

NATSOP-CAM001 NATIONAL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE: GROUND SHOOTING OF CAMELS

Voluntarily adopted by the Vertebrate Pest Committee 2012 with the Invasive Plants and Animals Committee endorsing minor updates September 2017.

BACKGROUND

The population of feral camels (*Camelus dromedarius*) in Australia is currently estimated to be around one million with numbers increasing at around 8% per year. At high densities camels can have serious impacts on vegetation and have the potential to cause significant production losses through competition with cattle. They can also damage fences and watering points, particularly during times of drought. Control methods include capture (by trapping at watering points or mustering), exclusion fencing, ground shooting and shooting from helicopters. Ground shooting is usually conducted from all-terrain vehicles and is best suited to accessible and relatively flat areas where there are low numbers of problem camels. The Judas approach has been used with some success to support this technique. Ground shooting is also used for euthanasia of sick or injured camels. Shooting from a helicopter is considered a more humane control method as mobile wounded animals can be promptly located and killed. It is also a more effective method for large scale population reductions in remote and/ or inaccessible areas. [Refer to CAM002 Aerial shooting of feral camels.](#)

Shooting can be a humane method of destroying feral camels when it is carried out by experienced, skilled shooters; the animal can be clearly seen and is within range; the correct firearm, ammunition and shot placement is used; and wounded animals are promptly located and killed. This National Standard Operating Procedure (NATSOP) is a guide only; it does not replace or override the legislation that applies in the relevant state or territory jurisdiction. The NATSOP should only be used subject to the applicable legal requirements (including WH&S) operating in the relevant jurisdiction.

APPLICATION

- Ground shooting should only be used in a strategic manner as part of a coordinated program designed to achieve sustained effective control.
- Ground shooting is time consuming and labour intensive, and is therefore not considered an effective method for large-scale control.
- Ground shooting is used to euthanase small numbers of sick, injured or unwanted camels.
- Ground shooting as a means of population control is not suitable in inaccessible or rough terrain where sighting of target animals and accurate shooting is difficult or when wounded animals cannot easily be followed up and killed.
- The optimal period for ground shooting is during dry seasons or droughts when many groups of camels are forced to congregate around remaining areas of water or succulent feed. Shooting during drought may reduce the number of camels that may otherwise die slowly of hunger or thirst.
- Frequent shooting from the ground may teach camels to avoid certain areas, making overall control difficult.
- Shooting of feral camels should only be performed by skilled operators who have the necessary experience with firearms and who hold the appropriate licences and accreditation.
- Storage and transportation of firearms and ammunition must comply with relevant legislative requirements.

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Reference me as: Trudy Sharp, 2012. Ground shooting of camels. Standard Operating Procedure. PestSmart website. <https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/ground-shooting-of-camels/>