



Canada Geese – hunting status

The following article is intended to clarify confusion around hunting Canada geese since the Government removed the species from the game schedule.

1/ Canada geese have been moved from the First Schedule (wildlife declared to be game) of the Wildlife Act 1953 to the Fifth Schedule (wildlife not protected). This now means Canada geese have the same status as blackbirds, rock pigeons and sparrows.

2/ Canada geese have not been legally classified as 'pests'. To be classified as a pest legally this must be passed under the Noxious Animals Act, or passed by your local regional council as part of their "pest management strategy". To the best of my knowledge no regional council has as yet classified Canada geese as a pest (watch this space). Please note, however, that both Federated Farmers and media frequently use the term 'pest' to highlight the point or ingrain an ideology.

3/ As a result of the new status of Canada geese, Fish & Game NZ has no authority to utilise licence holders' funds or resources to assist with any future management or control of this species. However, all Fish & Game regions have agreed to assist with expertise regarding culls or management with relation to aviation threats (bird-strike issues), should assistance be sought.

4/ As a result of the new status (wildlife not protected), Canada geese may be hunted any time utilising any method – with the exception of poisoning (the Minister of Conservation ruled poisoning out as the risk of by-kill of other protected species was too great). This means you may now shoot Canada geese with rifles, shotguns, bows etc, from motorised boats or helicopters, on the ground, on the water or in the air, and during the moult – no limits and any time during the day or night.

5/ Shotguns: You may now kill Canada geese with whatever ammunition you like (i.e. lead shot). As Canada geese are no longer game birds, the rules associated with Fish & Game no

longer apply. However, please note that should you be hunting Canada geese while also shooting other waterfowl game (e.g. mallards, swans) lead shot would not be permissible as it is an offence to be in possession of lead shot while waterfowl hunting over water. If you even have a single duck caller or a couple of duck decoys while in possession of lead shot in this situation it is enough for prosecution. Fish & Game rangers will issue an offence notice and seize firearms and ammunition etc should this offence be detected. If you are clearly hunting Canada geese only, evidenced by decoys, goose flute etc., and have lead shot during the game bird hunting season this is legal. You will, however, be thoroughly scrutinised and questioned by a ranger. This is obviously a tricky area for compliance and hunters alike. Simply put, during the normal game bird hunting season it is advisable that you just use non-toxic shot!

6/ You may hunt Canada geese on any land/water – private or public. However, normal permissions are required for private land. For public water bodies (lakes, rivers, estuaries), you may hunt whenever you like and may not need permission*. Please note that any hunting on Department of Conservation (DOC) managed estate requires a 'permit' to take a firearm onto it. Consequently, for those wetlands, lakes and lands managed by DOC you will need a permit to hunt Canada geese. It is unclear what DOC's stance is currently as some regions have authorised hunting and some do not. There are also many public wetlands that are managed by Fish & Game (appointment to control and manage or owned) that you are not able to hunt outside the normal game bird season. At NO time are you able to hunt a Wildlife Refuge regardless of a bird's status. Also, check if permission is required for local body and territorial authority lands. Essentially, if you are granted permission to hunt on public land/water there are no issues.

7/ Regardless of permissions or localities, the overriding piece of legislation you must abide by is the requirements of the Arms Act 1983 -- the seven rules of firearm safety and for no person to be frightened, threatened or intimidated by your actions.

- **Post script** Should you be thinking of hunting Canada geese, the stigma attached to your hunting ethics will associate you to legal game bird hunting as well. As hunters we need to be aware that the public and lobby groups are watching our actions and will be quick to judge us.
- Hunting Canada geese during the waterfowl breeding season (normally August–November) may disturb nesting birds, and any hunting during April will affect the upcoming opening weekend and following weeks of the game bird hunting season. Please bear this in mind have due consideration for fellow hunters.