone signal. In an emergency, even if you manage to connect with help via cell phone, you might not be able to talk due to injuries, or rescuers may not be able to pinpoint your location.

The advantages of beacons are:

- their distress signal operates for at least 24 hours;
- a homing signal that can be picked up by aircraft;
- they connect to multiple types of orbiting and fixed satellites – they don't rely on cell service;
- they don't require you to talk or input text; just activate it to request help;
- rescuers can locate you even in very difficult terrain;
- usually they have powerful strobe and infrared lights;
- most are buoyant and waterproof.

## Considerations

Only activate a PLB when the circumstances are serious (e.g. you or another person is seriously injured or sick, and you can't resolve the situation without professional help).

Remember, mounting a rescue can be dangerous for all involved especially if at night or in bad weather.

If you do activate your PLB, leave it on and stay put at your location; this will make it easier for rescuers to find you.

Carry it on your person at all times throughout your trip. Don't put it in your pack or leave it in the hut when you're "only going out for 10 minutes".

Make sure everyone in your party (including you) knows exactly how and when to use it.

PLBs can be purchased (or hired) in many locations in New Zealand. Make sure that the device meets the AUST/NZ standards and that it can be registered in New Zealand.

Keep your registration details up-to-date, carry out unit self-test checks and replace the battery according to the manufacturer's guidelines. Find out how to get and register a PLB at beacons.

***Figure 8.3.*** *Personal Locator Beacon (PLB).*

# Harmful substances

Some of the products used in the cleaning and maintenance of firearms contain potentially harmful chemicals. Always follow the manufacturer's safety guidelines (such as appropriate personal protection equipment and sufficient ventilation) when using such products.

The firing residue from discharging firearms may also contain lead and other harmful materials.

Remember to wash your hands thoroughly after:

- using a firearm;
- picking up expended cartridges on a range;
- cleaning and maintaining your firearm (remember good ventilation);
- reloading ammunition.

# Safety at a shooting range

## The shooting range

A shooting range is a place that has been certified for shooting by a competent person or authority. Ranges have strict rules for use, and there are Officers on Duty who supervise shooters and enforce these rules. Officers on Duty may use alternative designations depending on the shooting discipline.

Shooters fire from a clearly marked firing point that is down-range, facing towards targets set up for the type of shooting or competition being held. Behind the targets is a 'bullet catch' designed to safely contain the fired projectiles.


***Figure 9.1.*** *Shooting ranges in operation (firing point on the left; bullet catch on the right).*

## Shooting range rules

Ranges are operated under a set of rules known as 'Range Standing Orders' that are specific to the range you are using. You should receive a briefing from the Officer on Duty before you start any shooting activity.

To learn more about range rules and operation follow the link to the Police Shooting Range Manual. Remember, each range and each group of range users will have their own specific rules for using the facility.

***Figure 9.2.*** *Rifle shooters on the firing line at rifle range.*

Before you use your firearm at a shooting range, ensure the:

- the firearm is in the UNLOAD state;
- the firearm is mechanically sound
- the barrel is not blocked;
- the firearm has been prepared for use (refer to **Section 6: Preparing your firearm for use and zeroing**);
- the ammunition is correct for the firearm.

**Note:** Some ranges will have restrictions on the type or calibre of firearms and ammunition that can be used. They also may have restrictions on the type of shooting activities or practices.

Make sure you know the rules and regulations that relate to the range you use. Don't hesitate to ask Range Officials or other club members if you are unsure of something.

### Remember

- Check you have access to a first aid kit and carry communications with you.
- Know the emergency procedures specific to the range you are using, including the physical location of the range, where the medical kits are stored and where the evacuation points are.
- Learn all range rules prior to using the range.
- Every shooter is responsible for upholding safety procedures on the range, so don't be afraid to point out lapses to other shooters and how their behaviour can affect your safety and the safety of others.

**For more information on any of the topics covered in this Safety Code go to:**

**www.firearmssafetyauthority.govt.nz**

# Appendices

## Appendix 1

### Some of the offences applying to firearms licence holders

The offences below are described in general terms:

| Arms Act (section) | Offence |
|---|---|
| 16 | Importing a firearm, etc., without first obtaining a permit to import from the Police. Visit Te Tari Pūreke website. |
| 20 | Possessing a firearm (non-prohibited) without either being licensed or under the immediate supervision of the holder of a firearms licence. |
| 21 | Possessing an airgun while not 18 years or older, or between 16 and 18 and not the holder of a firearms licence. |
| 22A | Possessing a non-prohibited magazine or a non-prohibited part without either a firearms licence or being under the immediate supervision of a licence holder. |
| 22B | Possessing ammunition without either a firearms licence or being under the immediate supervision of a licence holder. |
| 22D | Selling or supplying ammunition to someone who does not hold a licence; selling or supplying ammunition without being the holder of a firearms licence. |
| 22E | An ammunition seller failing to keep records of their ammunition sales; not permitting Police to inspect and make copies of those records; not retaining those records for the required period; not surrendering those records to Police on cessation of business. |
| 22G | Manufacturing a prohibited item. |
| 26 | Failing to produce a firearms licence when required by the Police, or failing to maintain the licence in an undefaced and legible condition. |
| 28 | Failing to immediately surrender a firearms licence when it is revoked.<br>Failing to deliver arms items or ammunition to Police on demand if licence has been surrendered or revoked. |
| 34 | Failing to give Police written notice of change of address within 30 days of the change.<br>Endorsement holder who intends to change address failing to notify Police of arrangements made for the safe custody of a pistol, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine or restricted weapon during the shift.<br>You can update your address online at MyFirearms, see Te Tari Pūreke website. |

| Arms Act (section) | Offence |
|---|---|
| **36** | Carrying a pistol, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine or restricted weapon beyond the person's dwelling, unless in accordance with the conditions endorsed on the licence by Police. |
| **38** | Failing to (a) give at least four days' notice of intention to remove a pistol, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine or restricted weapon from New Zealand, and (b) deliver to Police their firearms licence for amendment of the endorsement. |
| **42** | Tampering with or altering the details of any firearms licence; using a licence that is tampered with; allowing another person to use your licence; using another person's licence; and supplying false information in a licence application. |
| **43** | Selling or supplying a firearm (other than a pistol, prohibited item, or restricted weapon) to someone who does not hold a licence. Supplying an airgun to a person who is under the age of 18 years who does not have a firearms licence. |
| **43AA** | Selling or supplying prohibited ammunition without reasonable excuse. |
| **43A** | Selling firearms, magazines or parts that are non-prohibited, pistol carbine conversion kits, airguns or ammunition by mail order or on the internet without a written order signed by the purchaser and containing an authorising statement from Police and Police signature.<br><br>Selling prohibited firearms, prohibited magazines, pistols or restricted weapons by mail order or on the internet to a purchaser who does not have the required endorsement and permit to possess with courier specified. |
| **44** | Selling or supplying a pistol or restricted weapon to someone who does not have a permit to possess or an import permit. |
| **44AA** | Selling or supplying, without reasonable excuse, a pistol carbine conversion kit to someone who does not have a permit to possess or an import permit. |
| **44A** | Selling or supplying, without reasonable excuse, a prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine to someone who does not have a permit to possess or an import permit. |
| **44B** | Selling or supplying, without reasonable excuse, a prohibited part to a person who does not have an endorsement to possess a prohibited firearm. |
| **45** | Carrying or possessing a firearm, airgun, prohibited magazine, restricted weapon or explosive without a lawful, proper and sufficient purpose. |
| **46** | Carrying an imitation firearm without a lawful, proper and sufficient purpose. |
| **47** | Being in charge of a firearm, airgun, pistol or restricted weapon while under the influence of drink or drugs to the extent they are incapable of having proper control of the firearm, etc. |
| **48** | Discharging, without reasonable excuse, a firearm, airgun, pistol or restricted weapon in or near a dwelling house or public place so as to endanger property or to endanger, annoy or frighten any person. |
| **49** | Using, discharging, or carrying certain firearms without some lawful, proper and sufficient purpose. |
| **49A** | Being in possession of a firearm, prohibited magazine, prohibited part or airgun after revocation of firearms licence. |

| Arms Act (section) | Offence |
|---|---|
| **50** | Unlawful possession of a pistol or restricted weapon. |
| **50AA** | Unlawful possession of pistol carbine conversion kit. |
| **50A** | Unlawful possession of prohibited firearm. |
| **50B** | Unalwful possession of a prohibited magazine. |
| **50C** | Unlawful possession of a prohibited part. |
| **50CA** | Unlawful possession of prohibited ammunition. |
| **50D** | Carrying or possessing a prohibited firearm in a public place, without lawful purpose. |
| **51** | Without lawful purpose carries or possesses a firearm (other than a prohibited firearm), airgun, pistol, restricted weapon, ammunition or explosive in a public place. |
| **51A** | Presents at another person a prohibited firearm or something that is likely to be believed to be a prohibited firearm, unless there is a lawful purpose for this. |
| **52** | Presenting a firearm (other than a prohibited firearm), airgun, pistol or restricted weapon (or something that is likely to be believed to be such an item), whether loaded or not, at any person, except for some lawful or sufficient purpose. |
| **53** | Causing bodily injury or the death of another person by carelessly using a firearm, airgun, pistol or restricted weapon.<br>Leaving a loaded firearm, airgun, pistol or restricted weapon in a place in such circumstances as to endanger the life of any person.<br>Discharges or otherwise deals with a firearm, airgun, pistol or restricted weapon in a manner likely to injure or endanger the safety of another person or with reckless disregard for the safety of others. |
| **53A** | Using or attempting to use a prohibited firearm with intent to resist or prevent arrest of themselves or another person.<br>Possessing a prohibited firearm at the time of committing an offence punishable by 3 years' imprisonment or more. |
| **54** | Using or attempting to use an airgun, imitation firearm, restricted weapon, ammunition or explosive to resist or prevent arrest of themselves or another person.<br>Possessing a firearm (other than a prohibited firearm), airgun, pistol, imitation firearm, restricted weapon, ammunition or explosive at the time of committing an offence punishable by imprisonment for 3 or more years. |
| **54A** | Carrying a prohibited firearm with intent to commit an offence. |
| **55** | Carrying a firearm (other than a prohibited firearm), airgun, pistol, imitation firearm, restricted weapon, ammunition or explosive with intent to commit an offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of 3 years or more, or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another person. |
| **55A** | Assembling a prohibited firearm, or converting a firearm into a prohibited firearm, without a lawful purpose. |

| Arms Act (section) | Offence |
|---|---|
| **55B** | Endorsement holder failing to produce pistol, restricted weapon, prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine to Police on demand, or to permit Police inspection of the item or the place where it is kept, or to enter that place. |
| **55C** | Failing to produce a firearm (other than pistol, restricted weapon, or prohibited firearm) to Police on demand or to permit Police inspection of the firearm or the place where it is kept, or to enter that place. |
| **55D** | Manufacturing or assembling, or entering into an arrangement to manufacture or assemble, a firearm or restricted weapon using parts illegally manufactured, imported or trafficked.<br>Intentionally manufacturing for sale or other supply certain arms items or arranging to do this, without a dealer's licence.<br>Intentionally failing to mark a manufactured firearm, part of a firearm, or pistol carbine conversion kit in accordance with the Act or regulations. |
| **55E** | Moving, delivering, etc., arms items or ammunition into New Zealand; from New Zealand to another country; or, through or across New Zealand to another country, or arranging to do this, without lawful authority (or, in some cases, without complying with marking requirements). |
| **55F** | Marking a firearm with false identifying marking at time of manufacture or when it is imported. |
| **55G** | Obliterating, removing or altering a marking on a firearm or part, without reasonable excuse. |
| **56** | Obstructing a member of Police in the exercise of any right of entry, search, seizure or detention conferred by the Arms Act. |
| **58** | Failing to report injury or death caused by use of a firearm, airgun, pistol, or restricted weapon. |
| **59(4)** | Failing to comply with a notice regarding unsafe firearm or pistol. |
| **66A** | Not advising the Police when a firearm, prohibited magazine, prohibited part, or restricted weapon is lost, stolen or destroyed. |
| **66B** | Refusing to give full name, address and date of birth if requested by the Police when in possession of an arms item or ammunition; or giving false particulars. |
| **66C** | Failing to comply with a notice from Police to surrender an airgun or antique firearm. |

| Other legislation | |
|---|---|
| **Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004, clause 7.21** | Operating a vehicle carrying a firearm, airgun, or restricted weapon that is loaded (whether in its breech, barrel, chamber or magazine), unless:<br>» For Police or NZ Defence Force purposes;<br>» Under the authority of a permit issued by a constable who is of or above the level of position of inspector. |

# Appendix 2

## Visitor licences and firearms licence endorsements

A visitor licence is issued specifically for visitors to New Zealand, who intend to be in New Zealand for less than one year and hold a current firearms licence from a country that is recognised by New Zealand Police as having a licensing system which is comparable to New Zealand's.

A visitor licence may be issued for a period of time not exceeding 12 months or until the visitor leaves New Zealand, whichever is sooner.

A visitor who holds a visitor licence may not, during their stay in New Zealand, acquire ownership of any firearm or restricted weapon for possession in New Zealand.

Returning New Zealand citizens, residents or recent immigrants should apply for a **New Zealand firearms licence**. The visitor licence is not issued to new arrivals pending an application for, or a decision on, a New Zealand firearms licence.

For further information on endorsements available to visitors to New Zealand, go to Te Tari Pūreke website.

## What are firearms licence endorsements?

Licence holders and licence applicants who want to possess pistols, restricted weapons, prohibited firearms or prohibited magazines require a specific endorsement on their licence and a permit for each item.

Obtaining an endorsement and permit is a two-part process:

- First, the licence holder (or applicant for a firearms licence) applies for the relevant endorsement capacity type below. A further vetting process will be carried out and more stringent security arrangements are required for these kinds of firearms and weapons and are a condition on all of these endorsements (regulation 28).
- Then, before taking a particular pistol, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine or restricted weapon into their possession, the person needs to obtain a permit (to possess or import) that item (except for dealer employees handling their employer's arms items – see below).

For further information on endorsements, go to the Te Tari Pūreke website.

| Type of firearm/weapon and endorsement capacity | Endorsement details |
|---|---|
| **Pistol**<br>» **Pistol club member** | Required where the licence holder seeks to possess a pistol in their capacity as a member of an incorporated pistol shooting club that is recognised by the Commissioner.<br>» Endorsement holder may use the pistol on their endorsement only for target pistol shooting on a pistol range approved by the Commissioner of Police (Arms Regulations 1992, reg 22(1)(a)).<br>» Endorsement holder must actively participate in the activities of the pistol club by taking part in club activities on the pistol range used by that club on at least 12 days in each year (Arms Regulations 1992, reg 22(1)(b)).<br>» Endorsement holder may not carry pistols beyond the curtilage of their dwelling unless authorised by conditions endorsed on their licence by Police. Usually authority will be limited to carriage to a pistol club range, a Police station, a licensed dealer or a gunsmith for the purposes of repair (Arms Act, section 36). |
| **Pistol / restricted weapon / prohibited firearm / prohibited magazine**<br>» **Bona fide collector of firearms** | Required where the licence holder seeks to possess a pistol, restricted weapon, prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine in their capacity as a bona fide collector of firearms.<br>» The licence holder must be 18 years or older if applying for an endorsement to possess prohibited firearms and/or prohibited magazines.<br>» Legislative reference: sections 29(2)(b), 30A(1), and 4A(1)(b) Arms Act 1983.<br>**Conditions**<br>» Any restricted weapons or prohibited firearms possessed under this endorsement must be rendered inoperable by the removal of a vital part and maintained in an inoperable condition. In addition, in the case of a prohibited firearm, the removed vital part must be kept at a separate address approved by Police (sections 32(1)(b), 33A(1)(c)).<br>» Items held on this endorsement cannot be used with live ammunition (reg 22(2), section 33A(1)(c)(i)).<br>» Endorsement holder may not carry these arms items beyond the curtilage of their dwelling unless authorised by conditions endorsed on their licence by Police. Usually authority will be limited to carriage to a Police station, or a place at which there is to be held an organised sale or exhibition and the item is to be displayed at that place (Arms Act, section 36). |

| Type of firearm/weapon and endorsement capacity | Endorsement details |
|---|---|
| **Pistol / restricted weapon / prohibited firearm / prohibited magazines**<br>» **Heirloom or memento** | Required where the licence holder seeks to possess a pistol, restricted weapon, prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine in their capacity as a person to whom such an item has special significance as an heirloom or memento.<br>The applicant must be 18 years or older if applying for an endorsement to possess prohibited firearms and/or prohibited magazines.<br>Legislative reference: sections 29(2)(c), 30A(1) and 4A(1)(c) Arms Act 1983.<br>**Conditions**<br>» Items held on this endorsement cannot be used with live ammunition (reg 22(2), section 33A(1)(c)(i)).<br>» Any restricted weapons or prohibited firearms possessed under this endorsement must be rendered inoperable by the removal of a vital part and maintained in an inoperable condition. In addition, in the case of a prohibited firearm, the removed vital part must be kept at a separate address approved by Police (sections 32(1)(b), 33A(1)(c)).<br>» The arms items may be possessed only within the curtilage of the endorsement holder's dwelling, except as permitted in writing in a particular case by Police (see section 36). |
| **Pistol / restricted weapon / prohibited firearm / prohibited magazines**<br>» **Theatre, film, and television** | Required where the licence holder seeks to possess a pistol, prohibited firearm, prohibited magazine or restricted weapon in their capacity as an approved employee or approved member of a broadcaster, bona fide theatre company or society or cinematic or television film production company or video recording production company.<br>The applicant must be 18 years or older if applying for an endorsement to possess prohibited firearms and/or prohibited magazines.<br>» A person applying for this endorsement must be an employee or member approved in writing by the chief executive of the relevant body (s29(3)).<br>» Legislative reference: 29(2)(e), 29(3), 30(1)(c), 30A(1), 4A(1)(e) and 30B(3) Arms Act 1983.<br>**Conditions**<br>The pistols, restricted weapons, and prohibited firearms must remain inoperable except for blank firing. |

| Type of firearm/weapon and endorsement capacity | Endorsement details |
|---|---|
| **Prohibited items**<br>» **Various capacities involved in wild animal recovery or controlling wild animals or animal pests (section 4A(1)(f) to (j))** | Required where the licence holder seeks to possess a prohibited firearm or prohibited magazine in their capacity as:<br>» A person employed or engaged by the Department of Conservation and involved in operations for the purpose of controlling wild animals or animal pests (in accordance with the Wildlife Act 1953, the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, the Conservation Act 1987, or the Biosecurity Act 1993).<br>» A person who holds a concession granted by the Minister of Conservation to undertake wild animal recovery operations (in accordance with the Wildlife Act 1953, the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, the Conservation Act 1987, and the Biosecurity Act 1993).<br>» A person employed or engaged by a management agency as defined in section 100 of the Biosecurity Act 1993 and involved in operations for the purpose of controlling wild animals or animal pests in accordance with that Act.<br>» A person whose sole business, or a substantial part of whose business, is providing services to control prescribed wild animals or animal pests, or a person employed or engaged by that person for that purpose.<br>» A person who is the owner or manager, or is an employee, of an agricultural, a horticultural, or a silvicultural business, if there is a real possibility that the commercial viability of the business would be detrimentally affected to a significant extent by the presence of prescribed wild animals or animal pests on any land used for that business (subject to prescribed limits, if any).<br>The applicant must be 18 years or older.<br>» Legislative reference: sections 30A(1) and 4A(1)(f) to (j) Arms Act 1983.<br>**Conditions**<br>The duration of the endorsement is 2 years and 6 months unless the relevant firearms licence is surrendered or revoked or expires sooner (s33C).<br>The endorsement cannot be granted unless Police is satisfied that the person has a genuine need to possess the prohibited item, the prohibited item will only be used solely for the purpose of controlling wild animals or animal pests, and that purpose cannot be effectively achieved by the use of non-prohibited items (s30B(4)). |

| Type of firearm/weapon and endorsement capacity | Endorsement details |
|---|---|
| **Pistol / restricted weapon / prohibited firearm / prohibited magazine**<br>» **Employee of a licensed dealer** | Legislative references: sections 29(2)(f), 30A(3), 11.<br>This endorsement is only for the handling of the dealers pistols, restricted weapons, prohibited firearms or prohibited magazines in the course of the dealer employee's employment.<br>The endorsement is for the duration of the employment with the dealer and ceases to be in force when the employee ceases to be employed by the dealer or when the dealer's licence expires or is surrendered or revoked (section 33C).<br>The endorsement does not allow the dealer employee to apply for a permit to possess any pistols, restricted weapons, prohibited firearms and/or prohibited magazines or pistol carbine conversion kits (section 35AAA(2)(b), 35(2A) and 35A(2A), Arms Act 1983). |

**Notes:**

» All endorsements are subject to a condition that additional security precautions required by the regulations are observed (refer to Arms Regulations 1992, regulation 28).

» For definitions and further information on prohibited firearms or items, go to the Arms Act 1983.

# Appendix 3

## Recommended contents for your first aid kit

| Contents | |
|---|---|
| **Item** | **Use/Description** |
| **Off-the-shelf first aid kit** | General minor injuries, such as cuts, bruises, sprains, abrasions, allergies, rashes, stings. |
| **Tourniquet (TQ)** | For arterial occlusion, especially on the limbs when other methods have failed. Ensure you buy a quality tourniquet and have had training in its use. |
| **Nitrile gloves** | Reduce chances of infection. Nitrile is less likely to puncture or have allergy issues unlike latex gloves. |
| **Emergency Compression Bandage (commonly called an Israeli Bandage)** | A specially-designed bandage to help stop bleeding from haemorrhagic (a copious discharge of blood, as from a ruptured blood vessel) wounds. |
| **Hemostat wound dressing** | A dressing containing a haemostatic agent (stops bleeding) to provide temporary external control of traumatic bleeding, can be used with a tourniquet or in places where a TQ can't be placed. Ensure you follow the instructions on the manufacturers packaging. |
| **Cotton compressed gauze** | For absorbing fluids or packing wounds. |
| **Emergency blanket** | Retains body heat during shock. Waterproof and windproof. Can be used to treat hypothermia. Consider a Hypothermia Prevention Management Kit if hunting in extreme environments. |
| **Vented chest seals** | Applied when patient has suffered a penetrating chest wound/s (open pneumothorax or "sucking chest wound"). |
| **Shears** | For the rapid and safe cutting away of clothing and equipment to access the wound site. |
| **Sterile bandages** | Several different sizes for splints and general use. |
| **Quick reference card** | Lists basic first aid skills and procedures. |
| **Strips of duct tape** | Sealing dressings, improvised options. |
| **Marker pens** | For writing times/meds on a tourniquet or the injured person. |

# Appendix 4

## Glossary

| English | Māori |
|---|---|
| **action (of a firearm)** | rua kariri |
| **ACTION (state)** | RITE (āhua) |
| **actively supervising** | āta whakahaere |
| **airgun** | pū hau |
| **ammunition** | hāmanu |
| **barrel** | māngai |
| **beyond all doubt** | kia ea katoa ngā rangirua |
| **blanks** | kariri wātea |
| **bolt** | tūtaki |
| **bolt-action** | rua kariri-tūtaki |
| **bore** | kōwiringa |
| **break-open** | wāhi-tuwhera |
| **breech** | wāhanga o muri |
| **bullet** | matā |
| **butt** | reke |
| **calibre** | kūpara |
| **(live) cartridge** | kariri (hou) |
| **centrefire** | puhipokapū |
| **chamber (of a firearm)** | poka kāta |
| **choke** | nanati |
| **discharge** | whakapakū(tia) |
| **drill round** | hāmanu whakangungu |
| **effective range** | toronga papai |
| **endorsement** | whakamana |
| **field of fire** | whānuitanga o tō pupuhi |
| **fire** | puhi |
| **firearms range** | papa pupuhi pū |

| English | Māori |
|---|---|
| **firearms user** | kaiwhakamahi pū |
| **firing zone** | takiwā pupuhi |
| **game animals** | kararehe kēmu |
| **gauge** | ine |
| **gunsmith** | mātanga whakatika pū |
| **handgun** | pū mau ringa |
| **hang fire** | puhi takaroa |
| **image intensifiers** | pūrere whakakaha ata |
| **immediate and personal supervision** | whakahaerenga pātata tonu, ā-whaiaro hoki |
| **incident** | maiki |
| **INSTANT (state)** | TIKA TONU (āhua) |
| **lever** | kauwhiti |
| **lever-action** | rua kariri-kauwhiti |
| **LOAD (state)** | WHAKARITEA (āhua) |
| **magazine** | kopa matā |
| **magazine well** | wahi kopa matā |
| **maximum range** | toronga mōrahi |
| **misfire** | puhi kore |
| **missile** | hoata |
| **muzzle** | ngutu |
| **muzzleloader** | pū whāngai ngutu |
| **night vision device** | pūrere kite i te pō |
| **night vision equipment** | taputapu whakaahua ā-pō |
| **non-prohibited firearms** | pū rāhui-kore |
| **off (safety catch)** | reri (kati) |
| **on (safety catch)** | tau (kati) |

| English | Māori |
|---|---|
| **(optical) sight** | karu (ōmata) |
| **optics** | pūwhatu |
| **pellets** | hāmoamoa |
| **pistol** | pītara |
| **pistol carbine conversion kits** | kete whakaumu pītara |
| **(positively) identify your target beyond all doubt** | āta tautohu rawa pū i tāu whāinga kia ea katoa ngā rangirua |
| **positively identifying** | āta tautohu tika |
| **pre-charged pneumatic air rifles** | raiwhara hau ā-haurehu i whakakīia kētia |
| **primer** | matū tahu |
| **prohibited firearms** | pū rāhui |
| **prohibited item** | mea rāhui |
| **prohibited magazines** | kopa matā rāhui |
| **projectile** | pere |
| **propellant** | matū kōpana |
| **pump-action** | rua kariri-papu |
| **range** | toronga |
| **receiver** | pūwhiwhi |
| **recoil** | pana whakamuri |
| **restricted weapon** | rākau e herea ana |
| **ricochet** | riripi |
| **rimfire** | puhitapa |
| **safe direction** | aronga haumaru |
| **safety / safety catch** | kati |
| **safety precautions** | ngā whakatūpato haumaru |
| **secure** | whita |

| English | Māori |
|---|---|
| **semi-automatic** | āhua-aunoa |
| **shotgun** | pū mau pokohiwi |
| **shotgun pellet, shot** | hōta |
| **shotshell** | angahōta |
| **snap caps** | hāmanu ārai |
| **spotlights** | tīwhiri |
| **spotting scope** | karu whātata hīkawe |
| **squib loads** | puhinga ngoikore |
| **states of readiness** | ngā āhua rite o te pū |
| **stock** | raparapa |
| **supervision** | whakahaerenga |
| **target (fixed)** | keonga |
| **target (live)** | whāinga |
| **terminal ballistics** | pānga tukinga |
| **thermal imagers** | pūrere whakaahua pōkākā |
| **thermal imaging equipment** | taputapu whakaahua pōkākā |
| **trigger** | keu |
| **trigger guard** | ārai keu |
| **trigger lock** | raka keu |
| **trigger mechanism** | pūrere keu |
| **UNLOAD (state)** | WĀTEA (āhua) |
| **unload (verb)** | whakawātea |
| **unloaded** | wātea |
| **velocity** | tere whaiahu |
| **wad** | whakapuru |
| **zeroing** | whakaheipū |

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Te Tari Pūreke
Firearms Safety Authority

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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