

FACT SHEET

Hunting game birds and deer with dogs in Victoria

A number of changes to the laws for hunting game birds and deer with dogs were introduced in the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012.

These changes include:

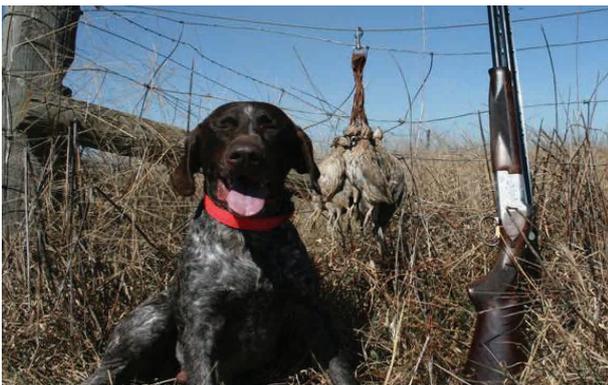
- Creating a new category of 'deer hunting dogs'.
- Allowing four new gundog breeds for deer (except Hog Deer) and game bird hunting.
- Allowing deer (except Hog Deer) to be hunted with gundogs and deer hunting dogs throughout the state.
- Allowing gundogs to be trained with the aid of 'blanks'.
- Creating an offence for dogs that maim or attack wildlife.

A number of changes have also been made to the laws relating to the use of hounds for hunting Sambar Deer in Victoria. A separate fact sheet, 'Hunting Sambar Deer with Hounds in Victoria', provides details on these changes.

Regulation of dogs used for hunting deer

Any dogs that are used for game hunting must instinctively hunt, be non-aggressive, obedient and able to be trained to obey commands from the hunter to only hunt certain types of game animals and to ignore distractions in the field. Such characteristics are found in certain dog breeds, many of which have been selectively bred over centuries for these traits.

The Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012 ensure the use of dogs for hunting game is humane and safe and any impacts on other users of public land are minimised.



A new category – 'deer hunting dogs'

Under the previous regulations, only specified gundog breeds and Beagles and Bloodhounds could be used to hunt Sambar Deer.

In response to hunters' requests to use companion dogs, some other dog breeds have been approved for hunting all game deer species, except Hog Deer. These breeds do not present an animal welfare or control risk given their size and temperament.

Under the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012, the new category of dogs permitted for deer hunting is called 'deer hunting dogs'. Only two deer hunting dogs can be used by any hunter, team of hunters or hunters working together.

The new breeds of 'deer hunting dogs' are:

- Border Terrier
- Fox Terrier (smooth)
- Fox Terrier (wire)
- German Hunting Terrier (Jagd Terrier)
- Jack Russell Terrier
- Finnish Spitz
- Norwegian Elkhound
- Dachshund

Permitted gundog breeds for game birds and deer

Breeds of gundogs have been selectively developed over centuries to either trail, flush, point or retrieve game species. These breeds have the appropriate physical and behavioural characteristics to effectively and humanely hunt deer and game birds.

Under the previous regulations, gundogs could only be used to hunt game birds and Sambar Deer. However, under the new regulations, gundogs can be used to hunt game birds and all game deer species, **except for Hog Deer**.

The new regulations maintain the list of 25 gundogs, with the addition of four more gundog breeds for game birds and deer hunting (not including Hog Deer). They are:

- Bracco Italiana
- Hungarian Wirehair Vizsla
- Lagatto Ramangolo
- Weimaraner (Long haired)

A full list of approved permitted gundog breeds is included at Part 1 of Schedule 5 of the Wildlife (Game) Regulations 2012.

The use of gundogs and deer hunting dogs

The new regulations outline requirements for the use of gundogs and deer hunting dogs.

Number of dogs

The regulations set the maximum number of gundogs and deer hunting dogs to two at any one time. This means that a person hunting alone, or hunting in a team or together with other hunters is permitted to hunt with no more than:

- two gundogs; OR
- two deer hunting dogs; OR
- a combination of one gundog and one deer hunting dog.

Deer species and hunting areas

Under the previous regulations, gundogs could only be used to hunt Sambar Deer in a particular part of the state. However, the new regulations permit all game deer species, except for Hog Deer, to be hunted with the aid of both gundogs and deer hunting dogs. This applies throughout the state, wherever hunting with dogs is permitted. However, **this does not apply to hounds** and hounds must only be used in the areas where previously allowed.

The extension of permitted areas for hunting deer with the aid of gundogs and deer hunting dogs reflects the changing distribution of deer in Victoria.

Changes to the ways dogs can be used to hunt deer and game birds

Gundog training with 'blanks'

Previously, gundogs could only be trained outside the hunting seasons with the use of a starter's pistol. However, the new regulations now allow shotguns with the use of blank ammunition to be used to train gundogs outside the hunting seasons. However, it will still be an offence to train a gundog outside the open seasons while in possession of live ammunition.

Offence for dogs to attack, bite or maim wildlife

Under the *Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals in Hunting*, any dog used to assist game hunters must instinctively hunt and must be non-aggressive, obedient and be able to be trained to obey commands from the hunter to only hunt certain types of wild animals and to ignore distractions in the field. Any dog that attacks, bites or maims wildlife, including game, must not be used.

The new regulations create an offence for a gundog or deer hunting dog that attacks, bites or maims wildlife, including game. The maximum penalty for this offence is approximately \$2,800.

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