

Stop the suffering

In today's modern society we know that birds feel fear, pain and sorrow. Most of us do not tolerate any kind of animal cruelty.

Yet when it comes to our gentle native ducks, many species unique to our country, we turn their homes into war zones each year in Victoria, blasting apart their unsuspecting families in 'recreational duck shooting'.

Regional Victorians Opposed To Duck Shooting said ballistics studies showed that at least one in four of the birds shot - even by the best shooters - would not be killed outright.

"Many will flutter away wounded to die a slow painful death over days or weeks. Many others will live, only to suffer permanent injuries," a spokesperson said.

What vets say

The first thing to consider is how a shotgun works. It fires a spread of small pellets, greatly reducing accuracy but increasing the probability that something will be hit.

When a bird is shot, unless the brain, heart or a major blood vessel are struck, the animal will die in one of the following ways.

- Torn muscles / broken bones / damaged wings - the bird falls from a height of speed causing impact damage, extensive bruising / internal bleeding / more broken bones. If the bird lands in water it will likely drown.

- Birds have unique respiratory anatomy; large multiple air sacs not lungs. This increases the chance that the respiratory system is hit leading to slow asphyxiation or the bird drowning in its own blood.

- Damage to the bill / gastrointestinal tract causing it to die of starvation.

- Damage to anywhere else on the body - infection, maggots and a slow painful death.

Many shooters wouldn't consider that because a bird doesn't fall from the sky, it



A freckled duck, Australia's rarest native duck, thought to be one of the world's rarest, illegally shot in Victoria's recreational duck shooting season.

doesn't mean it wasn't hit. A bird can be shot and continue flying, dying a lingering death elsewhere.

Birds have a large silhouette compared to the area where their vital organs are and they travel fast. The likelihood of an effective kill shot is hence reduced and the chances of an animal being severely maimed increase.

It has been put another way: "Using a shotgun on ducks is as flawed as using a bus to run over a flock of chickens as a method of slaughter. Death is not guaranteed and there will most likely be heavily maimed individuals that will die a slow, painful death".

Apart from the destruction of a range of species that are important to local ecosystems, this is a cruel and ineffective way to end any animal's life.

RSPCA, vets and the government's own Animal Welfare Advisory Committee have condemned the practice of duck shooting.

Recreational duck shooting is banned in QLD, ACT, WA and NSW.