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# Duck hunt is 'lawless'

## Cruelty hotline not the answer

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PEOPLE living near wetlands claim the current duck shooting season is "completely uncontrolled" and have accused the state government of allowing shooters to "run amok with no oversight".

Despite urging the public to do in dodgy hunters, the Game Management Authority (GMA) – responsible for regulating game hunting in Victoria – only operates its cruelty hotline during business hours on weekdays.

While hunters are allowed to shoot from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset, most activity takes place outside business hours.

Locals say the unattended phone lines have led to illegal activity going unpunished, and reports of cruelty are not followed up until days later in many instances.

Karen Mander received a

response from the Game Management Authority four days after making a complaint about a hunt in central Victoria, which started before the legal time.

But the case was dropped, according to correspondence between Ms Mander and the GMA, obtained by the Herald Sun.

It took one week for the authority to respond to another report about illegal shooting in Gippsland.

That matter was also dropped.

"Illegal hunting is commonplace and nothing is being done about it," Ms Mander said.

"GMA do not have the ability – or the will – to monitor the thousands of shooting waterways around the state.

"Shooters know they can get away with it because there is no one doing anything about it."

Premier Daniel Andrews

recently pledged to take further action if authorised officers detected widespread bad behaviour.

Activists have filmed threatened species being killed, birds not being retrieved and daily bag limits being exceeded.

Laurie Levy, from the Coalition Against Duck Shooting, claimed the system was designed to protect shooters.

"The GMA's job is to look after the interests of duck shooters while it is left to concerned volunteer members of the public to look after our native waterbirds," he said.

A GMA spokeswoman said the authority worked alongside other agencies to regulate the season, and that any suspected illegal activity involving firearms should be reported to Victoria Police.

"Illegal hunting and irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated," she said.

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