

# The 99 Most Common Australian Hunting Questions

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## Firearms & licencing

### 1. How old do you have to be to get your firearms license?

- a. In Victoria, NSW, ACT and the NT you can get your junior firearms license from 12 years old and in Queensland you only have to be 11 years old.
- b. In Tasmania young people aged 12 years old may apply for a permit that allows them to use a firearm on an approved range under supervision. A Tasmanian aged 14 years may apply for a permit that allows them to use a firearm in the field and on a firearms range.
- c. Once you are 18 you can get your full firearm license in any state of Australia, with the exception of SA where you can get your license if you are 15 years old and working on a farm.

### 2. Do I need a license to hunt with a bow?

- a. If you are hunting game animals (deer) in Victoria in state forest or crown land you require a Game license to hunt with a bow. However, you do not need a license to hunt pigs, foxes, rabbits or goats with a bow in crown land.
- b. In NSW in order to hunt state forest with a bow you need an R-license.

### 3. How many firearms can you own in Australia?

- a. There is currently no limit to the amount of firearms you can own in Australia.

### 4. When I buy a firearm and take it home that day?

- a. No. When you purchase a firearm you also need to buy a firearm permit which takes time to process. This processing time could be as short as 24 hours, 2 weeks or longer.
- b. Some states like Victoria also have a mandatory waiting period of 28 days from the date in which you purchase your first firearm before the permit can be issued.

### 5. Can you buy a second hand and firearm?

- a. Yes, you can. Ultimately the purchase is made through a gun shop, even if it's advertised on a website.

### 6. Can I buy a friend's firearm?

- a. Yes, you can, but the sale and transfer must be made through a registered firearm seller like a gun shop.

### 7. Can you hunt with a handgun in Australia?

- a. No. Handguns require a special license and can only be fired at an approved hunting range.

### 8. Can you own semi-automatic or fully automatic rifles in Australia?

- a. Only farm owners or pest control experts with a Category D license are able to own semi-automatic rifles for professional use.
  - b. Fully automatic rifles fall under the Category R and are heavily restricted.
- 9. Are you allowed to use a firearm if you have a blood alcohol level over 00.00**
- a. No
- 10. What are the most common firearm license categories hunters have?**
- a. Most hunters have a category A & B license which allows them to own and use double and single-barrel shotguns & rimfire (category A ) and centerfire rifles and lever action shotguns (category B).
- 11. Can you own ammunition for a caliber not listed on your firearm license?**
- a. No. You can only own ammunition for the firearm category you are licensed for.
- 12. What is the best caliber for a new hunter?**
- a. .22 .223 or 243. Once you're confident with those and want to hunt big game you can then move up to 30 calibers
- 13. Can you borrow a friend's firearm?**
- a. Yes, as long as your firearm license specifies that you can own that category.
- 14. Is there anything I need to do to maintain a firearm?**
- a. Yes, you regularly need to 'zero' or sight in a rifle if it has a scope
  - b. You will also need to clean your firearm every 6 months or so.
- 15. Will my firearm rust?**
- a. If you leave your firearm in a safe without a safe moisture absorber or dehumidifier it will rust.
  - b. You should also wipe down your rifle after a wet hunt.
- 16. Is there a limit to how much ammo you can own in Australia?**
- a. In Western Australia and Queensland, there is no limit on the amount of bullets bought at one time.
  - b. In South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria, gun owners can buy as much ammunition as is considered "reasonable" for their needs.
  - c. In Tasmania, there are limitations on the amount of ammunition a person can acquire or possess, depending on the type of firearm and the genuine reason relating to the firearm license. However, the specific amount of ammunition the laws cite is vague.
- 17. If you have a firearm license from your home state can you hunt in other states?**
- a. For a short period of time yes, but if you change your address to that state you'll need to apply for a firearm license within that state. The exception is WA where you need to get a 'Temporary WA Firearms Permit.' to hunt there.
- 18. Apart from a firearm license, what kind of additional hunting license do I need to hunt in Australia?**
- a. None for hunting on private land
  - b. R-license for hunting state forest in NSW
  - c. Game license for hunting deer in Victorian state forest, ducks or quail.
- 19. Where can I hunt in Australia?**
- a. NSW (with an R-license), Victoria and Tasmania have millions of hectares of state forest you can hunt. Everywhere else in Australia only allows hunting on

private property. I've got a useful video covering this topic on The Huntsman channel.

## Storage

- 1. Are there rules on how you store a firearm in Australia?**
  - a. Yes, firearms must be stored in a safe. Different firearm categories (A, B, C and D) all have different storage rules. The sizes, weights, locking mechanisms, safe wall thicknesses and mounting options are different for each state.
- 2. Can you buy a firearm first, then buy the safe later?**
  - a. No, that's illegal
- 3. Can ammunition be stored in the same safe as your firearms?**
  - a. Ammunition must be stored separately from the firearms. However, they can be in the same safe if that safe has a separate lockable box that requires an additional key to unlock it.

## Firearm Safety

- 1. When should I load my rifle?**
  - a. Put your magazine into your rifle when you start hunting. If you're new to hunting only load a round into your rifle when you positively identify the animal and are ready to shoot.
- 2. What safety precautions should I take when handling a rifle?**
  - a. Never point it at anyone
  - b. Always know when you've got a round in the chamber
  - c. Use your safety
  - d. Never climb a fence or log with a rifle in your hands, pass it over or under first.
  - e. Keep your finger away from the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
  - f. Always check the chamber of the rifle for a live round before you put it away.
- 3. I dropped my rifle in the dirt and clogged the barrel, is it still ok to shoot?**
  - a. No. You need to clean the barrel with a 'bore snake' to remove the dirt otherwise you risk exploding the barrel on your next shot. There are different size bore snakes for different firearm calibers.

## Hunting

- 1. How long does it usually take for a new hunter to get their first big game animal?**
  - a. Differs for every hunter, but 12 - 24 months is fairly standard before a new hunter would take down a large animal.
- 2. How many times should I hunt the same area changing locations?**

- a. If you don't see animal prints, game trails or poo in your first scouting mission don't go back. Find another spot.
3. **How important is the direction or strength of the wind when hunting?**
  - a. The most important element during any hunt is the wind. If the wind is blowing at your back or changing directions rapidly you will never see animals, it has to be consistently blowing in your face to prevent your scent from getting to the animals before you do.
4. **What should signs indicate animals have been in an area**
  - a. Wallows, rubs, scrapes for deer
  - b. Scat (poo) and prints for all animals
  - c. Well-used game trails
  - d. Carcasses for predators (foxes, wild dogs and dingos)
5. **What can you tell me about animal prints**
  - a. They are most visible after rain
  - b. The deeper the track the more recent it is.
  - c. The track will indicate what direction the animal is heading and whether the animal was walking, running, or startled.
  - d. If there is bent grass stuck to the bottom of the track it's fresh
6. **When is the best time to hunt deer?**
  - a. Right before sunrise and sunset.
  - b. Or during the night if you are using thermals or spotlights on private property.
7. **Can you hunt with dogs in Australia?**
  - a. Yes, you can.
  - b. Hunting pigs with 'pig dogs' is common in Queensland and 170 state forests of New South Wales.
  - c. There are also 19 state forests in New South Wales that allow pig-dog hunting at night.
  - d. You can hunt deer with certain breeds of dogs in Victoria (except Hog Deer)
8. **Is there a limit to how many dogs you can hunt with?**
  - a. Yes, in Victoria you can only hunt with a maximum of 2 dogs.
9. **Any quick tips for shooting?**
  - a. Slow your breathing and relax your hands.
  - b. Always try and stabilize your firearm (on a bag, against a tree, using a shooting stick or bipod)
  - c. Slowly squeeze the trigger, don't pull
  - d. Keep your eye looking through the scope after the shot, don't look up.
  - e. Listen for the bullet impact (especially prominent if you've hit the chest)
  - f. Watch for where the bullet impacts (on the animal causing it to fall or leap, or on a tree, or dirt).
10. **How do I scout hunting areas effectively?**
  - a. Do your research with Google Maps (satellite mode). Mark out a grid and search that area. Try and focus on areas with water sources (dams, streams, rivers) or fringe forest areas. Don't be timid or move too slowly. Just try and find and locate

the game. Then once you've found and probably spooked the animals, come back another day to hunt them. They will still be there.

**11. When is the best time of the year to hunt deer?**

- a. The first cold snap is when deer start to breed and the male deer are most vocal and easy to find. This is usually around the end of March, the start of April. The further north you live the later in April this will occur. The fallow deer rut usually starts first, and then the Red deer roar follows soon after.

**12. What are the main hunting styles or methods?**

- a. Stalking
- b. Driven (hound hunting)
- c. Long distance
- d. Baiting
- e. Tree stand
- f. With a pointer
- g. Decoys (specific to duck hunting)
- h. From a car/buggy

**13. Can you hunt when it's raining?**

- a. Yes, sometimes that's the best time to hunt. It helps mask your scent and noise.

**14. Should you shoot at a deer that is running away?**

- a. No, it's unethical as the risk of wounding is much higher.

**15. Where is the best place to shoot a deer?**

- a. Broadside, right next to the armpit which has the best chance of hitting the vital organs (lungs and heart)

**16. What's the earliest time you can shoot an animal in a state forest?**

- a. 30 minutes before first light

**17. What's the latest time you can shoot an animal in a state forest?**

- a. 30 minutes after last light

**18. Can you stalk on a fire track or 4WD track in a state forest?**

- a. You can use fire tracks and 4WD tracks to cover country, but you are not allowed to hunt on them or shoot off them.

**19. Are you allowed to spotlight or use thermals in a state forest?**

- a. No

**20. Can you have a loaded firearm in a state forest?**

- a. Yes

**21. Can you shoot an animal if it's just over the fence on private property, then drag it over?**

- a. No, that's illegal and immoral.

**22. Are there deer hunting seasons in Australia?**

- a. Victoria has a Hog deer hunting season. This season runs during the month of April.
- b. Victoria also has restrictions on when Sambar deer hound hunting can take place which runs from the 1st of April till November.
- c. Otherwise, you can hunt Sambar, Chital, Rusa, Red and Fallow all year round, all around Australia.

**23. What do you do if you've wounded a deer?**

- a. Wait 20 minutes, then go to the point of impact. Mark the location with a bright-colored ribbon. Follow the blood trail slowly and carefully regularly look up to see if you can spot the animal. It will more than likely be bedded down at this point trying to hide. Always have your rifle or bow with you ready to ethically kill the animal.. If you lose the blood trail head back to the last time you saw it and then move in small concentric circles until you find it again, or find the animal.

**24. Is it okay to wound a deer and then start the search the next day?**

- a. No this is considered unethical and could potentially result in action from state firearm bodies if discovered. The only situation where you would consider this is if the deer was shot at last light, and even then you should still try and locate the deer via torch light until it's clear that you can't find it and need to return the next day.

**25. Can you camp in a state forest?**

- a. Yes. If a state forest has designated camp locations you are supposed to use them. Otherwise, you can camp wherever you want.

**26. Can you hunt at night in VIC, TAS or NSW state forest?**

- a. Hunting at night is prohibited in Victorian and Tasmania state forests. However, there are 19 NSW state forests that allow nighttime pig hunting with dogs.

**27. What do I do if I see another hunter when I'm hunting in the bush?**

- a. You should make every effort to let that hunter know where you are without startling them. Don't worry they will be just as nervous as you are. You can then have a conversation about each of your hunting plans and ensure that you're not ruining each other's hunts. It is also a courtesy to unload your firearm before approaching another hunter or person.

**28. Is it rude to ask people for hunting spots?**

- a. It's all about how you ask. You shouldn't ask a stranger for GPS points, but it's ok to ask questions about general areas that might be fruitful, like the name of the state forest. The better you know the person the more specific you can be in your request. Just don't shoot out the spot and kill everything there. Be considerate. Most of the time a sensible hunter will offer to take you to the location first.

## Hunting properties

**1. How do I go about getting access to hunting properties**

- a. Build relationships with property owners and help them out on their properties with jobs. Once you've helped out enough, then you can ask.

**2. Should you take your mates on properties you have access to?**

- a. Only if you first ask the property owner. Never take mates on without getting express permission. That's a great way to lose access.

**3. What else should I keep in mind when hunting on someone else's property?**

- a. If the gates are closed, shut them after you go through them.
- b. Don't disturb livestock
- c. Don't tear up the place with quad bikes, motorbikes, buggies or 4WD's

- d. Keep dogs under control at all times
- e. Never leave any rubbish.
- f. Let the farmer know what you've shot, they'll appreciate it.

## Harvesting, meat, and food

- 1. What do I do if I see weird growths or spots on the meat?**
  - a. Throw it out, don't eat any of the meat. Never risk eating meat that looks suspicious. If in doubt, throw it out.
- 2. What do I do with a carcass after I've butchered it in the bush?**
  - a. Take as much as you can and leave the rest. No need to bury the carcass or do anything else. It will become a source of food for scavengers and predators and eventually breakdown.
- 3. Do I need to string up an animal with rope and a tree in order to butcher it?**
  - a. No. Some people prefer to do this, and it certainly makes skinning an animal a lot easier. But it's just as easy to butcher an animal on the ground. You just need to be more mindful of contaminating your meat.
- 4. Is there a part of an animal I can't eat?**
  - a. Yes, you shouldn't eat the intestines or bladder. Everything is fine with the right amount of cleaning, even the stomach.
- 5. What do I do if I nick the gut bag when opening up an animal?**
  - a. Do your best to quickly and cleanly remove the guts. Then wash your hands before you continue and wash the affected area of the carcass and remove and throw away that area of meat.
- 6. What is the best cut of meat?**
  - a. It's a matter of preference. Some people say the tenderloins, others say the backstrap.
- 7. Do the different species of deer taste different?**
  - a. Yes. Sambar, Red and Rusa have a stronger more gamey taste. Where fallow, Chital and hog deer have a lighter taste.
- 8. What is the easiest way to cook venison and not stuff it up?**
  - a. Venison schnitzel
- 9. What is the easiest way to cook goat and not stuff it up?**
  - a. Goat curry
- 10. What is the easiest way to cook pork and not stuff it up?**
  - a. Pan-fried port cutlets
- 11. Is it ok if I get dirt on the meat?**
  - a. It's fine, just wash it off and try not to do it again. The meat will be fine.
- 12. How quickly should you remove the guts of an animal**
  - a. As soon as you can. The sooner you remove the guts the lower the likelihood of spoiling the meat.
- 13. How long can I leave meat out in the open before it spoils?**

- a. It depends on the weather. In colder climates where the temperature is below 5 degrees, you can leave a gutted carcass for about 24 hours until you start to run the risk of spoiling the meat. In hotter climates, you have less than 2 hours to start cooling the meat.

**14. How do I handle and store game meat properly?**

- a. Quarter and field dress your kills during the hunt. Store in a cool location in breathable game bags or ideally on ice. Once at home, break down your quarters into cuts suitable for meals and freeze in freezer or vacuum bags.

**15. Once you've gutted the animal do you have to break it down further?**

- a. You don't have to. For small goats, pigs and deer you can sometimes carry them back. But for larger animals, it's a lot easier to break the animal down into quarters and transport the meat back to your camp or car in trips or between multiple people. Otherwise, you'll need to carry out the animal whole.

**16. If I want to keep the hide what do I need to do after I've shot the animal**

- a. You need to remove as much of the flesh of the hide with a scraping tool as soon as you can, and then salt or freeze it. Then you can start the tanning process when you're ready.

**17. How do you transport a deer home?**

- a. Either quartered in an esky or a full carcass without the guts. If it's a hot day you'll need ice to keep the meat temperature down. You can also use the air conditioning in the car to help.

## Animals

**1. What animals and hunting styles are most common in each state?**

- a. The main focus of hunting in Victoria is deer, duck, fox and rabbit shooting in that order. There are very few wild goats and pigs in Victoria in comparison to deer.
- b. In New South Wales the focus is broader and includes deer, goat and pig shooting.
- c. In Queensland there is a strong hunting culture around 'Pig dogging' which uses dogs to bait and hunt pigs. Goat and deer hunting is also common, but not as strong as in Victoria or New South Wales.
- d. The main focus of hunting in South Australia is deer.
- e. Tasmanian hunters focus mainly on deer, but they also have the unique benefit of being able to hunt wallabies which is also very common.
- f. Western Australian Hunting is focused on pigs and goats mainly with a few deer.
- g. Hunting in the Northern Territory is almost exclusively wild dog pest control or buffalo, banteng or scrub bull trophy hunting, with some trophy deer hunting too.

**2. What is the difference between a game species and a pest/feral species?**

- a. Deer are considered in some states as 'game' and afforded special conditions as such. A pest animal is generally an introduced species which is having a negative impact on the environment and ecology.

**3. What are the main pest/feral species in Australia you can hunt?**

- a. Rabbit/hare



- b. Foxes
  - c. Goats
  - d. Pigs
  - e. Donkeys
  - f. Camels
  - g. Water buffalo
  - h. Bentang
- 4. What are the main game species I can hunt in Australia?**
- a. Each state has different rules in regard to what game animals you can hunt, they include:
    - i. Deer
      - 1. Sambar
      - 2. Rusa
      - 3. Chital
      - 4. Fallow
      - 5. Hog
      - 6. Red deer
    - ii. Quail
    - iii. Pheasant
    - iv. Waterfowl (ducks, geese)
- 5. Can you hunt kangaroo in Australia?**
- a. No. But you can get a permit to cull them in certain states if you own land and have an invested interest in agriculture or farming. You can however hunt wally in Tasmania.

## Hunting Gear

- 1. What is the best kind of knife for hunting?**
  - a. A small, light knife.
- 2. Should I always have a GPS or PLB with me when hunting?**
  - a. Both GPS's and PLB's are very useful and could save your life one day, especially if you hunting in large, thick or undulating terrain. If you are hunting in NSW state forests it is mandatory to carry one or printed maps.
- 3. What are the bare essential items to take hunting?**
  - a. Water, knife, firearm, binoculars, ammo.
- 4. Is it worth buying gaiters?**
  - a. Yes, gaiters are a fantastic bit of kit that can protect you from snake bites, prevent your boots from getting water in them and help keep your legs warm in the winter.
- 5. How much ammo should I take on a hunt?**
  - a. Depends on how long the hunt is. If it's one day or a weekend a magazine full (5 rounds) is sufficient.
- 6. How important is wearing camouflage?**

- a. It helps, but it's actually not essential. Most game animals are color-blind, so it's the pattern of the camo that helps break up your profile. But lots of people hunt successfully without it.
- 7. Can you hunt with a bow in Australia?**
- a. Yes
- 8. What type of arrowhead should I use when hunting with a bow?**
- a. Victoria requires an arrow fitted with a broadhead having a combined minimum weight of 400 grains (26 grams) and at least two cutting blades for large deer (Sambar, Rusa, and Red Deer) and or combined minimum weight of 350 grains (22.5 grams) and at least two blades for smaller deer (Hog, Fallow, and Chital Deer).
- 9. What poundage for a bow should I use?**
- a. Victoria requires 50 pounds (22.5 kilograms) for large deer or 45 pounds for smaller deer.
- 10. Can you hunt with a crossbow in Australia?**
- a. In Victoria, you can hunt with a cross bow, but it must have a minim draw weight of 150 pounds for large deer, 120 pounds for small deer with broadhead having a combined minimum weight of 400 grains (26 grams) for large deer and 250 grains (22.5 grams) for small deer and at least two cutting blades.
- 11. What is the Minimum caliber for deer hunting**
- a. For Victoria it's .270 130 grain bullet for large deer (Sambar, Rusa, and Red Deer) or .248 80 grain bullet for smaller deer (Hog, Fallow, and Chital Deer).
- 12. Is there a limit to how many deer you can get per year?**
- a. Only Hog deer in Victoria have a bag limit of one female and one male animal which must be hunted in April. Otherwise, you can harvest as many Sambar, Chital, Rusa, Red and Fallow deer as you want.
- 13. If I let off a shot will I have ruined my chances of finding any more game in the immediate area?**
- a. No. You would be surprised how many animals will not move an inch even if they hear a gunshot. Moreover, if you are hunting in a sheltered valley, the odds of an animal hearing your shot in the neighboring valley are slim.
- 14. Are hunting binoculars with internal range finders worth the price?**
- a. Yes, every penny.
- 15. How important is a spotting scope when hunting?**
- a. If you are doing long glassing sessions or shooting long distances a spotting scope is essential. If you are stalking in thick bush it will just weigh you down and will offer very little value.
- 16. Is reloading your own ammunition worth it?**
- a. With the precision of modern manufacturing reloading your own ammunition won't give you increases in accuracy. You get into reloading if you want to save a few cents on your ammo, or because you enjoy the process and research.
- 17. What is the most important piece of gear I can buy that will help me be successful in a hunt?**
- a. Binoculars

## Vehicles

- 1. Can you hunt or shoot from a car or buggy in a state forest?**
  - a. You can drive into the state forest in a car, but you can't shoot from the car.
- 2. Can you store a firearm in a vehicle while camping on a hunt?**
  - a. Yes, but it must be in a padded cover or hard case, unlocked and preferably inoperable (with the bolt out)
- 3. Can you store ammunition in a vehicle while on a hunt?**
  - a. Yes, but it has to be in a locked container or locked glove box.
- 4. Can you have a loaded firearm in a car in a state forest?**
  - a. No. However, you can on private property (however I don't recommend this).
- 5. Do I have to conceal a firearm in a soft bag or case when my car is in a public area?**
  - a. You should conceal a firearm when storing it in a car to prevent it from getting stolen, or from making people nervous.
- 6. If I get pulled over by the police and I have a firearm in my car should I tell them?**
  - a. Yes.

## Bonus Questions

- 1. What is the average distance you will shoot an animal?**
  - a. For every animal it's different. You can easily shoot goats or pigs under 80 meters if you're quiet enough and have the wind in your favor. They tend not to be as vigilant or aware as other animals. You can get even closer when shooting rabbits. Deer, foxes and dogs are much more attentive and tend to be shot between 100 meters - 200 meters on average. Long-distance shooters prefer to shoot animals north of 400 meters, sometimes even past 1.5km in extreme cases.
- 2. Some people say buck when referring to a male deer, while others say stag? Some people say doe when referring to a female deer, while others say hind. Which is correct for both sexes?**

- a. When you are talking about fallow deer a male is called a buck, and a female is called a doe. When you are talking about any other species of deer in Australia (Sambar, Rusa, Red, Chital and Hog deer) a male is called a stag and a female is called a hind.
- 3. Is it ok to shoot a buck or stag when it's in velvet?**
- a. Yes its ok, but if you are planning on keeping the antlers you will need to use embalming fluids to preserve it or take it to a taxidermist. If you are planning this it's important that you don't touch the antlers with your hands, as the oils from your skin can damage them.