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SECOND TRAGIC HUNTING DEATH PROMPTS MOUNTAIN SAFETY COUNCIL TO URGE ALL HUNTERS TO MAKE FIREARMS SAFETY AN ABSOLUTE PRIORITY

The death of a second hunter, reported to have been killed in the early hours of Sunday morning in the Cattle Flat area of Southland, could have been avoided if basic firearms safety rules had been followed says Mike Spray, Firearms and Hunter Training Programme Manager for the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council.

This second death follows an incident at Easter where a hunter was shot dead whilst deer hunting in the Wairarapa. That incident appears to be due to the shooter failing to identify their target and it could once again be what has happened on this occasion. "Identifying you target beyond all doubt" is one of the seven basic rules of firearms safety and all hunters should be very familiar with this rule.

When using a spotlight to hunt at night, as this incident has been reported to be, it is imperative that hunters positively identify their target as non-human. "Hunters need to see sufficient of the target animal to positively confirm it is the intended target and never ever shoot at movement, colour, shape or sound alone," said Mr Spray.

"I think at times hunters can get caught up in the heat of the moment and drop their guard. Hunters need to be aware of what is termed 'buck fever', recognise it and counter it with logical thought.

"ALL hunter deaths are avoidable and it is extremely tragic that two people have died unnecessarily," added Mr Spray.

"The roar is not quite over yet and next weekend the duck shooting season begins. This second death should be another tragic and timely reminder for all hunters to make firearms safety an absolute priority at all times," said Mr Spray. "If there is any doubt DO NOT shoot. No meat is better than no mate."

The Firearms Safety Code: Seven Basic Rules of Safe Firearms Handling:

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 the magazine only 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 if 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.

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A print ready image of the Firearms Safety Code can be obtained by visiting:

www.adventuresmart.org.nz/posters

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.

MSC's volunteer firearms instructors are approved by NZ Police to deliver firearm safety training and administer the Firearm Safety Test to new firearms licence applicants. MSC is also proactive in delivering key firearms safety messaging campaigns throughout New Zealand and produces publications including the 'Going Hunting' pamphlet.

www.mountainsafety.org.nz