

From: [REDACTED]
To: ramsar
Subject: End duck shooting in Victoria - veterinary perspective
Date: Wednesday, 27 November 2019 7:49:52 PM

Dear Committee Members

Victoria is blessed with special and diverse wetlands, home to so many different plants, birds, fish and other species.

I'm pleased to see this inquiry underway and wanted to take the opportunity it presents to raise with the committee my strong opposition to duck shooting.

No inquiry into Victoria's wetlands can be complete without understanding that the decline of wetlands combined with the hunting season has brought our native duck populations to the brink.

I'm very upset and distressed that in 2019, duck shooting continues in Victoria when it has been banned in WA, NSW and Queensland, and was never permitted in the ACT.

The shooting of native birds for fun is simply not okay. Up to one quarter of birds that are shot fly away wounded, and will go on to either suffer painful deaths or survive with enduring injuries including shotgun pellets embedded in their bodies.

As a veterinary volunteer at the opening of the Victorian season for the past four years, I have an extensive catalogue of the cruelty inflicted on native waterbirds (including non-target species), which would be clearly prosecutable offences if inflicted on other species. Very few animals are able to be saved. The suffering of the individuals shot and behavioural stressors to all resident animals are never adequately addressed by government. Members of the public are also shocked to learn it is a complete voluntary veterinary effort providing for birds left in the aftermath of shooting, with no government support of involvement in this process. Without voluntary efforts, there would be no provision of a humane death for those left suffering.

Across Victoria, Australia and the world, there is growing evidence that our ecosystems are in real trouble and the water bird populations are particularly susceptible to drought, climate change and other threats. These factors make it even more inappropriate for recreational killing of water birds.

On top of this, each 'season' I am confronted by video evidence and firsthand experience showing the cruel practices of some hunters and inadequate monitoring by compliance staff.

I hope this inquiry will seriously consider an end to duck shooting in Victoria, and will also provide recommendations for Government actions to restore and protect the wetland habitats all our water birds depend on.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Yours sincerely,
Belinda Oppenheimer

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