



Straight shooting: advice from an expert

Access to New Zealand's lakes, rivers, beaches and mountains is at the heart of our Kiwi way of life. It is part of our culture and heritage and an experience we are privileged to enjoy. That's because this access frequently relies on landholders' goodwill in allowing people to cross their private land.

Most landholders are happy to oblige yet sometimes they can be concerned about people requesting access for recreational purposes, especially when they are carrying firearms.

Hunters can put landholders at ease by understanding these concerns and respecting landholders' rights and private property. Sam Fielden, a keen hunter, trumper and angler agrees.

"In my experience, people are generally comfortable with anglers crossing their land, but can be more anxious about hunters carrying firearms. It's a good idea to ask permission first. A phone call to the farmer explaining why and where you want to go, and asking if that's ok, shows courtesy and respect. Otherwise, if I was walking up to someone's door I'd leave the rifle locked in the car, somewhere I could clearly see it at all times, rather than over my shoulder.

"I'd also be open to the idea that I wouldn't necessarily be given access on my first visit – sometimes it's about building that relationship and swapping details. I have in the past taken a box of beer as a koha to say thanks...and in the event you are granted access, don't stuff it up for the next person – leave gates as they are found and respect the landholder's requests."

Don Rood, communications manager at the [New Zealand Fish and Game Council](#), says hunters should be courteous and respectful when crossing private land. "It's a good idea

to keep dogs on a leash and load your firearm only when ready to fire. While you are entitled to public access on the unformed legal roads, hunters should check in with the farmer first.

Being aware that responsibilities go hand in hand with rights means it is more likely this privileged, free access to the places we love to go, will endure.”

New Zealand Mountain Safety Council chief executive Mike Daisley agrees responsible behaviour is the key.

“All firearms users need to ensure they understand and comply with the seven basic rules of firearms safety.”

What does the Outdoor Access Code say?

The New Zealand Walking Access Commission has published the *New Zealand Outdoor Access Code* that includes all the practical information and reminders you need about public access and hunting, which requires both the carrying and use of firearms:

- The right to carry firearms or to take dogs depends on the existing rights that run with access. For example, access by way of an unformed legal road is a public right and therefore people are legally entitled to carry firearms on these roads. However, you need a firearms licence, or to be under the immediate supervision of someone with a licence, to be in possession of a firearm.
- The New Zealand Mountain Safety Council’s website includes the Firearms Safety Code and a link to the Arms Code - a downloadable firearms safety manual issued by the New Zealand Police.
- There is no legal right of access either to private land or across private land to public land, for the purpose of sports fishing or game hunting.

If you are carrying or using firearms you need to be responsible. It’s a good idea to refresh your knowledge of both the *New Zealand Outdoor Access Code* and the *Firearms Safety Code* to help reduce any landholder concerns and ensure appropriate, safe behaviour.

The Seven Basic Rules of Firearms Safety

Rule 1: Treat every firearm as loaded

Rule 2: Always point firearms in a safe direction

Rule 3: Load a firearm only when ready to fire

Rule 4: Identify your target

Rule 5: Check your firing zone

Rule 6: Store firearms and ammunition safely

Rule 7: Avoid alcohol and drugs when handling firearms

