

First Ever Native Stubble Quail Count in Victoria Finds Only 101 Birds Hunting regulator accused of bias - extrapolates number to over 3 million

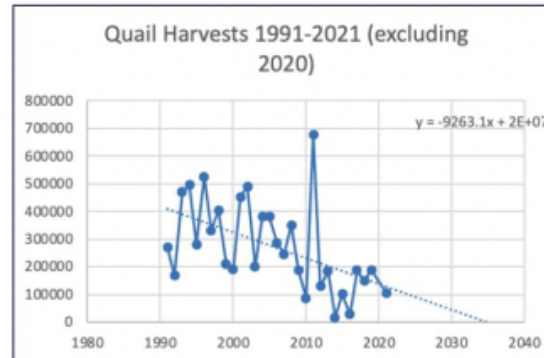
For 25% of each year in Victoria, little native Stubble Quail are pummelled with shotgun pellets in the name of recreation, despite government data on harvest estimates showing a worrying long-term decline in the bird's numbers.

Game Management Authority (GMA) arranged a first-ever count of the birds in Victoria early this year, and the resultant report it assisted in drafting, has recently been published.

The report's authors have admitted only 101 birds were counted, yet the figure was extrapolated via complex methodologies up to an extraordinary estimate of 3.1 million.

Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting inc, (RVOTDS), believes the report is not only unreliable, but clear evidence the "independent" regulator is biased and unable to effectively do its job.

"For a start, the report says quail



shooting is "popular", when less than 0.03 percent of the population participate in it" says Elizabeth McCann, Campaign Director RVOTDS. "In our group alone we have far more supporters than that who are vehemently opposed to the pastime, believing it cruel and destructive. Aside from hunter trespass issues, who wants toxic lead pumped around their paddocks?"

As for accuracy, the report's authors have previously stated that a coefficient of variation should not exceed 15% for results to be acceptable. (Abundance estimates of game ducks in Victoria, Ramsey and Fanson 2022, p 14-15). However in this quail report, there's a

coefficient of variation of 29%, in other words, the estimate of 3.1 million quail is unreliable.

To support its claims of bird numbers, the report references a survey in SA which found the stubble quail to be "abundant". But the report fails to mention that survey was performed by members of shooting clubs, and was described as lacking scientific vigour.

In an email exchange late September, the regulator advised "Long-term harvest records show no ongoing decline in harvest, which can be used as a proxy to monitor abundance". But data published on government websites (see graph), shows long term harvest decline.

The regulator has been quick to publish the report's estimate for stubble quail population, failing to detail its shortcomings, suggesting it could be an underestimate. No answer has been forthcoming from the regulator about why it couldn't also be an overestimate given its acknowledged inaccuracy. The report has not been subject to an independent peer review.