

# Firearms and Aircraft

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Here is a plain language guide to transport and use of firearms in aircraft. You are strongly advised to clarify the requirements with your aircraft operator when you book your flight, whether scheduled or charter – they are responsible for ensuring the current regulations are met.

Section 92 of the Civil Aviation Rules applies to carriage of dangerous goods  
[https://www.caa.govt.nz/rules/Part\\_092\\_Brief.htm](https://www.caa.govt.nz/rules/Part_092_Brief.htm)

## Leaving NZ with a firearm and/or ammunition

- All firearms and ammunition leaving NZ must have a permit. Notify your airline before you get to the airport.
- Many countries have pre-travel approval requirements – check early (e.g. UK requires two weeks).
- Firearms and ammunition must be in suitable locked receptacles.
- Firearms and ammunition must be checked baggage – not in carry-on baggage.
- Individual airlines have responsibility for enforcing the rules. Their requirements vary. Check with your airline.
- Air New Zealand: [www.airnewzealand.co.nz/dangerous-goods](http://www.airnewzealand.co.nz/dangerous-goods)

## Carrying firearms/ammunition on a domestic airline (e.g. Air NZ, Jetstar)

- There is no requirement to pre-notify the airline.
- Firearms and ammunition must be in suitable, locked receptacles.
- No firearms or ammunition are permitted in carry-on baggage. Check them in.
- Air New Zealand: [www.airnewzealand.co.nz/dangerous-goods](http://www.airnewzealand.co.nz/dangerous-goods)
- Jetstar: <http://www.jetstar.com/nz/en/planning-and-booking/baggage/dangerous-goods>

## Carrying firearms/ammunition on a light aircraft

- Applies to unpressurised aircraft under 5700kg certified take off weight. These are the types of fixed wing aircraft and helicopters that will transport you to your hunting site.
- It's OK to take unlocked firearms and ammunition on these flights as long as:
  - You identify each firearm to the operator and the operator approves
  - There are no passengers on the flight who are not associated with the firearm(s)
  - The operator establishes safety procedures
  - The pilot has final say

## Shooting from helicopters

Civil Aviation Rules govern conduct related to the aircraft, while the Wild Animal Control Act governs requirements for landowner permission to hunt animals. Aerial hunters must comply with both.

- Shooting from helicopters is permitted under **Civil Aviation Rules** if:
  - It is for shooting or immobilising animals on the ground
  - The discharge does not pose a hazard to people or property on the ground
  - The discharge is not over a city, town or open air assembly of people
  - The firearm is not loaded until within the area in which it is intended to be discharged
  - The aircraft is only carrying persons performing an essential function associated with shooting and immobilising animals
- There are no restrictions on who can shoot from a helicopter, and there are no formal training requirements.
- The aircraft operator is responsible. The Civil Aviation Authority expects a full briefing of all passengers by the pilot to ensure rules are met.
- Under section 8(2) of the **Wild Animal Control Act 1977** it is illegal for anyone to “hunt or kill or have in his possession any wild animal on any land, or discharge a firearm into or over or across any land, without the express authority of the owner or occupier of that land.”
  - Without landowner permission you can’t shoot over any land.
  - Without landowner permission it is illegal to recover any wild animal from any land.
  - Shooting over land administered by the Department of Conservation requires a written consent for the type of activity you are undertaking, e.g. wild animal recovery (WARO).
  - Department of Conservation Aerially Assisted Trophy Hunting permits forbid shooting from an aircraft.

If in doubt, refer to the Civil Aviation Rules and discuss the situation with (a) the landowner, and/or (b) your airline or pilot, who has final responsibility.

## Other considerations:

Minimal legal requirements are specified above. Additional requirements apply to members of certain groups. For example, the **NZ Deerstalkers’ Association** fair chase guidelines exclude shooting from aircraft, **Safari Club International** prohibits use of aircraft for shooting, intentional hazing or herding of game, and the **NZ Professional Hunting Guides Association** prohibits clients shooting from aircraft and carrying shotguns in aircraft during aerially assisted trophy hunting.