

**BANG!! RSPCA SAYS IT IS TIME TO MAKE THE GOVERNMENT THE TARGET OVER DUCK SHOOTING**

As duck hunters prepare to descend on wetlands across Victoria today, the RSPCA is issuing an urgent call to Minister Jennings and his department to immediately suspend the season before any ducks are subjected to unnecessary pain and suffering.

Dr. Hugh Wirth, President, RSPCA Victoria, said: "It is no secret that duck shooting is nothing more than senseless cruelty masquerading as a sport. The entire Victorian community is very conscious of the adverse animal welfare issues associated with duck shooting. The RSPCA is baffled as to why the government has allowed a 2010 season to go ahead when it is in no doubt that the vast majority of the community actively support a ban (87% according to a recent Roy Morgan Poll)."

Despite reasoning by the government that a 2010 season is viable and sustainable due to a small increase in bird numbers over the past year, research has shown that overall, water-bird numbers are down an incredible 82% since 1982.

"The RSPCA shudders to think of the irreversible damage that may be caused over the 72 days of the duck shooting season. While the cruelty inflicted on these birds is the RSPCA's major concern; the issue also centres upon the conservation and preservation of our native wildlife. How can the government justify appeasing an incredibly small cross section of the community whilst it is knowingly wiping out wildlife populations."

The RSPCA has long campaigned for the abolition of duck shooting in Victoria. Bans have been placed on this outdated practice in most other Australian states, with duck shooting only remaining in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

"If the government doesn't or won't grow a conscience and ban duck shooting immediately in Victoria, the community does have the power to show it that it won't stand for animal cruelty - particularly in an election year. The RSPCA urges the community to take just a moment of time to actively show their opposition by downloading a petition via [www.rspcavic.org](http://www.rspcavic.org) and collecting supporting signatures from their networks. Or, show their commitment to animal welfare by casting their vote for a party that includes animal welfare policies in its brief. It's time for the community's voice to be heard," Dr. Wirth added.

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