

FACT SHEET

How to humanely dispatch a downed duck using the swatter load 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. If firing a swatter load is not possible or safe, other dispatch methods can be used such as **blunt force impact**, **cervical dislocation** or **pithing**. Refer to the separate fact sheets for these alternative methods or the *Guidelines for how to humanely dispatch downed ducks*.

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 6 and 7. It is important that the barrel with the tightest choke is used to deliver the swatter load. This is typically the top barrel in an under/over shotgun.



Caution must be used when using swatter loads. 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 the 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 Vital signs).



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)