

Code of conduct for a Surround

This code must be read in conjunction with the official codes of conduct in the SA Wingshooters Pocketbook.

By Johann van de Giessen. Pics by André van der Westhuizen



Safety Above All

The Hunt Master is the only person in charge of the running of the shoot, and he has authority to enforce safety and to discipline shooters if necessary. This person can have captains strategically placed to help him in the running of the shoot, and their instructions carry the same weight as those of the Hunt Master.

No dead bird can ever compensate for a shooting friend hurt or maimed or killed. Experienced shooters are aware at all times where other shooters are. We never shoot at an obscured object or at something we cannot make out clearly. We do not consume any alcohol

before or during a shoot. It is our duty to immediately correct any transgression of safety rules or unsafe behaviour by anyone. To this end all guns must accept that the hunt master or one of his captains will immediately point out any transgressions or dangerous behaviour with the view of ensuring a safe and successful hunt, and that this should not be seen or taken as a personal attack.

The golden rule of surround and driven shooting is “blue skies” only. This term is often misinterpreted. It describes a shot taken at a bird that is elevated above the shooter at an angle of about 45° and can only be reasonably applied to an incoming bird flying at the line of guns. To this end no shot can safely be taken at any bird that gets up at the shooters feet and flies away from him/her at any angle into the circle. The aim of a surround is to get as many birds as possible in the centre of the shooting party and thus only birds that are escaping the circle can be shot. Once the circle is complete, beaters from alternating sides will be sent in to flush

birds; these beaters (should guns be used in this fashion) are not allowed to shoot at all, and as soon as beaters enter the circle, no shooting to the inside is allowed, so only shots at birds that have crossed the line can be taken. This procedure will continue until all birds are flushed or the bag for that drive has been attained.

Absolutely no shooting of furred game, i.e. hares or rabbits, is permitted. Shooting down the line of guns are also not permitted, so it is essential to only shoot a crossing bird once it has passed outside the circle.

The aim of a surround is for the whole party to function as one cohesive unit, so it is up to the individual guns to ensure that they stay in line and stick to the plan. To this end the use of two-way radios is highly recommended.

Good gun manners require that we be considerate of our fellow shooters, and to this end a gun running forward to try and get in a better position is not acceptable, and because you cannot shoot into the circle it will prove fruitless. Hanging back or hiding away will have the effect that birds see an escape route, and one gun will have lots of shooting to the detriment of everybody else. Please remember that your initial function is to act as a beater for the gun opposite you, as he is acting for you.

Respect for Life

The primary target species for a surround is guineafowl, a notoriously tough bird, so use shot in sizes 4 or 5. Francolin may also be encountered, and where it is legal and safe to shoot and the landowner has given permission to this extent. Species that may be encountered and not shot under any circumstances are



Shoot



the various species of bustards (korhane).

We try to avoid wounding birds. We strive to improve our shooting skills on the clay target range and do not shoot at game that is out of range. We avoid shooting 'double birds' (i.e. a left and a right) under certain conditions. It is our duty to look for any wounded birds, and this may end up creating a break in the line through which birds can escape.

Wingshooters have respect for life; we practice self-restraint and condemn killing sprees and any wastage of bagged birds. We condemn the awarding of prizes for birds shot and any form of competition in live bird shooting. We never shoot at birds on the ground, and support the principle of bag limits as part of a shooting ethic. We make every effort to retrieve shot or wounded game. We avoid public displays of dead birds.

General behaviour

At all times listen to the instructions of the hunt master and his captains and follow them as best and as fast as you can. At no time are you permitted to start shooting while the line is forming prior to the hunt master giving the order and at no time will you be permitted to shoot after the command to stop shooting. Ignoring these commands may lead to a dangerous situation or a unsuccessful (read spoilt) surround.

Considering that a surround can sometimes take the better part of an hour to complete and involve some guns and beaters walking a kilometre or more to get into position and the opposite sides of the surround being up to 3 kilometres away, nobody wants to be responsible for foiling the best laid plans.

Because of respect for the environment, we do not litter. We clean up behind ourselves, even the litter of other people. Please endeavour to pick up all your cases and if you see an old case lying around pick it up as well, as next year somebody will be picking up the one that got away from you.

Wingshooters always strive to learn more about their quarry, the game birds and the waterfowl. We always try to identify the gamebird before shooting, and obey the law and comply with hunting regulations.

Gun Dogs

Wingshooters encourage the use of controlled gun dogs. This means that a dog should never be allowed to make a nuisance of itself or to show any aggression and that the dog should be kept under control at all times (so no matter how well trained your dog is take a collar and lead along).

In the event of a dog misbehaving it is up to the owner to ensure that it does not spoil anybody else's shoot, so if it has to walk on a leash the whole day, so be it.

Please note that the use of gundogs on a surround is primarily retrieving, the only time pointing and flushing dogs are allowed to range is when the circle is complete and the beaters move in, and then the handler of the dog can take his dog in as well, all the while keeping in mind that he/she then becomes a handler/ beater only and cannot fire a shot until he/she has again taken his/her place at the outside of the circle.

