

Air Rifle shooting in NZ

Everything you need to know about getting into air rifle shooting



In New Zealand, air rifles offer a safe and affordable way to enjoy target shooting and small-game hunting. Purchasers just need to be over 18, or 16+ with a firearms licence. This guide explains how air rifles work, where you can shoot and accessories you need to make your target shooting great and your hunting successful!

Intro. Challenging fun & hunting benefits

Air rifles require no licence and are great for target shooting and hunting.*

Challenging Fun with Air Rifle Target Shooting

Air rifle target shooting requires focus, patience, and precision. It's a fun outdoor activity that challenges your skills and allows friendly competition with family and friends. Many beginners have progressed into competitive shooting at national and international levels, including Gun City team members who have competed at the Olympics.

Pest control and food for the table

Not only is hunting important for New Zealand's environment by reducing the number of pests but many people harvest rabbit meat for cooking up a delicious meal or use possum fur for clothing.

**provided you are over 18 or over 16 with a firearms licence. Excl. PCP.*



Rabbit Pie Harvested Using an Air Rifle

'My 6 year old son has developed the skills of slowing down and concentrating intently, through target shooting'



1. Who can buy & use an air rifle

Buying air rifles

In New Zealand, anyone aged 18 or older can legally buy and use an air rifle. Individuals aged 16 or 17 with a valid firearms licence can also purchase and use air rifles.

Using air rifles

Air rifles may be used safely by:

- Anyone 18 or older
- 17-year-olds with a valid NZ firearms licence
- Under 18s without a licence, under direct adult supervision



Minimum age to buy: 18 years old
16–17-year-olds with firearms licence: Can buy and use an air rifle
Under 18 without licence: Can use under direct adult supervision

2. How an air rifle works



Power source

Air rifles work by using compressed air to propel a pellet or BB down the barrel. To compress the air there are two main types of air rifles that do this: 1. Spring or gas piston, which rely on the user to 'cock' the barrel. This involves cranking the barrel or underlever back, to store energy in the spring or gas system. 2. CO2 powered. A disposable cylinder of CO2 releases the pressure meaning no 'cocking' of the barrel is needed.

Not a gun, quieter and less recoil

Unlike firearms, which use gun powder and ignition to send projectiles toward the target, air rifles use just air (or gas). In every instance (excl. PCP*) air rifles are less powerful than firearms meaning less noise and recoil.

**PCP - Pre-Charged Pneumatic using a high pressure air cylinder. Requires a firearms license to purchase in New Zealand.*

What Do They Shoot

Air rifles shoot pellets or BB's. Pellets have a pointed/rounded or flat head and 'skirt' while a bb is a ball. Pellets are usually most accurate and best suited to hunting.

Spring or gas powered, creating compressed air to shoot a pellet



Pellet



BB's

Most air rifles come in either .177 (4.5mm) or .22 (5.5mm) calibre, though there are larger calibres available in certain models. BB pellet air rifles are almost always .177 (4.5mm) cal."

3. Low power & high power

Back yard air rifles - low power

Beginner air rifles are designed with new shooters in mind. Typically .177 calibre with velocities of 500-600 fps, they're lighter, easier to hold, and perfect for backyard shooting at 10-20 meter distances. Great for building skills and confidence before moving up to higher-powered models.

Hunting/longer range targets - high power

High-power air rifles deliver 1000+ fps in .177 calibre and 720+ fps in .22 calibre, giving you an effective range of 50-80 meters for hunting and target shooting. The .177 shoots flatter with less bullet drop, while the .22 hits harder and handles wind better but has more arc in its trajectory. Always use a heavy-duty backstop when shooting high-powered air rifles in your backyard.



Beginner Air Rifles: Usually 500-600fps (.177)

Hunting/High-power Air Rifles: 1000fps+ (.177) or 720fps+ (.22)

Always follow legal requirements and safety guidelines

4. Where you can shoot

Backyard Shooting

Due to the lower power of air rifles (compared to a regular firearm), you are allowed to shoot an air rifle in your back yard. You must, however, make sure you can do so safely and ensure that no projectiles leave your property or put anyone in harms way.



Backyard

Farm Land Shooting

Many people who buy air rifles have a rural or semi-rural block of land that is suitable to shoot on. Air rifles are an affordable way to control pests (like rabbits and possums) on farm land.



Farmland

5. Safely shooting in your backyard

Key tips for a safe backyard shooting experience

Air Rifle Power

You can shoot with any power of air rifle in your back yard as long as you do so safely. Many people buy a high power air rifle with both target and hunting capability.

Safe Back Stop

It's important to ensure your pellets do not go further than your property boundary. This is why it is recommended to have a good, solid back stop. This way, if you miss the target you're aiming at, the pellet is stopped safely within your property. We recommend pellet trap targets (pictured right) or some thick sheets of wood. It is also recommended to be shooting on an angle where your pellet will travel into the ground if the target is missed. We sell a number of targets specifically designed to capture pellets.



Pellet Trap Target

Noise

Air rifles are generally fairly quiet, relative to regular firearms. High powered air rifles are louder, due to their muzzle velocities, but many of these rifles have integrated silencers, or threaded barrels allowing them take a silencer. Generally, in an outside environment, no hearing protection is required when shooting an air rifle.



6. Backyard air rifles buyers guide

The Affordable Starter - *Air chief junior .177*

This affordable target rifle is lightweight and features a safe break barrel action with an easy-to-cock, low-power spring. Made in China.



Air Rifle from **\$99.99**

Scoped Package from **\$149**

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Classic Look & Highly Accurate - *BSA V-Scout*

Built with high quality components, the V-Scout is an exceptionally accurate and smooth cocking, spring powered, break barrel air rifle. The short stock makes it a great fit for young shooters.



Air Rifle from **\$289**

Scoped Package from **\$339**

[Click to browse →](#)

European, comfortable & lightweight - *Delta Fox GT Whisper .177*

The gamo delta fox GT whisper .177 air rifle is a small, lightweight and low powered gamo airgun with a special stock design, easy to hold for the youngest members of the household.



Air Rifle from **\$299**

Scoped Package from **\$349**

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Quiet & Easy to Reload - *Air Chief rapid repeater .177*

The Air Chief rapid repeater is a quiet, fast and easy to reload airgun with a silencer. A bolt action with a 10-round magazine which makes for fast reloading without needing to break the barrel.



Air Rifle from **\$399**

Red Dot Package from **\$599**

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7A. Hunting with an air rifle

Tips for safe and effective hunting in New Zealand

Where you can go

You can shoot pests on your own land or if you are given permission to shoot on a farmers land. Gaining permission from farmers may be a case of putting up a poster at the local notice board or posting online.

What you can shoot

Mice, rats, possums, and rabbits are common pests in New Zealand that damage crops and native ecosystems. Rabbits provide quality meat for the table, while possum fur is valued for warm clothing.



Rabbit



Possum



7B. Features to improve your hunt

From increased power and faster reloading to precision optics, these three features can transform your hunting experience:

1. Higher Power

While the 1000fps models are effective, new high power models offer as much as 1400fps (.177 cal). This gives you more range and hitting power like the Gamo Swarm Magnum below.



2. Magazine Fed

While traditional air rifles require you to load each pellet manually, magazine fed air rifles hold 10 rounds where simply cocking the air rifle will load the next pellet for you. This makes a follow up shot much faster!



3. Scopes

While many air rifles have 'open sights', we recommend putting a scope on your air rifle. This allows you to see further, and be more accurate with your shot placement.

8. Hunting air rifles buyers guide

Single Shot Hunter - *BSA Comet Evo Red Devil .177 or .22*

The BSA Red Devil is lightweight, single shot & spring powered. An affordable European entry level hunting air rifle.



Air Rifle from **\$329**

Scoped Air Rifle from **\$379**

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Affordable Multi-Shot Hunter - *Swarm Whisper 10x Gen2*

The Gamo Swarm Whisper is our most affordable multi-shot, magazine fed hunting air rifle making reloading faster. Made in Spain, this quality air rifle is best for quiet and fast dispatch of vermin.



Air Rifle from **\$549**

Scoped Air Rifle from **\$599**

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High Power Multi-Shot - *Swarm Magnum Pro 10x Gen3i*

Featuring a multi-shot magazine and ergonomic stock, the Swarm Magnum is the most powerful and popular air rifle we sell. Delivering over 1300fps in .177 and 1100fps in .22, this can shoot further and hit harder than standard hunting air rifles. Also available in .25 which is excellent for possum hunting.



Air Rifle from **\$899**

Scoped Air Rifle from **\$999**

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Traditional Look, High Power - *BSA Merlin XL Multi Shot*

The Merlin XL multi shot utilises the Gamo Swarm magazine and an English made hammer forged barrel. Finished with a great looking and comfortable feeling traditional chequered beech wood stock.



Synthetic from **\$1099**

Beech Wood from **\$1199**

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9. Essential gear for safe and accurate air rifle shooting

Gear that ensures safety, accuracy, and fun

To shoot safely and effectively, you'll need proper accessories. Quality gear protects you, improves your accuracy, and extends the life of your rifle.

Below is our recommendations:

Ammo: Pellets & BBs



There are a many types of pellets for different purposes. Its good to try 2-3 types to see which will shoot best through your air rifle.

Targets



Accurately sight in your rifle, hone your shooting skills and challenge yourself with a fun array of targets.

Scopes



Good optics will increase your accuracy by clearly helping you to see more.

Eye Protection



Important for back yard target shooting.

Gun Storage & Bags



Your air rifle will need to be stored safely. We recommend a gun bag for transportation and gun safe for piece of mind.

Bipods



Very helpful to stay steady and hit the target when target shooting and teaching younger shooters.

10. How to buy an air rifle

Option A: Head into your local Gun City

Bring ID for 18 years and older or 16 years with a firearms licence

or

Option B: Buy online and collect from your local Gun City

For instore pickup: bring ID for 18 years and older or 16 years with a firearms licence

If your local Gun City is to far away, buy online and collect from your gun dealer

Free shipping on purchases over \$499

11. Other types of backyard target shooting

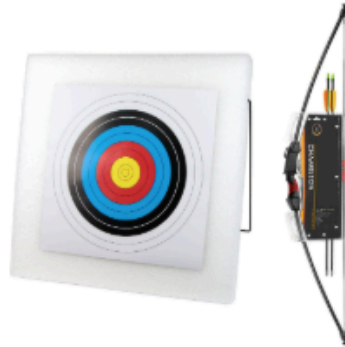
We have plenty of other great options that turn any backyard into a mini adventure zone:

Air pistols



Great for backyard plinking and improving your aim.

Bows



Smooth, silent, and skill-building fun for backyard target sessions.

Gel blasters



Safe & low impact that delivers fast-paced fun without the mess.

Paintball guns



Perfect for high-energy battles with friends.

Sling shots



A simple, nostalgic way to enjoy target shooting.

Cross bows



Compact, accurate, and great for thrilling target shooting at home.

12. Still have questions?

For any questions you still have, call or drop by and visit a [Gun City store close to you](#).



Note: This Information is correct as of 19th November 2025.