

# 4 Muzzleloading

## A brief description

Within the SSAA, muzzleloading involves competitive shooting with replicas of firearms used during Australia's colonial days.

Many of the excellent replicas available are exact in every detail and it surprises many people just how accurate these firearms can be in the hands of proficient shooters. Being in touch with the guns the early settlers, farmers and bushrangers used transports you back in history. Many serious muzzleloaders have tried other types of shooting and have switched to what are lovingly described as 'smoke poles'.



## Scoring

Bullet holes have to be at least 50 per cent over a line to score a higher value, a rule that is necessary because different calibres can compete against each other. Smaller calibres are disadvantaged if a 'touching the line' rule was used as in other pistol and small bore disciplines. All matches are 13 shots, of which the top ten score.



## Shoot Muzzleloading

Most states and territories have clubs that shoot Muzzleloading matches. Contact your local SSAA range, the SSAA office in your state or the Muzzleloading National Discipline Chairman to see if they conduct matches near you.



## Gear

Muzzleloading gear includes: glasses and earmuffs, individual tubes for powder charges, ram rods, short starters, patches, lubes, oil, rags, spare flints, percussion caps, priming powder, nipple and vent picks, bullet pullers, nipple keys and more.



## Firearms

The range of long arms in use by muzzleloaders include:  
 Smooth bore matchlock muskets - circa 1600-1650  
 Smooth bore flintlock muskets - circa 1700-1800  
 Smooth bore percussion muskets - circa 1830-1860  
 Flintlock rifles - circa 1750-1830  
 Flintlock shotguns - circa 1750-1830  
 Percussion rifles - circa 1830-1860  
 Percussion shotguns - circa 1830-1860  
 The various types are divided into three classes: military, traditional and open. Handguns also have three different classes: revolvers, pistols and open. Handguns used include matchlock and flintlock single shot pistols, smooth bored and rifled and the revolvers are percussion cap and ball models used during the American Civil War.

## Competitions

During the past 20 years, SSAA muzzleloaders have competed at many world championships and other international shoots, winning numerous gold, silver and bronze medals in both individual and team events. State and national championships are held yearly. Every two years a world muzzleloading championship is held, with about 20 countries sending teams.

## Targets and Range

Competitions for pistols and revolvers are shot at 25m and 50m using the International 50m slow pistol target, while rifles compete at 50m, 100m, and 200m using the same target standing, kneeling, prone, benchrest, sitting and three-position.

The same 50m slow pistol target is used for all of the rifle events except for the 200m benchrest, which uses a much larger French 200m target. The same target is also used for the 50m musket matches.

## Ammunition

Muzzleloaders cast their own bullet, be they round balls, hollow-based minies or long slugs capable of shooting one-hole groups at 100m. They also make a lot of other bits and pieces necessary when shooting black powder. Loads used for competitive shooting are, in most cases, less than the old hunting and military loads. There is a lot of trial and error attached to doing well with muzzleloaders - weight of charge, size of powder granulations (1F, 2F, 3F, 4F), composition of lead projectiles, calibre of lead projectiles, type of bullet lube, thickness of bullet patching material and correct patch lube - and so on.

