

# **AIRGUN LAW GUIDANCE**

## **Purchasing Ages:**

The laws concerning the purchase of guns and ammunition are as follows:-

Any person under the age of 14 years of age may not purchase or own guns or ammunition.

Persons aged between 14 and 17 years may not purchase guns or ammunition but may borrow or have them purchased on their behalf by some one over 17 years of age.

Persons over the age of 17 years may purchase guns and ammunition, the guns having a power less than the UK legal limit. Guns over that limit require a fire arms certificate to be granted before they can be owned.

## **Air guns and Young Persons:**

The laws concerning the use of air guns by young persons are as follows:-

Any one under the age of 14 can only use an air gun whilst under the direct supervision and control of someone over 21, whilst on private property with the permission of the owner of the premises.

A person aged between 14 and 17 can use an air gun on private property where they have a right to be, without supervision.

They may carry an unloaded rifle (but not a pistol) in a public place only if it is in a securely fastened gun cover so that it cannot be fired, an under 14 year old must again be directly supervised by an over 21 year old.

A pistol can only be carried by someone over 17, again it must be unloaded and in a securely fastened case.

## **The Firearms Acts 1968-97:**

Air guns in the UK are subject to the firearms acts, under the Firearms (Dangerous air weapons) rules 1969 they are classified as low powered Air Weapons and as such they are restricted to a maximum power of 12 foot pounds force for a rifle and 6 foot pounds force for a pistol. Above 12ftlb a rifle is classified as a Section 1 Firearm and requires a licence called a firearms certificate, and a pistol above 6ftlb is again a Section 1 Firearm requiring a firearms certificate in the UK.

The definition of a firearm under the act is "a lethal barrelled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged" it further

defines "lethal weapon" as "a weapon capable of firing a projectile with sufficient force to inflict more than a trivial injury i.e. with sufficient force to puncture skin". The Home Office consider the lowest level of muzzle energy capable of inflicting a penetrating wound is one foot pound (1.35 joules) hence guns producing less than 1ft/lb are not covered by the act and therefore not classified as air weapons or subject to any restrictions. The 1997 Firearms Amendment Act made handguns illegal in the UK but Air Weapons were excluded under Section 5 (1) subsection (a) "a prohibited weapon includes a firearm with a barrel length less than 30cms and an overall length less than 60cms, other than an air weapon, a muzzle loading gun, or a firearm designed as signalling apparatus".

### **UK Legal Limit:**

To calculate the power of an air gun you need to use a chronograph to measure the speed of the pellet (in feet per second) when fired, and you need to know the weight of the pellet in grains. Once you have that information you perform the following calculation: - speed (ft/sec) X speed (ft/sec) X weight (grains) 450240 this gives you the result in foot pounds force (ft-lb).

As mentioned the legal maximum for an unlicensed air rifle is 12 ft-lb which from changing round the above formula, gives the approximate values as follows:-  
A .22 pellet weighing 14.4 grains, maximum permissible speed is 612 ft/sec  
A .177 pellet weighing 7.9 grains, maximum permissible speed is 826 ft/sec  
The corresponding figures for a pistol are 433 ft/sec for a .22 and 584 ft/sec for a .177. The pellet weights used in the above calculation are typical weights for the sizes of pellet but you must always check the actual weight of your pellet before performing your own calculation.

### **Public Places and Highways:**

You may never have an air gun in a public place without proper reason for doing so. If you are travelling to and from a place where you have the right to shoot, the gun must be in a case as above. A gun is loaded if there is a pellet or any form of projectile in it, including an "air weapon which has a loaded magazine, is loaded even though there is no round in the breach".

It is an offence to fire an air gun within 50 feet of the centre of a public highway, if by doing so you cause any member of the public using that highway to be injured, interrupted or endangered. This applies even if you are on private property adjacent the highway. Public highways include roads, bridleways and public footpaths.

**Trespass:**

If you go on to any land, including over water and in buildings, without permission you are Trespassing. If you have an Air gun with you it is classed as Armed Trespass which is a serious Criminal offence even if the gun is not loaded.

**Air gun Prey:**

The following pests are considered suitable for controlling using a sub-12 ft-lb Air gun: - Brown Rat, Grey Squirrel, Rabbit, Crow, Rook, Magpie, Jay, Wood pigeon, Collared Dove, Feral Pigeon, House mouse, and recently Mink have been added to the list. These are not always considered pests and only Authorised Persons can shoot them in all circumstances. Please check with your local authority before shooting any live quarry.

**Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981:**

All bird and animals are protected by law. Certain species are classified as pests or vermin and only these species can be legitimately shot and then only by authorised persons. An Authorised Person is someone who has the proper permission from the land owner to control pests on that land.

**IMPORTANT!**

You must be aged 17 or over to order any air rifle or air pistol, you may be asked to confirm age and proof of identity

*This information is provided for guidance. Always check with Police and Licensing authorities to confirm any information relevant to your situation.*