

Media release

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Reminder to act responsibly during duck season

The Game Management Authority is reminding everyone involved in the 2016 duck season to act safely, responsibly and legally.

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

“Hunters must be licensed, use non-toxic shot, adhere to bag limits and hunt only at those the times of the day when hunting is allowed,” Mr Hyams said.

“There are heavy penalties for failing to comply with the state’s hunting laws. For those hunters who choose to break the law, penalties could include fines, forfeiture of equipment used in the commission of an offence, conviction and the loss of Game and Firearms Licences.”

“Between June and December last year, the Game Management Authority cancelled the Game Licences of five hunters and we will have no hesitation in cancelling the Game Licences of those committing serious breaches of the law”, Mr Hyams said.

“In addition to losing their Game Licences, penalties for these offenders imposed by the courts included the forfeiture of firearms and other equipment, fines ranging between \$750 and \$4,500, costs awarded against them, four had convictions recorded and one had a community corrections order imposed for 220 hours of unpaid community work.”

“Dry conditions across the state this year will see hunting efforts change from many of the traditional wetlands utilized in past seasons to creeks and waterways this time.”

“Hunters must 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.”

The 2016 Victorian Hunting Guide containing current duck hunting regulations and the Duck WISE DVD for maintaining water bird identification skills are both available at www.gma.vic.gov.au

Mr Hyams said authorised officers and Victoria Police will be active throughout the state to ensure hunters and protestors act in a safe and lawful 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 obstruct, interfere with, hinder or harass hunters,” Mr Hyams said.

Offenders who unlawfully enter in or remain on a specified hunting area can receive a penalty of approximately \$9,100 and be issued with a banning notice. Magistrates can further impose exclusion orders. The penalties for breaching these notices and orders range from approximately \$3,030 to \$18,200.

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

“One protestor was recently found guilty and convicted of breaching the public safety laws and is the subject of an exclusion order. Failure to comply with that order could result in a substantial fine”, Mr Hyams said.

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

Three wetlands will be closed for the 2016 season to protect threatened species, including: Round Lake at Lake Boga, Heywood Lake State Game Reserve at Boundary Bend, and Johnson Swamp State Game Reserve near Kerang. Kow Swamp near Gunbower and Reedy Lakes near Kerang will be closed to reinforce their sanctuary status.

The GMA will continue to monitor wetlands throughout the season. Closed wetlands may be re-opened or further wetlands closed throughout the season.

Hunters and protestors must be mindful of the recent blue-green algae outbreak along the Murray Valley as coming into contact with or ingesting blue-green algae can pose significant health risks to humans and dogs.

"The identified areas may change. It is important to keep up to date with the most relevant information in relation to blue-green algae in affected areas. Visit www.emergency.vic.gov.au/bluegreenalgae for further information", Mr Hyams said.

The 2016 duck hunting season will open on Saturday 19 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 13 June.

The daily bag limit has been reduced to eight birds on the first day of the season and four birds per day for everyday thereafter. Also, the Blue-winged Shoveler must not be hunted in 2016.

Details of the 2016 duck season will be regularly updated on the Game Management Authority website www.gma.vic.gov.au

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