

Participant Requirements and Code of Practice

Shooting as a pest control method is often wrongly criticised as cruel and inhumane by those opposed to or unfamiliar with firearms, firearm ownership and hunting activities. This view is usually based on ideology, misinformation or a lack of knowledge. Although shooting can be seen as a visually confronting process to some (i.e., it involves the sight of blood), this does not mean that the shooting of an animal is indeed cruel or inhumane.

A model for assessing the relative humaneness of pest animal control methods, developed in conjunction with the RSPCA and Australian Government, highlights that shooting has the lowest overall welfare impact when compared to other management tools.

Ethical hunting, as promoted by the SSAA National, ensures that animals are killed in a way that rapid death is achieved and the potential for unnecessary pain and suffering is minimised. This conduct therefore eliminates any claim or action of cruelty.

To become a participant of the SSAA Farmer Assist Program, members will need to display a competent level of proficiency in firearm use. This requirement will demonstrate an appropriate level of marksmanship equivalent to commercial macropod harvesters (professional shooters). This will counter claims by various groups that control activities should only be done by professional or paid operators. The reluctance in certain parts of the community to endorse the use of any person other than a professional is purely based on perceived animal welfare concerns. Unfortunately, paying someone to do a job doesn't necessarily mean you always get the best outcome. The skill requirements for this program will hopefully go a long way to address this issue and will help eliminate such perceptions.

SSAA National believes that animal welfare concerns are appropriately addressed in the SSAA Farmer Assist Program through the individual member's obligation to obtain the proficiency requirements and adhere to a dedicated Code of Practice. Codes of Practice are common instruments used by many industries to address and overcome animal welfare concerns. These requirements will ensure that SSAA members can display the necessary skills and knowledge to perform the task at hand in a publicly acceptable manner with high regard to animal welfare.

Firearm Proficiency Requirements

The principles of ethical hunting dictate that a hunter should make every effort to get as close as possible to the intended target and depending on circumstances, shoot from a stable supported position. A supported position involves using aids such as bipods and vehicle-mounted shooting rests, fence posts or natural objects such as trees, branches and ground-based objects.

To display the necessary marksmanship skill level to participate in this program, SSAA members will need to shoot a five-shot group within the assessment zone of the 'SSAA Farmer Assist Assessment Target' at a SSAA range. Once a member has successfully demonstrated the required marksmanship, a range officer from the range must sign-off the target. The signed target must be kept by the member and available for display to the farmer on request.

- *Rimfire assessment must be conducted at a minimum range of 50m.*
- *Centrefire assessment must be conducted at a minimum range of 100m.*

Members are able to choose their most favoured shooting position for the assessment task.

Code of Practice

All activities under the SSAA Farmer Assist Program must comply with the following Code of Practice. Any breaches may result in exclusion from the program.

Firearm Safety

All participants are required to follow safe firearm handling practices at all times.

Safe firearm handling practices include:

- Treating every firearm with the respect due a loaded firearm.
- Carry only empty firearms, taken down or with the action open, into the car, camp and home.
- Ensure that the barrel and action are clear of obstructions.
- Always carry a firearm so you can control the direction of the muzzle.
- Never point a firearm at anything you do not want to shoot.
- Never leave your firearm unattended unless you unload it first.
- Never climb a tree or a fence with a loaded firearm.
- Never shoot at a flat, hard surface or the surface of water.
- Do not mix gunpowder and alcohol.

Laws, Regulations and Permits

All participants must follow and adhere to all relevant state firearm and hunting regulations.

This also includes national guidelines such as the *National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Non-Commercial Purposes*.

If protected species require management, farmers must have valid pest mitigation or destruction permits from the appropriate state government agency approving such actions.

Permission to Hunt

All participants are required to gain permission prior to access, and hunt only on private land in which they are required and have approval to conduct their activities.

Identifying the Target

Under no circumstances should a shot be taken until the target animal is clearly seen and identified, and that any shot taken poses no discernible risk to person or property.

Animal Welfare

No unnecessary pain or suffering should be inflicted on any animal being hunted or culled. There is an obligation to achieve a rapid humane death. A rapid humane death can be achieved by:

- Targeting the animal in a way to achieve a humane kill (i.e., shot placement into the head or chest kill zone).
- A shot must be taken within the recommended kill range of the firearm and ammunition being used.
- The firearm and ammunition choice must be sufficient for the size of targeted animal to achieve a humane kill.
- If a lactating female is killed, participants must make every effort to locate and kill any dependant young as quickly and humanely as possible.
- If an animal is wounded, participants must make every effort to locate and kill the animal as quickly and humanely as possible.

Use of Dogs

If permission is granted by the landowner or manager, dogs may be used to assist in the location of target animals.

The use of any dogs must not contravene any state or territory Prevention of Cruelty to Animals laws.