

Airgun Safety

The irresponsible use or misuse of an airgun can cause serious injury or even kill.

"RULE" NUMBER ONE: AIRGUNS ARE NOT TOYS. TREAT AIRGUNS WITH THE SAME RESPECT AS YOU WOULD ANY DANGEROUS WEAPON OR FIREARM.

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- Some irresponsible users have given airgun shooters a bad name by damaging property, shooting pets and protected wildlife, and even sniping at people for "fun".
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- You can help to change this perception by using your airgun in a way that demonstrates that airgun shooters are, in the main, responsible people who pose no threat to anyone. By following the common-sense rules set out below, you can significantly reduce the risk of an accident.
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- **There are some simple steps that people can take to ensure that their airgun is kept secure and used safely. For example:**
 - Never handle or operate an airgun which operation and features you are unfamiliar with. Read the manual first or ask the owner of the airgun if it is not yours to instruct you as to how to operate it safely.
 - Never let a child under the age of 18 handle or operate an airgun without direct adult supervision. • Always treat an airgun as though it were loaded.
 - Do not take anyone's word that an airgun is unloaded and safe before handling it. Check every airgun you handle yourself.
 - Always point an airgun in a safe direction, preferably at the ground, and never at another person.
 - Never load an airgun until you are ready to fire it.
 - Never rely on a safety mechanism to make an airgun safe. Such devices can fail.
 - If you are at a shooting range always pay attention to the range rules and the range officer's (RO) commands.
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What Can I Use My Airgun For?

- If you have never shot before, you would be well advised to go to a shooting club with an airgun division and learn from a club officer how to handle your airgun safely, responsibly and become an accurate shot. You can find information about where to find such clubs under the "Useful Links" heading in this brochure.
- Having bought your airgun, you can use it for a number of purposes including target shooting, plinking, pest control and hunting small game.
- You might find that target shooting provides all the challenge you need or you might want to move on to hunting. If you intend to hunt, you must be careful only to do so on private property for which you have written permission to shoot, a valid hunting permit and/or licence issued by a relevant provincial authority including a permit authorising the use of an air rifle for hunting (some provinces restrict their use for that purpose). You must also adhere to the legislated game species lists, their open hunting seasons and bag limits as published annually.
- Plinking at targets such as old tin cans or spinner targets can be useful to teach children marksmanship and safety in a fun way. It should be remembered though that it is illegal to shoot airguns in your yard if you live in a built-up suburb. You may shoot your airgun on your property if you live in a rural area with no close neighbours. However, all safety procedures must be adhered to and all the offences listed in the FCA still apply.

CITY OF JOHANNESBURG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY BY-LAWS

To summarise:

"hunt" means to hunt for, shoot at, kill, snare, capture, pursue or search for or lie in wait with intent to kill, shoot or capture, or disturb, destroy, wound or maim any wild animal or bird;

"wild animal" means any animal other than a domestic or domesticated animal, rat and mouse.

"bird" means any bird other than a domestic or domesticated bird;

and:

Prohibition against hunting wild animals and birds

2. No person may, without lawful cause or without the permission in writing of the Council and subject to such conditions as the Council may impose –

(a) hunt any wild animal or bird by any means whatsoever;

(b) remove, disturb or destroy any nests of birds, their eggs or their young.

and:

No person may, without lawful cause, the onus of proving which is on the person asserting it, fire or discharge a firearm, **air-gun or air-pistol** : Provided that this prohibition does not apply to –

(a) a firearm, **air-gun or air-pistol** lawfully fired or discharged in the course of his or her duties by a person who is a member of the South African armed forces or the South African Police Services or the Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department or by a person who is a member or employee of any organisation permitted by any law or by the State to be in possession of firearms;

(b) a firearm used during a Bisley or target practice on a recognised shooting range;

(c) a firearm fired for the purpose of a sports meeting or practice.