

AIRGUNS: DEADLY WEAPONS - NOT TOYS



One of these guns is an air rifle. The others are a shotgun and a rifle. If you were a post office worker could you tell the difference? The only real difference is that the airgun can be bought by a 17 year old for £35. They can all kill.

Every year thousands of wild, pet and farm animals are killed or injured by people with airguns. Airguns also take their toll on humans with one or two people killed and hundreds maimed or blinded annually. Airguns are the tools of sadists, vandals and criminals.

In one year alone 71% of armed crime in Scotland was committed by people using airguns. Most airgun crime, including killing of animals, goes unreported. Dunblane mass murderer Thomas Hamilton gained his love of guns shooting birds from his bedroom window with an air rifle. He later enticed young boys to go on camping trips by promising them airgun shooting contests.

Anyone over 17 can buy an air weapon. A basic pistol can be bought from around £13 and very powerful rifles from only £35. Some airguns are made to look like revolvers, automatic rifles and even machine guns.

In March 2005 a two-year-old boy from Glasgow was killed after being hit in the head by an airgun pellet during an incident where firefighters were being shot at. A 27-year-old man has been charged with murder. Little Andrew Morton was the second child to die from airgun injuries in Glasgow in less than 6 months. Two weeks later a six-year-old boy in Edinburgh had to have surgery to remove an airgun pellet from his head. A 14-year-old boy has been arrested in connection with that incident.

You do not need a licence or training to own and use most air weapons. You do not have to keep them in a secure place which is reflected in the high number of toddlers hurt or killed when 'playing' with airguns discarded by older brothers or parents.

Gun control is reserved to the Westminster Parliament. After decades of campaigning we were disgusted when MPs only agreed to minor changes in the law such as raising the age for buying airguns to 17. This tinkering with the law has not changed things.

People who want to indulge in sport target shooting should join controlled, licensed clubs where airguns are kept under lock and key when not in use. It might also be permissible for licensed pest controllers to own airguns as these are less cruel than poison and traps when killing rodents.

If your child asks for an airgun for a birthday or Christmas present buy them a Canon, Olympus or Kodak instead. With a camera they can shoot things without killing them and, who knows, it could lead to a career. An airgun could lead to a dead sibling or a prison sentence.

Please help Animal Concern to end the needless slaughter, pain and grief caused by these deadly weapons. Join our call for tough new legislation which recognises that airguns are deadly weapons, not toys. Please write to your MP urging him or her to support legislation which will totally remove air weapons from our streets and our countryside. If you see anyone carrying an uncovered air weapon in a public place dial 999 and tell the police.



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Sidney Mansfield rescued his dog Bell from the local dog pound. Bell soon became his faithful companion.

Bell was shot in the right eye with an airgun pellet on Sunday 6th March 2005 in the grounds of the old Keil School in Dumbarton near Glasgow. A vet had to remove her eye but could not recover the pellet which was lodged in her brain.

Despite the best of care Bell did not respond to treatment and had to be put down on March 13th leaving Mr. Mansfield angry and distraught.