



LEFT: Shot placement is as important as what you shoot with. As this knowledge is widely disseminated by hunting association courses and magazines, legislation on it is unnecessary.

RIGHT: The author has successfully hunted several hundred large antelope with guns now outlawed by pen-pushers ignorant of firearms or hunting.



Lawmakers or lawbreakers?

It seems that the hunting industry is being dictated to by uninformed, incompetent legislators who haven't the slightest idea about hunting, writes **Abri J Steyn**.

Our world is ruled by laws. In theory this sounds right, but we've created a system where the masses are dominated by the few.

In reality our lives are ruled by lawmakers who seldom know the subject they're legislating about. Since the ANC/Communist Party/Cosatu government took office in 1994, we've been inundated by an avalanche of new

laws, many of which were so impractical that they subsequently had to be amended almost beyond recognition and never achieved their apparent aim. In some cases, lawbreakers have become the lawmakers.

A good example is the Firearms Control Act, which was supposed to reduce crime by making the loss of a firearm as serious a crime as

stealing it. However, the mayhem in the country, including farm murders, is proof that the act has in no way impacted on the proliferation of illegal firearms or violent crime.

WHAT CHANGED?

Criminals are still frequently using R4 and R5 assault rifles that had never been available to ordinary citizens as well as police-issue 9mm pistols.

three times in court. In July 2010 the Black Gun Owners Association of South Africa filed a R3,2 billion lawsuit against the government for poor implementation of the act, which the association claimed led to 10 000 jobs losses in the firearms sector and the closing of 800 shops in what had simply been a disarming campaign.

It believed its members were being unfairly victimised by the act's implementation, as only 2% of all black applicants were successful in obtaining firearm licences.

The act's constitutionality was also challenged by the South African Hunters and Game Conservation Association (SAHGCA) and South African Gun Owners Association (SAGA) in two high profile cases.

In the first High Court case, which SAHGCA won, it obtained a ruling that all 'old act' (green card) licences are valid.

SAGA applied to the North Gauteng High Court to confirm this verdict as,

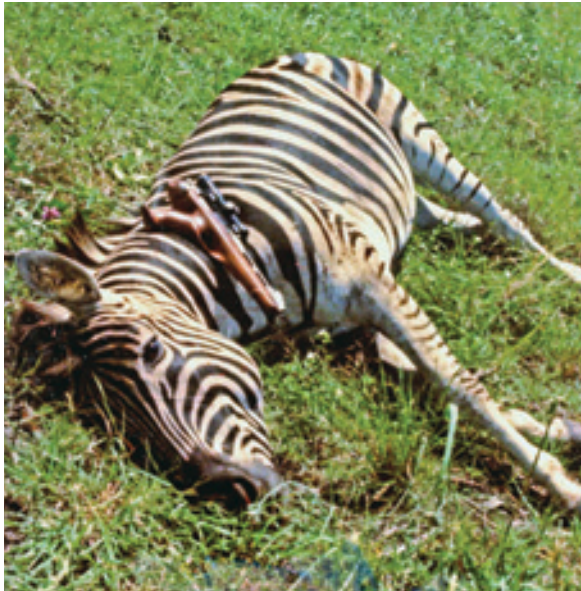
'THIS WOULD BE ILLEGAL NOW, AND THE GUNS WORTHLESS.'



LEFT: Rather than combating rhino poaching, environmental affairs wasted tax money by compiling a law which allows this old World War One Webley with its 265gr bullets to be used for hunting buffalo. It would be the surest way to commit suicide.

Reports state that the SAPS lost 8 286 firearms, including pistols, shotguns and automatic rifles, in three years (2006 to 2009). That's more than 10 every working day.

The firearms act has been amended seven times since it was first gazetted on 10 April 2001, and the Firearms Amendment Act of 2003 contains over 200 changes. Despite this, the act has already been challenged



LEFT: The single shot hunting pistol that took this zebra and dozens like it, can now only be used for hunting dassies, rats and birds.

RIGHT: To have a lawmaker who is unaware that constructing a premium hunting bullet has become a science, is like living in the dark ages and being ruled by a druid.



in a clear act of defiance and contempt of court, the SAPS had continued to process relicensing applications, granting some and refusing others.

ADDING TO THE BURDEN

As if it was not enough that the SAPS had violated the constitutional right to freedom of association of hunters by forcing them to join hunting associations, environmental affairs minister Edna Molewa published the Norms and Standards (N&S) for hunting methods by a proclamation in the *Government Gazette* No 32346 of 27 May 2011. This prescribed the minimum weight of bullets a hunter may use to hunt different animals.

If she had only consulted hunters, it could've saved her department a lot of embarrassment. Instead she let her pen-pushing clerks write a law about something they knew nothing about. The result is hilarious.

If you know anything about hunting, you'll know that it is not only a bullet's weight, but also its shape, velocity and, most crucially, its

construction that will determine whether it will be effective in hunting. According to minister Molewa's N&S, you may (with handgun or rifle) hunt animals to the size of a rock hyrax, any rodent (which includes porcupine) and any game bird (except an ostrich) with a bullet of 35 grain (gr).

Now that's the weight of a .22 Short bullet, and I'd like to see anyone shoot an Egyptian goose with such a peashooter!

Stranger still is the fact that a rifle hunter may hunt springbok with 50gr bullets; impala, blesbok and warthog with 100gr bullets and black wildebeest or hartebeest with 130gr bullets. But a handgun which uses bullets under 150gr may only be used to hunt dassies, rats and birds. If a handgun uses 150gr bullets, hunters may hunt anything to the size of blue wildebeest, kudu, sable, roan and leopard – same as a rifle hunter.

I've hunted literally hundreds of medium and large antelope with highly efficient hunting handguns, using bullets weighing less than 150gr. This would be illegal now, and the guns

worthless. I've hunted numerous wildebeest, zebra, kudu and even sable with handguns I'm now forbidden to even hunt duiker and steenbok with. Who wants to shoot one of the latter anyway? I've never shot one in my life.

It's generally accepted by big-game hunters that a 300gr bullet is the minimum for buffalo, but according to paragraph 4(h), any thick-skinned animal (elephant, rhino, hippo, or crocodile) may be hunted with both guns using 300gr bullets, but buffalo only with

a handgun. However, paragraph 4(g) states that buffalo may be hunted with bullets as light as 250gr with both type of weapons. I'm not joking! These norms and standards are not only a lot of hogwash, but may be deadly.

It would be legal to hunt buffalo armed only with my six-inch (150mm) barrel First World War Webley revolver, as its standard ammunition uses 265gr bullets. It would also be the surest way to make my wife a widow, as buffalo don't read the *Government Gazette*.

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BELOW: Except with thick-skinned animals, a hunting bullet must deform, like the top ones, to create a wide wound channel. If a bullet is too heavy, its velocity will be too low to deform only wounding the animal. PHOTOS: ABRÉ J STEYN



BELOW: None of the first five cartridges are suitable for buffalo hunting, although all use bullets weighing at least 250gr. The one on the right was used by various hunters to shoot at least 30 buffalo. The difference is in the bullet's velocity and construction, not in its weight.