

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE HUMANE DESTRUCTION OF WOMBATS BY SHOOTING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Purpose of this Code

This Code sets achievable standards for the humane destruction of wombats by shooting and it applies to the following species: the Southern Hairy-nosed Wombat (*Lasiorhinus latifrons*) and the Common Wombat (*Vombatus ursinus*).

Background information

A **Permit to Destroy Wildlife** is required prior to the destruction (killing) of wombats in the wild. When making decisions on whether, or not, to grant a permit the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) assesses all environmental, economic, social and animal welfare impacts.

The destruction of wombats in the wild is time consuming and when used in isolation is rarely an effective method of control. Wombat destruction can be effective when undertaken in a strategic manner to supplement non-lethal management methods. For this reason non-lethal methods, to reduce the significant impacts caused by the wombats, must first be considered by the permit applicant and their effectiveness evaluated, before DEW will consider issuing a permit.

Legislation

In addition to the requirements of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and subordinate regulations, permit holders, and any shooters listed on the permit, should familiarise themselves with their obligations under the South Australian legislation which regulates the welfare of animals and the possession and use of firearms.

National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972

Pursuant to Sections 53(1)(c) and 53(1)(d) of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* a Permit to Destroy Wildlife is required. It is a condition of permit that permit holders, and shooters listed on the permit, must comply with this Code of Practice.

Animal Welfare Act 1985

In South Australia the welfare of animals is protected by the *Animal Welfare Act 1985*. Humane methods of killing wombats result in the rapid loss of consciousness immediately followed by death.

Under the *Animal Welfare Act 1985* a person ill-treats an animal if that person:

- Intentionally, unreasonably or recklessly causes the animal unnecessary harm,
- Having caused the animal harm fails to take reasonable steps to mitigate the harm,
- Kills the animal in a manner that causes the animal unnecessary pain,
- Unless the animal is unconscious, kills the animal by a method that does not cause death to occur as rapidly as possible.

Firearms Act 2015

In South Australia, the possession, use and sale of firearms is controlled by the *Firearms Act 2015*. This Act outlines provisions relevant to storage, transportation, and use of firearms and ammunition.

Shooting competency

Shooters should practice regularly under field conditions with the rifle they intend to use for this permit, shooting at a suitable paper target with a safe backstop, at the distances wombats would be expected to be encountered.

Rifles should be sighted-in, with shooters achieving a recommended competency of a five shot group measuring 50 mm at 100 m.

HOW TO COMPLY WITH THIS CODE OF PRACTICE

SHOOTING PROCEDURES

- The combination of firearm specifications and point of aim must meet those outlined in this Code.
- Shooters must be confident that a safe shot can be taken. The background to the target area must be free of people, non-target animals, property and infrastructure to eliminate risk of unintended injury and/or damage. Shooting of wombats should be avoided if uninvited onlookers are present.
- The shooter must be stationary. Wombats must not be shot from a moving vehicle or other moving platform.
- The targeted wombat must be stationary and the point of aim (head shot, see next page) clearly visible. To simplify carcass retrieval and confirm the animal is dead, shooters should consider the distance the wombat is to the burrow entrance when taking the shot.
- Shooters must be confident that each shot wombat is dead before another is targeted. Death can be determined by checking that there is no body movement or breathing. There will also be an absence of eye protection reflex (corneal reflex) or 'blink'.
- All reasonable steps must be taken to inspect carcasses to confirm death and check for pouch young. If present, pouch young must be destroyed immediately in accordance with the specified methods outlined in this Code.
- Where an individual wombat is shot, but not killed, no further wombats can be shot until all reasonable efforts have been made to kill the injured animal by a second shot. If a second shot to the head is not possible a shot to the heart of an injured wombat is acceptable.
- Shooting should be avoided at times of year when dependent young at foot are present. However if young at foot are present they must be targeted first. This measure is necessary to prevent the inhumane death of dependent young that are unable to survive on their own.

FIREARM SPECIFICATIONS

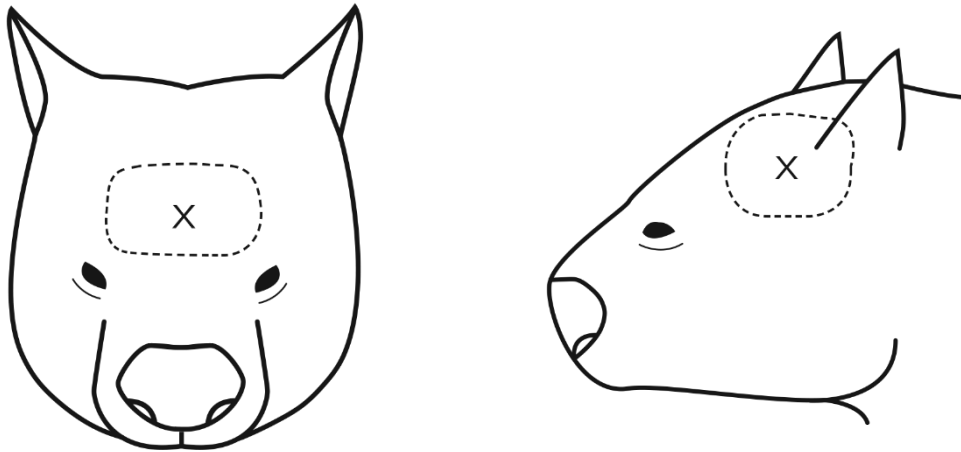
A centrefire rifle must be used.

- The minimum acceptable cartridge to be used is .22-250 with a 55 grain projectile.
- The projectile must be soft point and of a type that is not designed to fragment on impact (i.e. non-frangible).
- The maximum shooting range is 150 m.

POINT OF AIM

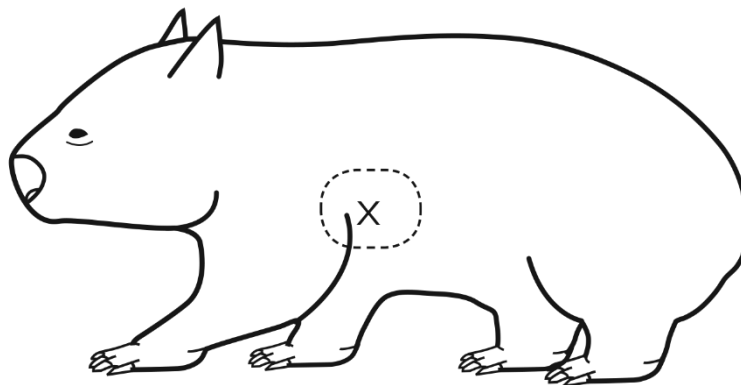
Point of aim (X) for a shot to the brain and location of the brain.

- **From the front** - The wombat is shot so that the bullet enters the skull at the intersection of diagonal lines taken from the base of each ear to the opposite eye.
- **From the side** - The wombat is shot so that the bullet enters the skull slightly behind the midpoint between the eye and the base of the ear.



Point of aim (X) for a shot to the heart and location of the heart - only acceptable if the wombat is injured and a second shot to the head is not possible.

- The wombat is shot from the side so that the bullet enters the chest at the point behind the foreleg, slightly above and immediately behind the elbow joint.
- A shot to the heart must not be attempted from the rear of a wombat as it will most likely strike the spine first and may deflect before hitting the heart, paralysing the animal and not killing it outright.



POUCH YOUNG

Care must be taken when handling pouch young to minimise unnecessary pain or distress to the animal and risk to the handler from bites or scratches. It may be necessary to carefully cut the pouch open with a sharp blade to access the young safely. If the joey is permanently fused to the teat and needs to be removed cut the base of the teat with a sharp blade and lift from the pouch. Do NOT pull it off the teat.

Sudden and painless death of the joey can be achieved by the following methods for each corresponding developmental stage		
Acceptable method	Description	Developmental stage
Decapitation	Rapidly severing the head from the body using a sharp blade.	Furless, pink skin. Less than 40 mm in length. Eyes closed, mouth permanently fused to the teat.
Stunning followed by decapitation or A single forceful blow to the base of the skull	A blow to the head with sufficient force to stun the animal followed immediately by decapitation. or A blow to the base of the skull with sufficient force to crush the skull and destroy the brain, delivered using a suitably hard and heavy blunt instrument.	Developing fine fur. Fits within the palm of the hand. Eyes just opening. May still have their mouth fused to the teat.
A single forceful blow to the base of the skull	A blow to the base of the skull with sufficient force to crush the skull and destroy the brain, delivered using a suitably hard and heavy blunt instrument.	Furred. Bigger than the palm of the hand.

EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

The following equipment must be kept well maintained and readily accessible for immediate use, as necessary:

- a sharp blade (e.g. a sharp knife or sharp scissors/shears) and
- a suitably hard and heavy blunt instrument (e.g. a large hammer).

HANDLING AND DISPOSAL OF CARCASSES

- Animals destroyed under a Permit to Destroy Wildlife are not to be utilised. If wombat carcasses are in public view they should be moved to a location out of sight or disposed of responsibly.
- Care should be taken when handling wombat carcasses as they can be heavy and wombats can carry diseases such as scabies or mange. The mites which cause these diseases can be transmitted to humans by direct contact. It is advisable to wear tough gloves when handling wombat carcasses.

Disclaimer

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE HUMANE DESTRUCTION OF WOMBATS BY SHOOTING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA, December 2018.

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