Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment

Tasmanian Government

Submission to the Review of the National Code of Practice for the Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes

Game Services Tasmania

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Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
Tasmania

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Summary of Submission

- **Rimfire rifles are the preferred firearm for shooting wallabies in Tasmania due to the small size of the animals, the proximity of dwellings and the abundance of bush cover that allows shooting at close range.**

- **While a number of options are available to commercial wallaby shooters wishing to use a rimfire rifle, .22L/R ammunition is the least expensive and most widely used by Tasmanian wallaby shooters.**

- **The 2008 Edition of the National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for Commercial Purposes provides for the use of .22L/R ammunition to a maximum range of 50metres.**

- **The revised National Code, while still providing for the use of .22L/R ammunition, has reduced the maximum range to 20metres making its use impractical.**

- **Statistics compiled by the Food Safety Branch of DPIPWE from commercial game meat harvesters indicate that .22L/R rimfire ammunition, when used in combination with a shot targeting the brain using a telescopic sight, is effective in reliably achieving a humane kill of both species of Tasmanian wallaby up to a distance of 50metres.**

- **It is therefore recommended that the revised Commercial Code should be amended to provide for the use of .22L/R rimfire ammunition up to a maximum range of 50 metres.**

Background

In Tasmania, three species of macropod are subject to shooting: The Forester, or Eastern grey, kangaroo (*Macropus giganteus*), Bennetts wallaby (*Macropus rufogriseus*) and Rufous wallaby, also known as Tasmanian pademelon (*Thylogale billardierii*).

Of these species, the Forester kangaroo is restricted to a number of small populations. Fewer than 5000 animals are shot each year for crop protection purposes and products of these animals are sold by appropriately licensed and accredited shooters and processors. Consistent with the Draft Code, forester kangaroos may only be shot using a centre-fire rifle of not less than .222 calibre.

In contrast, the changes to the Tasmanian environment resulting from European settlement, have favoured wallabies. In particular, the clearing of native forest for agriculture and forestry, and the creation of a mosaic of forests, pastures and crops has enabled wallaby populations to increase to levels where numbers need to be controlled to limit impact on agricultural and forestry production. As a result both species of wallaby are widely hunted in Tasmania to protect crops and pastures and products of some these animals are commercially traded as meat and skins.

Wallaby meat is used locally for human consumption and for pet food and a limited quantity of meat is sent interstate. The estimated number of wallabies harvested for the commercial trade by licensed commercial hunters is over 100,000, most of which are Bennetts wallabies.

Currently, there are approximately 60 commercial wallaby shooters. Each operates under a commercial wallaby hunter's licence and harvests wallabies under the authority of a landholder's crop protection permit that allows shooting at night with the assistance of a spotlight and vehicle. Most commercial wallaby shooters use a .22 rimfire rifle with .22 long rifle (.22L/R) ammunition.

Shooting is an important tool in controlling damage by wallabies to crops and pastures. Where shooting is not successful or appropriate, crop protection permits may be issued to reduce wallaby populations through the use of Sodium monofluoroacetate (1080).

The Tasmanian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee developed Animal Welfare Guidelines for shooting wallabies. These Guidelines were developed in close consultation with individuals and organisations with interests in the shooting of wallabies, and was approved under the *Animal Welfare Act* 1993 by the Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment in 2003.

The Animal Welfare Guidelines provide advice on the appropriate use of .22L/R rimfire rifles for harvesting wallabies in Tasmania, recognizing the small size of the animals, the proximity of dwellings to harvest areas and the abundance of bush cover that allows hunters to move close to wallabies for shooting at close range.

These Guidelines provide for the use of .22L/R ammunition to a maximum range of 50metres. This provision was adopted in the 2008 edition of the National Code. However, the revised

National Code, while providing for the use of .22L/R ammunition, has reduced the maximum range to 20metres, making use of this ammunition impractical in Tasmania.

Use of Rimfire Rifles for Shooting Wallabies

- The use of rimfire rifles for shooting wallabies is a very common and widespread practice in Tasmania where rifles are generally used at night with a spotlight. Spotlight shooting of wallabies is permitted only under the authority of a crop protection permit issued to a landholder to prevent or reduce damage to crops and pasture. Licensed wallaby hunters are able to hunt under the authority of a landholders crop protection permit.
- Rimfire rifles are preferred for wallaby shooting in Tasmania for a number reasons:
  - ***Public Safety***- Tasmanian wallabies occur and are hunted in areas where use of centrefire rifles would pose a high risk due to the close proximity to occupied dwellings.
  - ***Cost of Ammunition-*** The small size of Tasmanian wallabies results in a low financial return on each wallaby shot and traded commercially. Most commercial harvesters oppose the use of centrefire rifles on the basis of their ammunition higher cost in comparison to the low cost of rimfire ammunition.
  - ***Firearm Noise-*** The noise emitted by a centrefire rifle is much louder than that from a rimfire rifle causing considerably more disturbance to neighbours and disturbing wallabies thus reducing the numbers of animals that may be taken and reducing the efficiency of their operations.
- A number of options are available to commercial wallaby shooters wishing to use a rimfire rifle. These include .17HMR, .22Magnum and .22L/R ammunition, all of which are provided for in the revised National Code.
- Of these options, .22L/R is the least expensive and currently the most widely used by Tasmanian wallaby shooters.
- The maximum range of 20metres currently recommended in the revised National Code for use of .22L/R ammunition imposes a severe limit on its use.
- **It is recommended that the revised Commercial Code should be amended to provide for the use of .22L/R rimfire ammunition up to a maximum range of 50metres.**
- **Appendix 1** of this submission presents statistics compiled by the Food Safety Branch of DPIPWE from commercial game meat harvesters that demonstrates the effectiveness of .22L/R rimfire ammunition for humanely shooting wallabies.
- These statistics indicate a wounding rate for the 665 animals targeted, of under 2 percent.
- On the basis of the evidence presented in **Appendix 1**, .22L/R rimfire ammunition, used in combination with a shot targeting the brain using a telescopic sight, is effective in reliably achieving a humane kill of both species of wallaby up to a distance of approximately 50metres.
- Beyond this range a more high-powered rifle is required. Suitable rifles include .22 Magnum and various small calibre centre-fire rifles. **.**

APPENDIX 1:

Wallaby Shooting Statistics for Commercial Game Meat Harvesters using .22L/R rimfire rifles.

1) Game Meat Harvester Accreditation Assessments:

The figures below have been derived from assessments of 48 applicants for Game Meat Harvester accreditation conducted between 1995 and 2008. The outcome of every shot fired on the night of assessment and the distance of each shot estimated in yards is recorded. All applicants were using .22L/R rimfire rifles.

Targeted animals include both Bennetts wallabies and Tasmanian pademelons. Shooters were assessed using the rifle that they would normally use for wallaby shooting. Moreover, they are asked to shoot as they would normally under the prevailing conditions. Head shots are required by the *Australian Standard for Hygienic Production of Game Meat for Human Consumption*, except in the case of wounded animals, where a heart shot is acceptable if a head shot is not practicable.

Rifle Calibre	Distance in yards (K= Kills, M= Clean Misses, W= Woundings)																										
	0 – 20			21- 30			31 – 40			41 – 50			51 – 60			61 – 70			71 – 80			81 – 90			91 - 100			Totals
	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	K	M	W	
.22L/R	23	4	2	49	8	3	59	14	1	63	18	2	51	19	1	37	9	0	11	1	0	5	1	0	0	0	0	K=298 M= 74 W= 9

In summary, of the 381 animals targeted, 298 were clean kills, with 74 clean misses and a total of 9 wounded, which required a second shot. This gives a wounding rate of 2.3 percent.

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2) Accredited Game Meat Harvester Audits:

The figures below are from 28 audits conducted from 2001 to 2019 of previously accredited Game Meat Harvesters who use .22L/R rimfire rifles. The outcome of every shot fired on the night of assessment was recorded. All animals targeted were within a range of 50 metres.

Targeted animals include both Bennetts wallabies and Tasmanian pademelons. Shooters were assessed using the .22LR rifle that they would normally use for wallaby shooting. Moreover, they are asked to shoot as they would normally under the prevailing conditions.

Head shots are required by the *Australian Standards for Hygienic Production of Game Meat for Human Consumption*, except in the case of wounded animals, where a heart shot is acceptable if a head shot is not practicable.

	Number	**Comments**
Number of audits undertaken-	**28**	
Ammunition used-	**22L/R**	
Total number of animals targeted	**284**	
Number clean kills on first shot	**274**	
Number wounded	**3**	**Cleanly killed with the second shot**
Clean miss	**7**	

In summary, of the 284 animals targeted, 274 were clean kills, with 7 clean misses and a total of 3 wounded, which required a second shot. This gives a wounding rate of 1.1 percent.

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