

## 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 attempts to immediately recover downed game birds. On recovery, the game birds 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 the **swatter loads fact sheet**). The pithing method can be used on an unconscious duck if firing a swatter load is not possible or safe. See the *Guidelines for how to humanely dispatch downed ducks* for more information on different dispatch methods.

### 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.

#### 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.



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



Pithing tool

### 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 or back of the duck's skull. Use a hard, heavy and blunt instrument such as a fishing priest, metal pipe or a steel rod, or strike the duck's head against a hard surface (see the **blunt force impact fact sheet**).

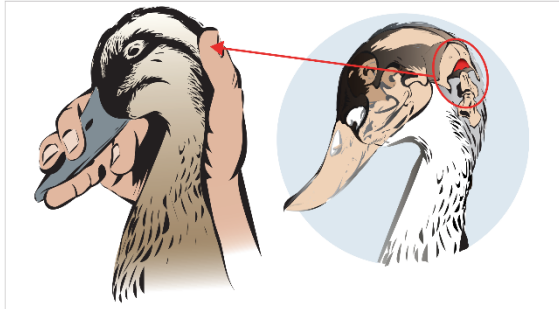
Enough force must be used to render the duck unconscious with ONE blow. Check for signs of unconsciousness (see Signs of unconsciousness). Once the duck is unconscious, proceed with pithing.

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



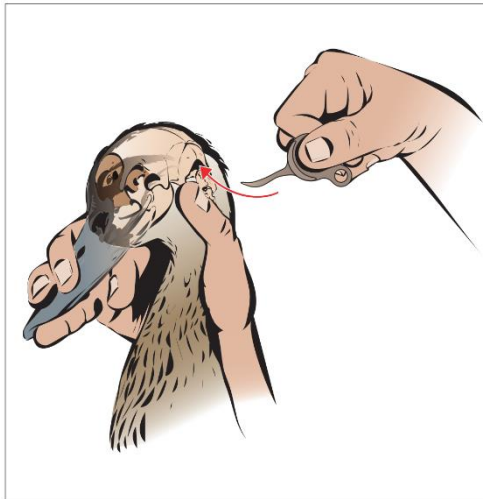
### Steps for pithing

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 the technique, practice on dead ducks where possible.

### 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)**