

RSPCA Knowledgebase

What is the RSPCA's view on recreational hunting?

The RSPCA opposes recreational hunting, or the act of stalking or pursuing an animal and then killing it for sport, due to the inherent and inevitable pain and suffering caused.

Hunting has the potential to result in animals suffering significantly including being:

- chased to the point of exhaustion;
- killed with methods that do not cause a quick and painless death
- injured to left die a slow, painful death

Although some hunters may have the skills, knowledge and motivation to minimise the suffering of their prey, many do not and it is inevitable that some animals will endure pain and distress. With some hunting activities and practices the potential for significant suffering is extremely high, for example where animals are injured but are not retrieved, where dogs are used and are not controlled properly, where hunters lack technical skill, where killing methods do not cause rapid death, or where dependent young are left abandoned. Current regulations and enforcement regimes do not prevent these things from occurring – they are an inevitable consequence of recreational hunting activities.

One of the main concerns is that there is no requirement for a licensed hunter to demonstrate competency in being able to shoot accurately using appropriate firearm and ammunition to kill the specified target animal instantly. This means that someone who is incapable of killing an animal instantly is still granted a licence and could be responsible for the suffering of many animals.

Why do people hunt?

Although the reasons for hunting are various, the primary motivations for hunting are often classified into four broad categories:

- To gather food or skins, e.g. traditional subsistence hunting.
- For sport or recreation, including to practice specific skills (such as tracking or shooting), to secure a trophy, or as a social activity or custom,
- For environmental, conservation or damage mitigation reasons: hunting to reduce the numbers of pest animals, prevent overpopulation, thereby minimising damage to other animals, plants, or

other elements of the environment.

- For commercial harvesting for meat and other products, e.g. kangaroo harvesting, crocodile harvesting.

A survey carried out by the University of Queensland in 2012 provides an insight into what motivates hunters in Australia. The survey asked "What motivates you to hunt?" and participants were asked to select all options that applied from 8 alternatives. The results from the 6,884 responses found that the three most common reasons to hunt were to kill pest animals, for recreation and for meat (this could be game meat for the table or for feeding the dogs). However, even though 'controlling pest animals' is given as a significant motivation to hunt, there is no evidence that recreational hunting, as it is currently performed in Australia, is effective at reducing the population or impact of pest animals on a broad-scale level. Irrespective of the reasons for hunting, it will never be adequately controlled to ensure that animals will not suffer.

Recreational hunting is not generally supported by the community. In 2015, an RSPCA market research survey revealed that 3 out of 4 people opposed recreational hunting.

Also Read

-  [How does hunting affect non-target animals?](#)
-  [Is recreational hunting an effective form of pest animal management?](#)
-  [Is recreational hunting humane?](#)
-  [RSPCA Policy C10 Hunting of animals for sport](#)
-  [Which animals can be hunted for sport or recreation?](#)

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