

FACT SHEET

How to humanely dispatch a downed duck using the pithing method

Responsible duck hunting requires downed ducks to be immediately recovered and dispatched humanely.

By law, hunters must make all reasonable efforts to immediately recover downed ducks. Hunters must stop shooting until the downed duck is recovered. On recovery, the wounded ducks must be immediately killed (i.e. dispatched).

This fact sheet explains how to humanely dispatch a wounded downed duck using swatter loads and the pithing method. If possible and safe to do so, using a swatter load is the preferred method to humanely dispatch a duck.

The pithing method can be used on an unconscious duck if firing a swatter load is not possible or safe. Please refer to the *Guidelines for how to humanely dispatch downed ducks* for more detailed information.

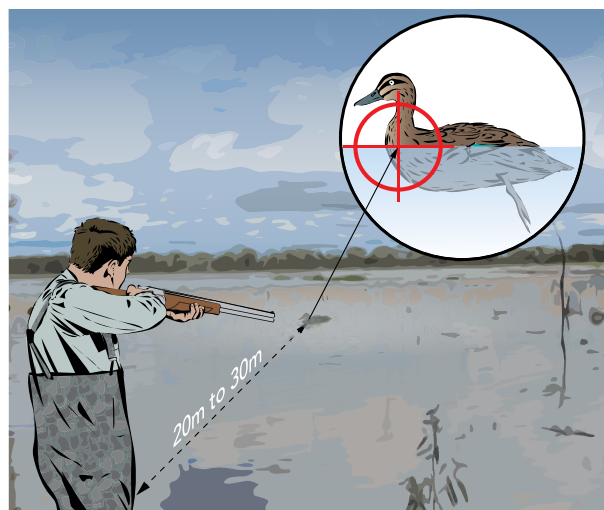
Swatter loads

Swatter loads are shotshells with small shot sizes that produce a dense pattern.

Firing a swatter load is the quickest way to dispatch a downed duck and should be your first course of action but only if safe to perform. The most effective steel shot sizes are numbers 5, 6 and 7, fired first with your tightest choke.

Extreme caution must be used. Always consider the safety of others.

1. Check there are no people, animals or obstacles in the firing line and always think about the potential for ricochet.
2. If possible, fire a swatter load from within 30 metres.
3. Aim at the front half of the duck where its body meets the waterline and fire swatter load.
4. If you see the duck is still alive, fire a second swatter load.
5. **Upon recovery of the downed duck, confirm it is dead by checking the vital signs and performing a touch test (see next page).**



Pithing

If a swatter load can't be used to dispatch a downed duck, pithing is an alternative option when the duck has been recovered.

The pithing method should only be performed on an unconscious duck. "Pithing" means destroying the brain using a sharp, thick needle or metal probe.

If you are using a commercially available product, make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions for correct use.



Pithing tool

Hands free

If you choose to use the pithing method, you will need two hands to dispatch a downed duck. Make sure you safely disengage and secure your firearm while doing this.



Render the duck unconscious

If the duck is still alive when you recover it, you will need to render it unconscious before using the pithing method. This is done by delivering a forceful blow directly to the top of the duck's skull. Use a hard, heavy and blunt instrument such as a fishing priest, metal pipe or a steel rod.

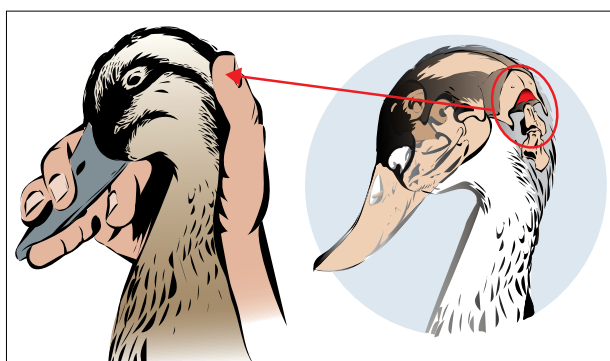
Enough force must be used to render the duck unconscious with ONE blow. Once the duck is unconscious, proceed with pithing.

If you cannot render the duck unconscious, use the cervical dislocation method as quickly as possible (see the cervical dislocation fact sheet).



Steps for pithing

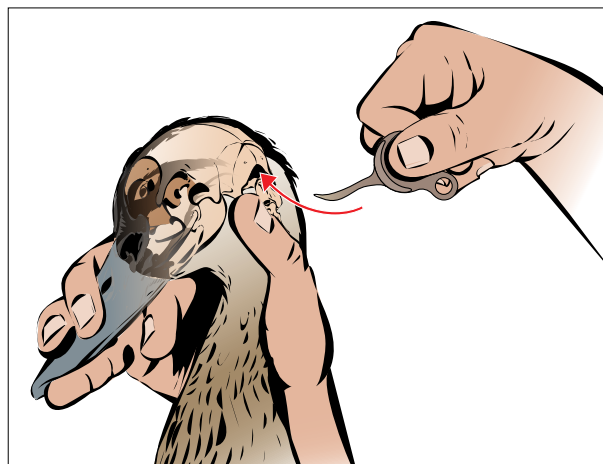
1. Secure the duck firmly by holding the duck's bill with two fingers and placing your thumb at the back of the head.
2. Find the soft spot at the back of the head, between the base of the skull and the spine.



Steps 1 and 2.

3. With the pithing tool, pierce the skin through the soft spot while angling the pithing tool upwards towards the top of the skull.
4. When the tool is in the correct position, twist it around a few times to ensure the brain is destroyed.
5. **Always confirm the duck is dead by checking the vital signs and performing a touch test.**

To perfect this technique, practice on dead ducks where possible.



Step 3.



Step 4.

Vital signs

Always check vital signs to ensure the duck is dead.

If the duck's eyes are open, its body and neck are limp, there is no movement, wings are drooping, it is not breathing, and it has no heartbeat - then you have effectively dispatched the duck.

Perform a touch test by placing one finger on the duck's eyeball. If the duck does not blink, it is dead.



'Windmilling'

'Windmilling' or swinging the duck by the neck around in an arc/circle is NOT recommended as it may not immediately kill the duck.

Unacceptable methods to dispatch downed ducks include:

- Drowning
- Suffocation
- Rib compression (thoracic compression)
- Hitting a duck's head against an object