

FACTS

FIREARMS, AIR GUNS AND AMMUNITION

Recently there has been an upswing in firearm sales, air rifle sales and reloading ammunition. There are a multitude of reasons why this is taking place, but for producers raising cattle the concerns are enhanced as more and more people want access to public and private lands where cattle are being raised as a place to use this class of firearm. The following facts are for producers to be educated in what is happening in the market place, and the possible impact it could have on their management of cattle operations.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Firearm ownership and use fall under the **Criminal Code of Canada**.
- Possession and Acquisition License (PAL) is required to own, purchase, and use a firearm. These are obtained through a rigorous process to establish character, involvement with the law and approval from spouse, parents or guardians that the PAL holder is a qualified individual.
- Air delivery rifles, hand guns and CO2 rifles and handguns fall under the same regulations as firearms; require a PAL to own, purchase, and use, with notable EXCEPTIONS: Since 1978, this class of firearm has been exempted from the criminal code IF the muzzle velocity of the projectile is 500 Feet Per Second (FPS) or less, or the muzzle energy the firearm creates is less than 5.7 Joules (4.2 foot pounds) of energy. There are no requirements for purchasing ammunition for any air or CO2 delivery weapons except in Ontario where the name and ID of the person purchasing is recorded. If the air gun falls into the exemption area, no PAL is required to purchase, use or own the weapon. Examples of these are BB guns, Pellet guns in both .177 and .22 caliber.
- While the power of the air guns may have met the exemption status it does not mean they are not dangerous if used indiscriminately. At close ranges they can cause eye damage, penetrate skin and flesh and carry the possibility of causing death. On average, in North America, 4 deaths from air guns occur annually.
- Using an exempted air gun but altering the projectile so as to increase the speed, and therefore increase range, penetration or killing ability is illegal if the projectile is able to reach a speed greater than 500 FPS.
- There are air guns on the market currently that rival the same power, muzzle velocity and muzzle energy of regular firearms. While they are under PAL requirements, many owners do not give them the same respect as a regular firearm, and do not respect the distances that these weapons can achieve. This is where cattle raising and target shooting could have a confrontation, resulting in injury to cattle which is an animal welfare issue, causing a food safety concern if skin/flesh penetration occurs, as well as increased production costs to the producer.
- There are modifications that allow arrows to be shot from an air rifle.
- There are highly developed types and designs of ammunition readily available on the market that have the ability to penetrate skin and flesh.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Knowing who is on your property and what they are doing there is likely the best all around management to control the possibility of accidental shooting of livestock. In many areas this is not possible, but through community watch groups and neighbors cooperating, some level of scrutiny can be maintained in most operations. Public access to private and public lands is an important ongoing issue and deserves resolution. Hunting or target shooting with permission brings credibility to the firearm owner/user and forms a relationship with the land owner.

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