“Harmless” .22 calibre Rabbit Rifles
Kill More People Than Any Other Type of Gun

Contrary to their popular image as low-powered “bunny guns,” .22-calibre rimfire rifles are commonly used in multiple shootings. In seven recent mass killings involving .22 rifles in Australia and New Zealand alone, 54 people died by gunfire.

Multiple Shootings With .22 Rifles, 1971-1997:
Data from police and coroners’ records

Mass shootings in Australia & New Zealand in which the primary weapon was a .22 rifle:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Perpetrator(s)</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Primary Weapon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20/06/94</td>
<td>Dunedin, NZ</td>
<td>David Bain</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Semi-auto .22 rimfire rabbit rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31/03/93</td>
<td>Cangai, NSW</td>
<td>Leabeater &amp; Steele</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 x .22 rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/09/81</td>
<td>Campsie, NSW</td>
<td>Fred Daoud</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Semi-auto .22 rifle, 10-shot mags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/71</td>
<td>Hope Forest, SA</td>
<td>Cliff Bartholomew</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>.22 rabbit rifle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mass shootings in Australia & New Zealand in which a .22 rifle was a secondary weapon:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Perpetrator(s)</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Secondary Weapon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13/11/90</td>
<td>Aramoana, NZ</td>
<td>David Gray</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Remington semi-auto .22 rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/08/87</td>
<td>Hoddle St, VIC</td>
<td>Julian Knight</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ruger 10/22 semi-auto .22 rifle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/06/87</td>
<td>Top End, NT/WA</td>
<td>Josef Schwab</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Brno .22 rifle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Known Overseas Mass Shooting in which a .22 rifle was used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Perpetrator(s)</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>Weapon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25/09/95</td>
<td>Toulon, France</td>
<td>Eric Borel</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>.22 hunting rifle (only weapon)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V: Victims Shot Dead</th>
<th>P: Perpetrators Shot Dead</th>
<th>K: Total Killed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Serial Killer Ivan Milat Also Used Two .22 Rifles

In the 1989-1992 Belanglo Forest backpacker murders, serial killer Ivan Milat also used an Anschutz .22 calibre rifle and a Ruger 10/22 semi-automatic .22 rifle to kill three of his seven young victims. This was not a “mass shooting,” and is not included in the tables above.

The .22 Rifle is the Most Commonly Used Gun in All Firearm Homicides

For every victim of a mass shooting which grabs the headlines, nine more Australians and New Zealanders die in less newsworthy gun murders. Most of these are domestic killings in which licensed male gun owners typically shoot members of their own family.², 4, 6

Again, several studies show that the ubiquitous .22 rimfire rifle, the largest-selling firearm and the gun readily at hand in many homes,³ is also the gun most commonly used in suicide, homicide and accidental shootings.

Philip Alpers, March 1998. 22R Fact Sheet, Page 1 of 2
Research Studies, Australia and New Zealand

- In Brisbane, .22 calibre rifles were used in 66% of gun suicides and 55% of gun homicides \(^{(4)}\)
- In New South Wales, 76% of all guns used in suicide were .22 calibre rifles \(^{(5)}\)
- Throughout Australia, .22 calibre rifles were used to kill 43% of firearm homicide victims, making this the gun most commonly used in murder and manslaughter shootings \(^{(6)}\)
- In Auckland, New Zealand, .22 calibre weapons were used in 46% of all gun deaths -- more than any other firearm \(^{(7)}\)
- Throughout New Zealand, 32.5% of firearm homicide victims were killed with a .22 calibre rimfire rifle; 20% with a semi-automatic .22 rifle and the remaining 12.5% with a single-action .22 rifle. Guns of this calibre were the most common type used in murder and manslaughter \(^{(2)}\)

Conclusion

These figures suggest that to allow .22 calibre “bunny guns” to escape firearm restrictions would be to exempt the most common agent of gun death and injury.

The registration of individual firearms (in addition to owner licensing) is a proven public safety measure in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United Kingdom. As a direct result of tight control and owner-accountability for each handgun and restricted weapon (machine guns, etc.), these have always been the firearms least frequently used to kill in suicides, accidental shootings and crime. Of the four comparable countries, all but New Zealand now register every type of firearm. In New Zealand, sporting rifles and shotguns -- the guns most commonly used to cause death and injury -- remain the only firearms exempt from registration.

Notes and References:

1) A mass murder is defined as one in which five or more victims died by homicide in proximate events in a civilian setting, not counting serial killings or the suicide or justifiable homicide of any perpetrators.
3) Among all firearms, by far the biggest seller is the semi-automatic .22 rimfire rifle (Robert Brewer, secretary of the Firearms Traders Association of Victoria. The Age, 11 May 1996); In New Zealand, the most common firearm is the .22 calibre rimfire rifle, probably involved in more incidents each year than any other firearm type (Forsyth, C I H. Firearms in New Zealand. NZ Mountain Safety Council Manual #19. July 1985, p. 4); Victoria Police figures show the .22 calibre rifle is the most commonly owned rifle in the state (Melbourne Herald Sun, 9 May 1996).
7) Firearm-Related Deaths by Type of Firearm, Auckland Coronial District 1978-87. Unpublished data set. Section of Forensic Medicine, Dept of Pathology, University of Auckland School of Medicine, 1990.