



# Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) – Euthanasia of animals with a firearm

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this SOP is to provide guidance to Fauna Rescue SA (FRSA) shooters with respect to euthanising animals in a legal manner, taking into consideration public relation aspects of this task. While it is recognised that kangaroos are the primary animals of concern, the same process applies to other native animals or even domestic livestock, should the need arise.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This SOP is aimed at FRSA shooters who may attend sick or injured animals, on public or private land, that may need to be euthanised for animal welfare reasons.

## 3. Related Documents

- 3.1 South Australian legislation can be accessed at: <https://www.legislation.sa.gov.au/>
- South Australian Firearms Act, 2015
  - South Australian Firearms Regulations, 2017
  - Animal Welfare Act, 1985
  - Animal Welfare Regulation, 2012
  - National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for non-commercial purposes, 2008 (referred to herein as the NCP)

## 4. Licensing

- 4.1 FRSA shooters must hold a Category 12(1)(a) firearms license for the purpose of “Humane Destruction of Animals”, that is, a miscellaneous license for the purpose approved by the Registrar.

**Note:** Interested shooters often have one of the following categories listed on their license, but these **do not** meet the necessary requirements under the relevant legislation:

- Category 1: Shooting club
  - Category 2: Target shooting
  - Category 3: Hunting
  - Category 5: Primary production
  - Category 7: Contract shooter
- 4.2 FRSA will provide a letter to interested shooters to support their change in license, i.e. obtain the required 12(1)(a), and reimburse the costs of the license amendment.



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- 4.3 Because some of the animals that are euthanised will be does with in-pouch joeys FRSA shooters should also have a Wildlife Rescue permit (for Kangaroo joeys), which is issued by the Department of Environment and Water (DEW).

## 5. Equipment

- 5.1 The following lists detail the essential and optional equipment.

### 5.1.1 Essential Equipment

- Long Rifle, calibre .22 – can be used up to 30m with 36 grain or heavier bullets (sub-sonic bullets must not be used as per NCP)
- Shotgun, 12 Gauge – can be used up to 20m with Shot Size of No 2 or larger
- Earmuffs, especially electronic versions which allow you to hear normal environmental noises (e.g. traffic) while cutting out high decibel noise from discharging the firearm
- High-vis vest (preferrable Fauna Rescue), to be used in public areas
- Notebook, logbook, diary or similar to record details of every incident (see Appendix 1 – Logbook example). These should be retained for a minimum of 7 years.

- 5.1.2 Alternative firearms may be used, e.g. .22 Magnum, and full details of bullet calibre or shot size can be found in the “National Code of Practice for the Humane Shooting of Kangaroos and Wallabies for non-commercial purposes” (2008) – Schedule 1 Part C “Euthanasia of sick or injured kangaroos and wallabies, etc.”

**Note:** Large calibre firearms and centrefire rifles are generally not appropriate for the euthanasia of sick or injured animals and can pose an unacceptable risk to nearby people, animals, houses, sheds, etc.

### 5.1.3 Optional Equipment

- Powerful torch, especially one that can be attached to the rifle or scope
- Emergency beacon for the car, useful when dealing with incidents on the road – must be able to run this with the door locked and engine off.
- Camera (on phone) for taking evidence photos
- Range finder, to ensure compliance with the code and assist with aiming for animals that cannot be approached closely
- Nitrile or latex gloves, for pouch checks or moving a mange affected animal
- Pouches (various sizes) for transporting viable joeys
- Safety pins and a sharp knife or medical scissors
- Blue tarp to cover kangaroo carcasses in built up areas awaiting council collection.



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## 6. Procedure

6.1 Do not accept a job if you are feeling unwell or are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Where possible answer the call but inform the caller that you are unable to attend so they can quickly find the next closest person.

### 6.1.1 Before departing

6.1.2 When you are called, ensure you obtain all relevant location and contact details. Ideally these are sent via SMS to your phone after confirming your availability to respond.

6.1.3 Using a navigation app of your choice (e.g. Apple or Google Maps) check the location information you have been provided, the best route to get there and how long it will take you to travel.

6.1.4 If possible and appropriate contact the member of public (MOP) who contacted FRSA and let them know that you are able to respond (in some case you may need to agree on a mutually suitable time to attend). Confirm /clarify the location of the animal and confirm whether the animal is at the side of the road, their own property, neighbour's property, SA Water or Forestry SA land, National Park (Recreation or Conservation - Nature Maps can be used to identify National Parks, see Appendix 2 – Nature Maps for details), etc.

6.1.5 Unless the animal is in a public area you will need to get permission from the property owner / custodian and this is generally more efficiently done before you leave. For example, the National Parks Duty Ranger may not give permission for an animal to be shot, in which case someone else, who can remove the animal, may need to be responded, or a DEW Ranger will need to deal with the animal.

**Note:** Making contact early with the MOP provides confidence to the public that their call is being actioned in a timely manner.

6.1.6 If the animal is by the side of the road, then ask if the MOP is able to remain with the animal until you get there – this can make locating the animal much easier. The MOP can also update you in case there is a change in the circumstances – you may still need to attend to check for a joey. Remind the MOP to stay safe. If the MOP is unable to stay on scene, then ensure you have good location information – the MOP may be able to mark the spot by tying a plastic bag to a roadside marker, for example.

### 6.1.7 On-site

6.1.8 For roadside incidents, park off the road as best as possible. Turn on your hazard lights and turn on an emergency beacon if you have one.

Don your HiVis vest – Remember your safety is paramount!

**Note:** If the animal is on the South Eastern Freeway, Southern Expressway or similar high speed, high traffic roadway, then you must first contact the Traffic Management Centre (see Appendix C) before proceeding. Discuss the situation and follow their instructions! If possible, let the TMC know that you are on route as soon as possible of receiving the call.



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- 6.1.9 Lock your car – you have a firearm and ammunition in your vehicle. These should be stored out of sight if possible.
- 6.1.10 Locate the animal and assess it, i.e. confirm the injuries / illness (as appropriate), from as far away as possible. If there is any doubt about the health of the animal, talk it over with someone experienced.

**Note:** Be mindful that a scared animal may move back onto the roadway and endanger traffic. Use information provided by the mop and what your senses (including sight and smell) tell you.

**Note:** Look around to see if there is an at-foot joey nearby – see Step 16 below.

**Note:** Depending on the circumstances it may be acceptable to **not** euthanise the animal. For example, sometimes kangaroos obtain a concussion when hit by a car. Provided they can be monitored by someone and are in a safe spot (e.g. MOP's property) it may be appropriate to give the animal a day or two to recover. However, if the animal deteriorates, then action will need to be taken. Seek experienced help if in doubt.

- 6.1.11 Decide whether an on-site euthanasia with a firearm is the most appropriate action. In some cases, even when SAPOL or the property owner give permission, it may be more appropriate to bag the animal and remove it to a vet for euthanasia (e.g. when young children are present, when there are lots of by-standers or if there is no safe way to shoot the animal). Call the FRSA hotline to get assistance from John Coventry or Andreas Kiermeier.
- 6.1.12 Check / confirm who the property owner is (unless on a public road) and get their permission in writing – use your logbook for this. For National Parks, SA Water, or Forestry SA land please contact the organisation as per details in “Appendix 3 – Contact details” – they may want to meet you on site or they may be happy to confirm location and permission to euthanise via SMS.

**Note:** Be prepared that getting permission may take some time.

**Note:** If the property owner does not give permission to euthanise the animal with a firearm, then you must respect that decision. However, they may be OK with the animal being removed (i.e. bagged) and euthanised by a vet – call the FRSA hotline to get assistance from John Coventry or Andreas Kiermeier.

- 6.1.13 Contact SA Police (SAPOL) on 131 444 if you are in a public area (e.g. roadside, Forestry SA land, etc) – depending on the location and proximity of neighbours it may be appropriate to contact SAPOL even if you are on private land (the property owner may also want to let neighbours know directly)..

Let SAPOL know that you are from FRSA and that you are “letting them know about shots being fired to euthanise an injured animal.” Depending on the person taking your call, they may ask you for various personal information. Ensure you provide them with your Firearms License Number, especially if they forget to ask! While not a requirement, it can be useful to provide SAPOL with your car details, i.e. make, model, colour and license plate.

Make sure you get a reference number and record it.

**Note:** In some cases SAPOL may not give you permission to euthanise the animal with a firearm, in which case the animal will need to be removed and euthanised by a vet; follow the process under #5 above when permission is not given.



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**Note:** Depending on the location (e.g. windy roads that may be unsafe; a public park/area or when bystanders are strongly opposed to euthanasia of the animal – see below) you may need/want to request SAPOL assistance, e.g. for traffic control. If you do, then make sure you wait until SAPOL arrives – record the details of the attending officer in your logbook.

**Note:** Sometimes SAPOL arrive shortly before or after you – make contact with the attending officer and offer to do the euthanasia. They may or may not allow you to do the euthanasia. If the attending officer performs the euthanasia, then wait until they are done and help with confirmation of death and check for a joey.

- 6.1.14 Check your distance and surroundings (including houses, people, animals, etc.), including backstop, and if safe to do the euthanasia, then decide on an appropriate firearm for the job – this will usually be the .22LR, but may be the shotgun if the animal is moving around.
- 6.1.15 It may be appropriate to let neighbours know (the MOP may be able to do this while you call SAPOL). Let by-standers know what you are about to do, in case they aren't aware.

**Note:** Sometimes by-standers do not understand or do not appreciate that the animal cannot be saved. Be aware that they may attempt to block you from taking a shot. Try to explain the need for the euthanasia for animal welfare reasons, but be prepared to request SAPOL assistance to manage obstructive members of public (131444 – and cite the job number).

**Note:** Do not attempt to euthanise the animal if it is not safe to do so and do not threaten a by-stander with your firearm!

- 6.1.16 Unlock your vehicle.

Retrieve your earmuffs, firearm and ammunition from the vehicle. Depending on the location it may be appropriate to carry the firearm in its bag. If the euthanasia site is close to your vehicle, then it is appropriate to load ammunition into a magazine.

Relock your vehicle.

**Note:** Once ammunition has been loaded into a magazine, the firearm is considered loaded, even if the magazine has not been inserted into the firearm. For this reason it is not appropriate to load ammunition into a magazine and travel to the site or leave ammunition in the magazine after completion of a euthanasia, e.g. to travel to a second site.

- 6.1.17 Move into an appropriate position and load your ammunition/magazine. Check the backstop again and ensure that you can take the shot safely.
- 6.1.18 Euthanise the animal – see Section 4.1 in the NCP for details. A shot to the head is preferable.
- 6.1.19 Approaching the animal from the side where its spine is, to avoid injury from kicking legs, confirm unconsciousness and death. This should be done by first checking the eye reflex (i.e. tap the eyeball – there must be no blinking reflex) and then that the iris is fully dilated/dilating. Check whether there is any sign of rhythmic breathing. If there is an eye reflex or rhythmic breathing, then a close range follow up shot to the brain is required.



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**Note:** For close range shots (initial or follow-up) do not place the muzzle directly onto the animal's head (i.e. touching); leave 1-2 cm distance to allow hot gases to expand and escape the muzzle when pulling the trigger.

**Note:** It is common that the heart will continue beating for some minutes, and this is not a concern. In addition, the animal's muscles may contract giving the impression that the animal is "still moving". Provided that there is no eye reflex or breathing these movements are of no concern. It may be prudent to explain what you are checking and what is happening to any by-standers.

- 6.1.20 Once you have confirmed a lack of eye reflex and breathing, make your firearm safe and secure it (unloaded) and the ammunition in your vehicle.
- 6.1.21 Remember to re-lock your vehicle.
- 6.1.22 Call SAPOL on 131 444, quote your job number and inform them that job is now complete.
- 6.1.23 It is usually wise to take a photo of the deceased animal, showing its injuries, for evidence purposes (if needed).
- 6.1.24 Confirm the sex of the animal and check a doe's pouch for a joey. If no joey is present, take note of the size of the pouch and check if the doe is lactating. If she is lactating, then this indicates that either a joey has been thrown from the pouch or that an at-foot joey may be nearby.
  - a. If there is a joey in the pouch, then assess its size. Joeys weighing around 300g are considered viable and should be removed from the pouch as follows – if in doubt about the weight follow these instructions anyway and weigh the joey later:
    - i. Do not pull the joey off the teat – this can result in a broken or dislocated jaw and will require the joey to be euthanised.
    - ii. Ideally, place a safety pin through the teat close to the joey's mouth to prevent the joey from swallowing the teat.
    - iii. Cut the teat between the base and the safety pin.
    - iv. Carefully remove the joey from the pouch. You may need to carefully cut the pouch open with a knife or medical scissors to remove the joey without getting legs/arms caught and injured.
    - v. Place the joey into a fabric pouch and keep it warm, ideally on your body (i.e. place it under your top).
    - vi. Contact FRSA Kangaroo coordinator (see Appendix 3) and discuss placement options for the joey.
  - b. If there is a joey in the pouch but it is clearly too small to be viable or is viable but has obvious injuries (e.g. broken leg), then the joey needs to be euthanised also. The preferred method (as described by the NCP) is to remove the joey from the pouch, deliver a forceful blow to the head to stun the joey (e.g. hit its head against a rock, post or other solid object) and then rapidly sever the head from the body with a sharp blade. Return the joey to the doe's pouch.



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**Note:** Be mindful of any bystanders and explain what you are doing and why. Depending on the situation and people involved, it may be necessary to remove the joey and euthanise it later.

- c. If there is an at-foot joey nearby, then an assessment needs to be made whether the joey is large enough to be on its own or not. As a guide, joeys that are thigh-high or taller when they sit up (weighing approximately 8 kg or more; roughly about thigh high on an average sized person) are considered large enough to survive on their own. Smaller joeys need to be caught and taken into care or failing that must be euthanised. You may need to get assistance to capture an at-foot joey that is too small.

**Note:** You may need to move the doe to an appropriate nearby location to reduce the risk of an at-foot joey being hit by a car.

- d. If the doe is lactating but no joey can be seen, then make a note of this. In some cases, a joey will return to its mum once people have disappeared. Ideally, the doe is re-checked that night or the following morning.

**Note:** You may need to move the doe to an appropriate nearby location to reduce the risk of an at-foot joey being hit by a car.

- 6.1.25 Mark the carcass (e.g. stock marking paint) to identify that it has been checked for a joey. If needed, move the carcass to less obvious spot, e.g. under a bush for roadside euthanasias, or follow the instructions of a ranger.

While FRSA generally does not provide a body removal service, use your judgement and abilities to decide whether the carcass should be removed to a veterinary practice for a body dump – call the vet to arrange this. It is preferable that you have a working relation with the vet and not all vets will allow you to do a body dump.

**Note:** Animal Welfare League do not charge vets for pickup of deceased wildlife and have no problem doing so. However, ultimately this option is at the discretion of the vet (remember, they have a business to run and likely have other animals in their freezer).

If the carcass is in a built-up area and is likely to upset members of public, then cover the carcass with a blue tarp and notify the local council to arrange removal (e.g. using the My Local Services app which will notify the appropriate council). Alternatively, call council and let them know that you will wait for them to arrive and collect the carcass (where appropriate).

**Note:** Council dumps do not accept animal carcasses though Wingfield may (this has not yet been tested).

- 6.1.26 Inform the FRSA phone operator about the completion of the job, either by calling or sending an SMS, e.g. “Aldgate complete. Doe with broken right leg. No joey, no lactation. SAPOL ref 1159”

- 6.1.27 Inform the MOP who reported the animal, either by calling or an SMS, of the completion of the job, and if necessary, the outcome. Most people appreciate getting an update as it confirms that FRSA is acting on their information.



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## Appendix 1 – Logbook example

Incident #: 2022/

Date: / /

Time:

Euth.  Reloc<sup>n</sup>  Other

Completion Time:

Agency:  FRSA  Other:

Log #:

Odometer Start:

End:

km:

Location:

### Animal & Reason:

Contact Person:

Contact Number:

SAPOL Ref #:

Time:

On Completion

SAPOL Attending Officer:

**Permission** to bring firearm onto property to euthanise an injured animal

Property owner/custodian:

Signature:

Phone:

**Animal Details:** M / F

**For doe, pouch check**  Yes  No **Lactating**  Yes  No

**Joey:**  Pouch  At foot  No **Action:**

**Equip:**  .22LR  .22WMR  Shotgun:

#Shots:

**Death confirmed by:**  Corneal reflex  No heartbeat

Max. dilated pupil  Lack of Movement (5min)  Lack rhythmic. breath

**Disposal of carcass:**  In situ  Landholder  Council notified

Removed for Research  Removed Other

**Completion Time:**

Notes:





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## Appendix 2 – NatureMaps

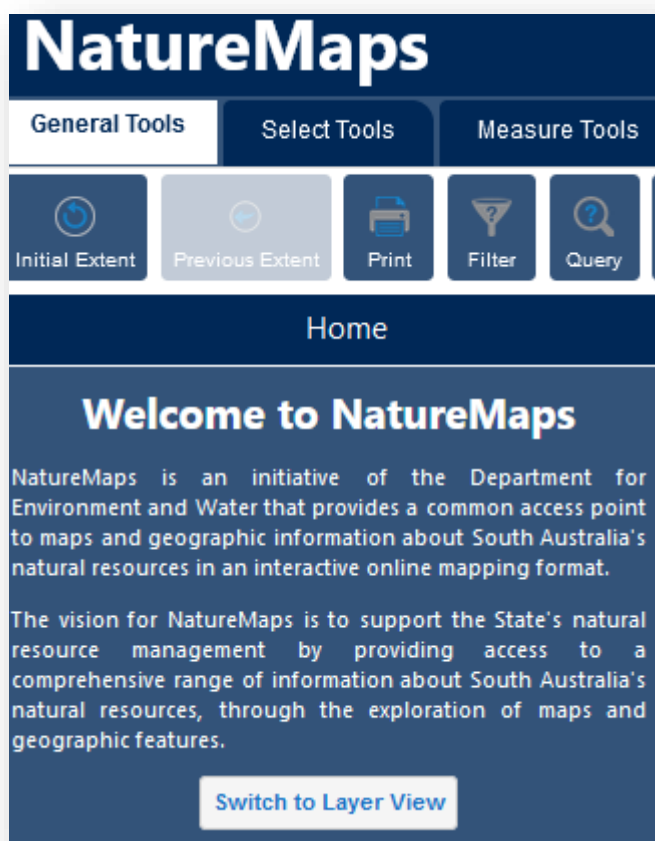
SA Governments Graphical Information Service NatureMaps can be accessed at:  
<https://data.environment.sa.gov.au/NatureMaps/Pages/default.aspx>

To check whether an area falls within a National Park follow these steps:

1. Click the Start button



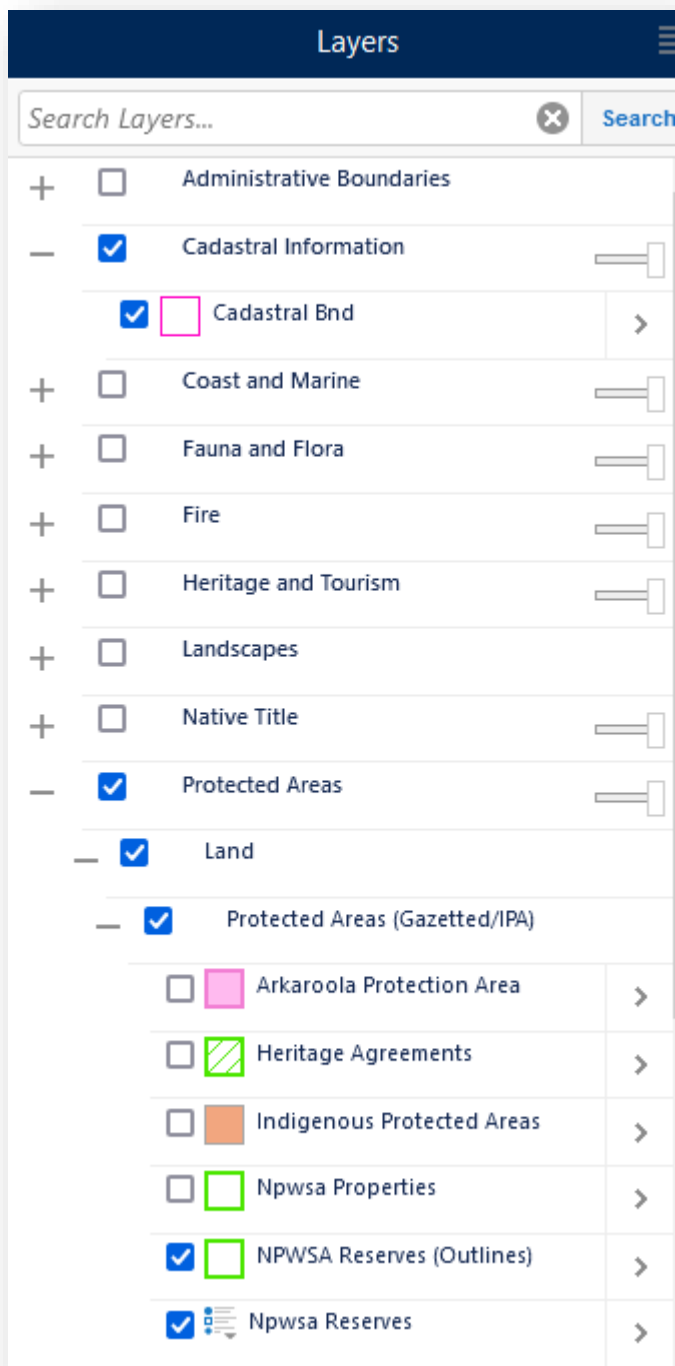
2. Once NatureMaps has loaded, click the “Switch to Layer View” button



3. From the available layers select Cadastral Information > Cadastral Bnd and Protected Areas > Land > Protected Areas (Gasetted/IPA) > NPWSA Reserves  
Note: you must select a layer before you can select the sublayers.



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## Appendix 3 – Contact details

### FAUNA RESCUE SA CONTACTS:

<b>Hotline:</b>	8289 0896
<b>FR Kangaroo Coordinators:</b>	Diana: 0411 267 841 or 08 8536 8263 Jo Geyer: 0400 711 390
<b>Department of Environment and Water:</b>	24-Hour Duty Ranger: 0448 730 085
<b>National Parks and Wildlife:</b>	24-Hour Duty Ranger: 0427 556 676
	Black Hill Conservation Park Office (0900 to 1700 only): 8336 0901
<b>SA Water (24 Hours):</b>	1300 883 121
	<u>Within</u> Happy Valley Reservoir only: Emergency number 1800 036 588
<b>Forestry SA:</b>	<a href="https://www.forestrysa.com.au/contact/">https://www.forestrysa.com.au/contact/</a>
<b>Traffic Management Centre:</b>	1800 018 313