

Short quail season

Jack Evans

VICTORIA'S "recreational" native stubble quail shooting season has been cut short by two months following campaigning by Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting and the recommendations of the Game Management Authority.

The shooting season typically runs for three months from the first Saturday in April, while this year it will run from April 26 to May 30, from 8am each day.

The stubble quail is the only native quail species that can be legally hunted in the Mallee and regional Victoria and about 175,000 stubble quail are harvested each year.

A Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting spokesperson said it was great that the season had been shortened but the group hoped the season would be cancelled all together.

"The native stubble quail numbers are declining at an alarming rate, according to information from the government's harvest data," they said.

"Anecdotally, if you talk to farmers out in the Mallee, there is hardly any little stubble quail level left. It is heartbreaking."

The spokesperson said they were unsure why this was the

only species of quail still able to be hunted and a case of mistaken identity threatened other similar bird species.

"Quail shooters don't have to sit any accuracy ID tests. There is only one quail species that is legal to shoot but unfortunately it looks like the other species which are illegal to shoot.

"There is another species called a plains wanderer, which is critically endangered and looks very much like a quail species. It is very likely they are being shot during recreational shooting."

They said shooting is also having environmental impacts.

"For some reason lead is still allowed to be used in quail shooting, it is banned in duck shooting for a good reason, it is toxic," the spokesperson said.

"We estimate there would be around five tonnes of lead being pumped into Victorian environments every quail shooting season.

"We have a lot of farmers who are trying hard to have good quality produce and it getting contaminated with lead is not good for anyone."

The spokesperson said Regional Victorians Opposed to Duck Shooting would put forward information

in an upcoming inquiry with hopes quail hunting will be banned in Victoria like in other states.

Hunting organisation Field and Game Australia said the arrangements were "despite an unprecedented population estimate of nine million stubble quail in Victoria this year - up from three million in 2022".

"It seems the Outdoor Recreation Minister has struck again," the organisation said.

"This decision mirrors the duck season modifications.

"There has been no consultation with hunters ... no regard to expert advice."