

**23 March 2011**

## **AS THE ROAR APPROACHES, THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL REMINDS HUNTERS TO 'LOAD YOUR FIREARM ONLY WHEN YOU ARE READY TO FIRE'**

The mating season for Red Deer in New Zealand starts in late March and many hunters are already making preparations to head into the bush for the start of what is commonly known as 'The Roar'.

The Roar is the season when stags become vocal, bellowing a challenge to rival stags to protect their harem of hinds and is regarded by many as the highlight of the hunting calendar.

However as the roar approaches, Mike Spray, Firearms and Hunter Training Programme Manager for NZ Mountain Safety Council reminds hunters to follow rule number 3 of the seven basic rules of firearms and 'Load your firearm only when you are ready to fire'.

Failure by some hunters to comply with this rule has resulted in ten tragic deaths in the past ten years. "That is one a year and yet all these deaths were avoidable" says Mr Spray.

Hunters need to remember to only load the magazine on reaching the hunting area and to unload completely, including the magazine on leaving the hunting area.

"Chamber a round only when you have positively identified the target beyond all doubt, checked your firing zone and are ready to fire. If game gets away unload your firearm immediately", added Mr Spray.

Some of the ten incidents actually occurred after the hunting trip had ended including during the cleaning of a firearm at home, whilst climbing over a fence and when transporting the firearm in a vehicle.

"It is extremely unsafe to have a loaded firearm in a vehicle at any time", said Mr Spray.

To check a firearm is unloaded firearms users need to sight the magazine and inside the chamber to ensure no rounds are present. This includes a very thorough check of the tubular magazines of lever and pump actions and semi automatic firearms.

"The more times you check that the firearm is unloaded, the less likely there will be another tragic incident and an unnecessary death" said Mr Spray.

"I am hopeful we will have an incident free roar this year and I urge all hunters to follow all parts of the seven basic rules of firearms safety at all times", added Mr Spray.

**The Seven Basic Rules of Safe Firearms Handling are:**

1. **TREAT EVERY FIREARM AS LOADED**
  - Check every firearm yourself.
  - Pass or accept only an open or unloaded firearm.
2. **ALWAYS POINT FIREARMS IN A SAFE DIRECTION**
  - Loaded or unloaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction.
3. **LOAD A FIREARM ONLY WHEN READY TO FIRE**
  - Load only the magazine after you reach your shooting area.
  - Load the chamber only when ready to shoot.
  - Completely unload before leaving the shooting area.
4. **IDENTIFY YOUR TARGET BEYOND ALL DOUBT**
  - Movement, colour, sound and shape can all deceive you.
  - Assume colour, shape, sound, and shape to be human until proven otherwise
5. **CHECK YOUR FIRING ZONE**
  - THINK! What may happen if you miss your target? What might you hit between you and the target or beyond?
  - Do not fire when you know others are in your firing zone
6. **STORE FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION SAFELY**
  - When not in use, lock away the bolt, firearm and ammunition separately.
  - Never leave firearms in a vehicle that is unattended
7. **AVOID ALCOHOL AND DRUGS WHEN HANDLING FIREARMS**
  - Good judgement is the key to safe use of firearms.

**Ends: 583 words**

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**ABOUT THE NEW ZEALAND MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL**

The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council was formed in 1965 in response to the increasing number of mountain, bush and firearms fatalities. Today, NZMSC is a national organisation responsible for safety in land based outdoor activities. We facilitate the setting of standards, offer training, distribute resources, lead public awareness campaigns and foster positive support in the community so that more people can discover and enjoy New Zealand's outdoors safely.

**[www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz)**