

# Remember the seven rules

by Nicole McKee



The media often ask me to make comments about firearms safety, especially when there has been an accidental shooting. From my point of view it's always good to get the safety message out there but sad when the media only seem to be interested in sensationalising tragedies.

We all require reminding of the rules every now and again but we shouldn't always be doing this as a reaction to a death or injury. Every time you handle a firearm you should remind yourself of the seven basic principles of firearms safety (see opposite).

I recently spoke at a NZDA branch meeting about firearm safety. I asked the members to recite to me the seven basic rules in order. The first rule members mentioned was Rule 4: "Identify your target." At another meeting I asked the same question and received the same answer. Rule 4 is the most memorable of the seven rules because the failure to identify your target is the main cause of hunter deaths in the New Zealand bush.

There are seven basic principles to firearms safety and each one is just as important as any other no matter your opinion of their order. We learn these rules when we get our firearms licences. We are reminded of the seven rules every time a hunter is shot. Many will be familiarising themselves with the seven rules before their licence renewal.

But how often do you think about those principles before you venture outdoors with your firearm?

There are people who are willing to share their near-miss experiences with their peers so that we may all learn from them. I was told the story of a hunter who identified an

animal but for one reason or another felt sceptical about the identification so did not pull the trigger. He continued to stalk and subsequently found that his target was in fact human. Or another hunter who recognised his heightened adrenaline rush, looked away from his target and on re-establishment eye contact realised the target was not what he had originally thought. These examples only relate to one of the seven golden rules – identify your target. But adhering to the principle of that rule can save lives.

The NZDA is a leader in teaching safe and ethical hunting practices. Encourage your children and grandchildren to learn the seven basic rules and the principles behind them. Get them learning young so these skills are embedded in their minds as they grow old enough to become firearms users. Their brains are like sponges. They have the ability to soak up all the good stuff so let's use that.

Clubs and organisations are encouraged to promote the seven basic principles of firearms safety and the Mountain Safety Council is keen to help. Many NZDA branches have MSC firearms safety Instructors in their midst. Tap a shoulder and ask them for resources for your club. Or drop me a line (Nicole.McKee@mountainsafety.org.nz) and I'll send you worthwhile information for your branch, club and community.



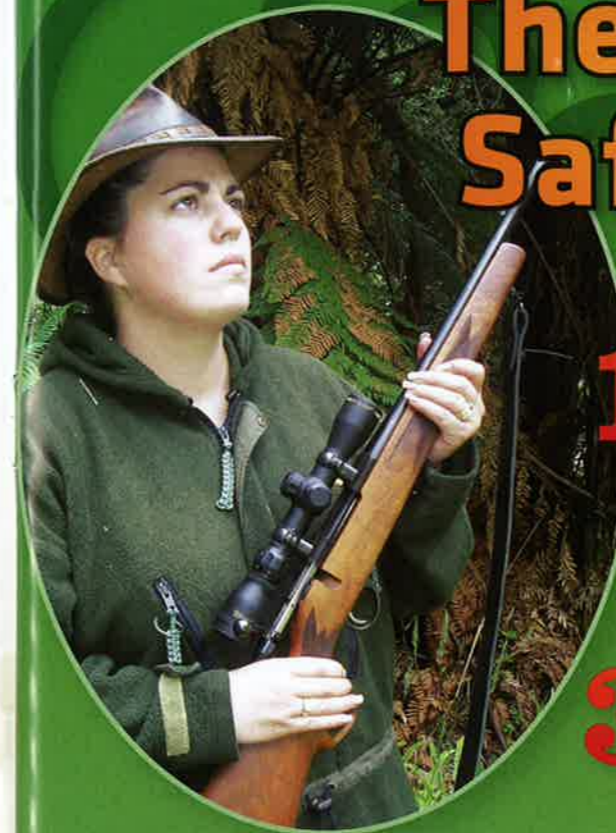
"Troubled waters" (Zeff Veronese, North Canterbury)

**IDENTIFY**  
YOUR TARGET  
BEYOND ALL DOUBT



[www.mountainsafety.org.nz/firearms](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/firearms)

# The Firearms Safety Code



**1** Treat every firearm as loaded

**2** Always point firearms in a safe direction

**3** Load a firearm only when ready to fire

**4** Identify your target beyond all doubt



**5** Check your firing zone



**6** Store firearms and ammunition safely



**7** Avoid alcohol or drugs when handling firearms



Further information is available in the ARMS CODE, go to [www.police.govt.nz](http://www.police.govt.nz) or [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz)

