

# Media release

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## Reminder to act responsibly for the start of the 2015 duck season

As the start of the 2015 duck season nears, the Game Management Authority is providing a timely reminder to all involved to act responsibly and legally.

The Game Management Authority (GMA) chief executive officer Greg Hyams encourages hunters to act responsibly, observe all relevant laws and take the time to educate new and junior hunters.

“Victoria has a long tradition of duck hunting and hunters generate significant economic activity in Victorian rural towns and regional centres,” Mr Hyams said.

“Dry condition across the state will see hunting efforts change from many of the traditional wetlands to creeks and waterways.”

“Hunters are reminded they must be licensed, use non-toxic shot, adhere to bag limits and hunting times, respect private property and use firearms safely as it is a serious offence to discharge a firearm on or across private property without the land owner’s consent.”

All licensed game bird hunters have received the new Duck WISE DVD, produced by the GMA. With the presence of both Freckled Ducks and Blue-billed Ducks at some wetlands, hunters are encouraged to watch this footage and maintain their waterbird identification skills.

Mr Hyams said authorised officers and Victoria Police will be active throughout the state to ensure hunters and protestors act in a safe and responsible manner.

“While those who oppose duck hunting have a right to protest, they must do so safely and legally. There are significant penalties should protestors unlawfully enter in, or remain on a specified hunting area, or interfere with or harass hunters,” Mr Hyams said.

“Offenders that unlawfully enter in, or remain on a specified hunting area can receive a penalty of \$8,856 and be issued with a banning notice. Magistrates can further impose exclusion orders. The penalties for breaching these notices and orders range from approximately \$2,950 to \$17,700.

“Public safety laws are in place to protect the broader community, hunters, authorised officers and protestors themselves.”

Mr Hyams said Government staff have recently conducted an annual waterbird count to check for the presence of rare or threatened species at wetlands across the state.

“Four wetlands will be fully closed for the 2015 season. Round Lake at Lake Boga will be closed to protect threatened species, Krause Swamp east of Hamilton will be closed to provide refuge for Brolga adjacent to a hunting area and Kow Swamp, east of Kerang, and Reedy Lakes at Kerang will also be closed to reinforce their status as Wildlife Sanctuaries.”

The GMA will continue to monitor wetlands throughout the season. Closed wetlands may be re-opened or further wetlands closed throughout the season. Hunters are advised to check the GMA website for updates prior to hunting.

A full bag of ten ducks, with a maximum of two Blue-winged Shoveler is permitted on the opening Saturday, and a half bag of five ducks with a maximum of one-Blue-winged Shoveler permitted for every other day of the season.

The 2015 duck hunting season will open on Saturday 21 March at 7.10am in the eastern zone, 7.20am in the central zone and 7.30am in the western zone, and close half an hour after sunset on Monday 8 June.

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