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Hunters should stick to the basics and “be safe”

Safe use of hunting firearms is pretty basic, says NZDA President Bill O’Leary.

The approaching “roar” and the opening of the game bird season will encourage thousands of hunters into the hills and swamps of New Zealand and national hunting associations and key government departments think it is timely to remind hunters to “be safe”.

In the past decade the number of firearm license applicants has more than doubled and this has increased hunter numbers.

The Hunter Safety Inter-agency Committee chaired by Mr O’Leary is reminding hunters to follow some basic rules:

- Get a firearms licence
- Get permission to access and hunt on land
- Communicate your presence to other hunters
- Understand and observe the basic rules of firearm safety.

Mr O’Leary said that the media and the public tend to focus on the “failure to identify” incidents but he emphasises that most incidents are the result of failure to observe basic rules such as always pointing the firearm in a safe direction.

The Hunter Safety Committee’s analysis of incidents has identified potential causal factors. Unlicensed shooters and illegal hunting are “red flags” and along with spotlighting have featured too frequently in shooting incidents, Mr O’Leary said.

“Experienced shooters are not exempt from making mistakes. Bad habits, complacency and deteriorated eyesight have been linked to past incidents.

“Each and every hunter needs to look hard at their own and their mates’ attitudes and conduct and ensure that safety is the most basic of considerations when hunting.”

The Hunter Safety Inter-agency Committee promotes safe firearm usage and draws its members from NZ Police, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Deerstalkers’ Association, Fish and Game NZ, New Zealand Pig Hunters’ Association and Firearm Safety Specialists NZ.

Bill O’Leary is the National President of New Zealand Deerstalkers’ Association which is a national organisation of hunters with 48 branches running training in safe firearm usage and hunting.

For further information contact Bill O’Leary 027 4305 008