

Airguns and the law (continued)

- It is an offence to shoot pet animals. Besides being abhorrent to most people, this is, above all others, the offence that gives all air weapon shooters a bad name.
- It is an offence to have an air weapon with intent to damage property.
- It is an offence to have an air weapon with intent to endanger life.

This may seem a long and onerous list, but it is all no more than common sense. If you use your gun safely and responsibly, you will be in no danger of committing an offence.



In Conclusion

You should always remember that airguns are capable of inflicting severe injuries and even of killing people. Irresponsible owners have given airgun shooters a bad name by breaking windows, shooting pets and protected wild birds and even sniping at people. You can do your bit to help change this perception by using your gun in a way that demonstrates that air weapon shooters are, in the main, responsible people who pose no threat to anyone. Always follow the guidelines set out in this leaflet.

Useful contacts

The following is a list of organisations which can help you get the most out of your gun.

The National Smallbore Rifle Association
Lord Roberts Centre
Bisley Camp
Brookwood
Woking
Surrey, GU24 0NP

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation
Marford Mill
Rossett
Wrexham
Clwyd, LL12 0HL

The British Shooting Sports Council
PO Box 11
Bexhill on Sea
TN40 1ZZ

The Gun Trade Association Ltd
PO Box 43
Tewkesbury
Gloucestershire
GL20 5ZE



Home Office

AIR WEAPONS



A Brief Guide to Safety

IF YOU ARE READING THIS, YOU HAVE PROBABLY JUST GOT YOUR FIRST AIRGUN OR ARE THINKING OF GETTING ONE. BEFORE YOU START SHOOTING, READING THIS LEAFLET WILL HELP YOU TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GUN BY USING IT SAFELY AND RESPONSIBLY.



Safety

Airguns can, in the wrong hands, be lethal. However, by following a set of simple, commonsense safety rules, you can ensure that you are never the cause of an accident.

- Always assume your gun is loaded. You'd be amazed how many accidents have happened with guns their owners "knew" were unloaded.
- Never point your gun at another person.
- Never carry a loaded air weapon in a public place and when you are carrying your gun in public, keep it fastened securely away in a gunslip or case.
- Never load your gun until you are ready to shoot.
- Never fire your gun unless you are certain the shot will be a safe one. This means checking there are no other people nearby who might be endangered by the shot and ensuring there is a suitable backstop to catch pellets and prevent ricochets.
- When at a shoot, never let your gun out of your sight.
- Never let young children near your gun unsupervised.
- Never touch anyone else's gun unless you have permission.



Getting Started

Air weapons are mainly sold from firearms dealerships and outdoor sports shops. Air rifles with muzzle energies of less than twelve foot pounds (16.3 joules) and air pistols with muzzle energies of less than six foot pounds (8.15 joules) can be bought by any person aged seventeen years or more. However, if you want an air rifle with a muzzle energy greater than twelve foot pounds, you must first obtain a firearm certificate from your local police firearms licensing department. Air pistols with muzzle energies greater than six foot pounds or air pistols and air rifles which use the self contained gas cartridge system are prohibited weapons which may only be acquired with the authority of the Secretary of State. If you are in any doubt, seek advice from your local police firearms licensing department.

Having bought your gun, you can use it for a number of purposes including target shooting, vermin control and hunting small ground game. However, if you have never shot before, you would be well advised to go to a shooting club with an airgun section* and learn from a qualified instructor how to handle your gun safely and responsibly and become an accurate shot. You may find that target shooting provides all the challenge you need or you may want to move on to shooting live quarry.

If you do move on to live quarry shooting you must be careful only to shoot on private property over which you have permission to

- After using your gun, make sure it is unloaded and store it in a secure place to which children cannot gain access. Store ammunition in a separate secure place.

shoot. Provided you follow the safety rules contained in this leaflet, you will be able to shoot safely and enjoyably even on quite small pieces of ground.

* The National Smallbore Rifle Association should be able to give you details of clubs in your area. You will find their address at the end of this leaflet.



Airguns and the law

Although air weapons, with very few exceptions as outlined above, are not required to be kept on a firearm certificate, they are still classed as firearms and fall under the control of the firearms legislation. As an airgun shooter, you must make sure that you know the law and keep within it. If you don't, you could find yourself in court facing charges with sanctions ranging from heavy fines right up to life imprisonment. The following is a list of the laws by which you must abide and you might be surprised at just how long it is.

- It is an offence to sell or make a gift of an air weapon to a person under seventeen years of age.
- It is an offence for anyone under seventeen to carry an air weapon unless:-
 - they are under the supervision of a person aged twenty one or more or;
 - they are on private land and have permission from the occupier or;
 - they are shooting as a member of an approved club or;
 - they are shooting at a shooting gallery for miniature rifles.

- It is an offence for a person under seventeen shooting unsupervised on private land to allow any pellets to cross the boundaries of the property.
- It is an offence for any person, regardless of age, to be in possession of an air weapon in a public place without a reasonable excuse. A reasonable excuse might be carrying a gun to and from a target shooting club or to and from land on which you have permission to shoot. It would also include taking a gun to and from a gunsmith for repair or service or taking a new gun home from the dealer.
- It is an offence to trespass with an air weapon, be that in a building or on land.
- It is an offence to have an air weapon if you are a person prohibited from possessing a firearm by section 21 of the 1968 Act. This section prohibits anyone who has been sentenced to a custodial sentence of between three months and three years from possessing an air weapon or other firearm for five years from the date of release. Anyone sentenced to three years or more is prohibited for life.
- It is an offence to fire your gun within fifty feet (fifteen metres) of the centre of a public road in such a way as to endanger or impede any road user.
- It is an offence to shoot protected wild birds or animals. When live quarry shooting, it is your responsibility to make sure that you only shoot legal quarry.