

FACT SHEET

How to humanely dispatch a downed duck using the blunt force impact method

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

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

If possible and safe to do so, using a **swatter load** is the preferred method to humanely dispatch a duck (see **swatter loads fact sheet**). However, if it is not safe to discharge a swatter load, the blunt force impact method can be used to either render a duck unconscious before attempting to dispatch it, or to humanely dispatch it outright if undertaken with enough force.

See the *Guidelines for how to humanely dispatch downed ducks* for more information on different dispatch methods.

Blunt force impact

There are two recommended methods to apply blunt force impact:

Option 1 – Use a blunt instrument to hit the duck's head.

Option 2 – Strike the duck's head against a hard surface.

Option 1 – Use a blunt instrument to hit the head

1. Secure your firearm and make it safe so both hands are free.
2. Using a hard and heavy blunt instrument such as a fishing priest or metal rod, deliver a forceful blow to the top or the back of the duck's skull.
3. The blow can be delivered vertically or horizontally depending on how the duck is positioned.
4. Enough force must be applied to make the duck unconscious with ONE blow.
5. Confirm the duck is dead by checking the vital signs and performing a touch test (see Vital signs).

6. If the duck is not dead, check if it is unconscious (see Signs of unconsciousness).
7. If the duck is unconscious, proceed with a secondary method of dispatch (e.g. cervical dislocation or pithing – see relevant fact sheets).



Option 2 – Strike the head against a hard surface

1. Find a suitable solid surface that you will use for striking a duck's head against that will not move or compress during the impact (e.g. a log, stump, hull of a boat, rock).
2. Secure your firearm safely.
3. If the duck is small, hold the duck firmly around the abdomen so that its belly is in your palm and your fingers pin the wings against its body.



4. Hold the duck at a sufficient height to give you enough momentum to swiftly and forcefully swing downwards to strike its head against a solid surface.



5. If the duck is large, hold the duck firmly around the abdomen with both hands, with the duck's back resting on your fingers and the wings pinned against the duck's body.



6. Hold the duck with both hands at a sufficient height to give you enough momentum to swiftly and forcefully swing downwards to strike its head against a solid surface.



7. Be sure to apply enough force that ONE blow to the head is sufficient to dispatch the duck or render it unconscious.
8. Confirm the duck is dead by checking the vital signs (see Vital signs).
9. If the duck is not dead, check if it is unconscious (see Signs of unconsciousness).
10. If the duck is unconscious, proceed with a secondary method of dispatch (e.g. cervical dislocation or pithing – see the relevant fact sheet).

If you can't render the duck unconscious using blunt force impact, cervical dislocation (NOT pithing) should be used to dispatch the duck (see the **cervical dislocation fact sheet**).

Signs of unconsciousness

- Lack of eye blinking
- Lack of muscle tension in the bill and neck
- No controlled movement of the head.

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.

Other unacceptable methods to dispatch downed ducks include:

- Drowning
- Suffocation
- Rib compression (thoracic compression)