



# USE OF DOGS (2)

continued from Use of Dogs(1)

## Deciding on how to track the deer

**3** If a shot deer is lost and/or known to be wounded, there is a natural tendency to want to begin tracking straight away. Instead, time should be taken to decide on the course of action which is most likely to ensure that the animal is found.

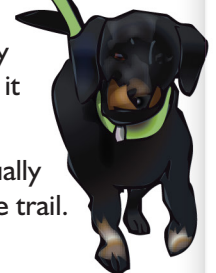
This may depend on:

- ◆ The need for help. It might be appropriate (for instance around very dense cover) to take time to strategically and safely place other shooters to intercept and humanely dispatch the animal should it still be mobile and is disturbed by the tracker.
- ◆ The species of deer. If undisturbed, territorial species can be more likely to cover less distance or return to their home area sooner. They will often lie down and become unable to move sooner than the large species, but their scent seems to dissipate faster.
- ◆ Time of day\*\*\*. Tracking wounded deer at night is difficult, can result in a lost animal or dog, makes it difficult to see to take a safe follow up shot, and can be dangerous, both to the dog and handler. It is usually more sensible to return the next morning. See also, Legislation.
- ◆ Type of wound and time since shot. It is generally not a good idea to track a lost deer immediately after the shot, except when it is known to have been well shot. This is because after the shot, a wounded animal will often move a short distance then lay down. If it is disturbed too soon after the shot it may well be able to get up (often unseen), run further away and be less inclined to stop again. This makes tracking more difficult and may considerably prolong the time taken to find the deer. Experience indicates that the chance of finding a wounded animal increases if the time elapsed after the shot is delayed up to 4 hours for a gut shot and 12 hours after a leg shot. The decision to wait, or proceed sooner, may however depend on the precise circumstances. See also, Legislation.



## Tracking with a dog

- 3** The dog is usually worked on a long leash because the handler:
- ◆ can allow the dog to work freely but is ultimately able to restrain it if required.
  - ◆ will have the best chance of visually confirming that the dog is on the trail.
  - ◆ will gain more information from the dog via its behaviour, and thus be able to monitor the situation as it develops.
- 3** Whenever possible, introduce the dog to the trail at the (previously marked) strike/shot site. After allowing the dog to get its bearings it should lock on to the trail, with the handler following carefully on foot.
- 3** As tracking proceeds, confirmed signs should be marked, in case the trail is lost further on and it is necessary to return.
- 3** The handler must keep a look out for the wounded animal and, if it is spotted, stop the dog and then decide what to do.
- 2** Dogs are not usually worked "free" i.e. off the leash, because of the additional risk that the dog will get out of control, chase the target or another animal unbidden, and/or become lost or injured. In some situations, such as on very



open ground or in dense cover, a decision may be taken to let the dog work free. Such dogs should be specifically trained for the purpose, the area must be safe and the dog should ideally work the trail at a slow pace, enabling the handler to keep up, to confirm signs and to stay in contact and control. A GPS collar with mapping app will help find the dog/deer and can be useful for track monitoring and general navigation.

## Locating and dispatching

**2** If the deer is located alive, the preferred method of dispatch is to safely shoot it, taking care that bystanders and the dog are in a safe position. If the deer runs before it can be shot, or a safe shot will not be possible, a decision has to be made as to whether to resume tracking or to allow the dog to bay or secure the deer. Because of the risk of losing both dog and deer should a chase ensue, or of injury to the dog, releasing the dog is not recommended unless:

- ◆ There is a very high degree of confidence that the deer is in such a condition that the dog will be able to secure it quickly, either at bay or by holding it, so that it can be humanely dispatched.
- ◆ The dog has been trained to hold or bring deer to bay and, if it goes out of sight, report to the handler in some way that it has found either the live animal or a carcass and be able to direct the handler to it. A GPS unit may assist with this.

Once the deer is secured it should be dispatched as soon as possible \*\*.

## Hygiene

**2** Dogs should not be allowed to maul found deer or carcasses unnecessarily. Dogs should not be allowed into the deer larder, or the storage area of any vehicle used for transporting carcasses. Depending on the nature of the wound, the time elapsed, and the level of carcass contamination, previously wounded animals may not be suitable for putting into the human food chain (See the Meat Hygiene suite of guides).

## Dog welfare

**2** The dog should be kept in good physical health. Ensure the dog is safely positioned before firing a shot.

Do not allow inexperienced dogs to tackle live deer off the leash until they are steady and have been trained for the purpose.

Carry a canine First Aid kit and check dogs for injury after working.

Do not allow a dog to run free where it is likely to get lost or run into or cause a danger e.g. near a road or livestock.

GPS and radio collars for finding dogs are available as a safeguard. If the dog is wearing any collar while working free, it should be of a design that will detach if the dog becomes entangled..

## Legislation

- 1** Dogs are not obliged by law to wear identification collars while being used for “sporting purposes”, which includes tracking deer.
- All dogs must be Micro-chipped and registered. Deer are protected from hunting with dogs under both the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 and the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002. There are exceptions relevant to tracking wounded deer built into these Acts to allow for:
- ◆ The retrieval or location of a wild mammal by a dog that the handler reasonably believes is seriously injured or orphaned: Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002, Section 5 (1) (c).
  - ◆ The humane destruction of an injured, diseased or orphaned deer by means that are normally prohibited: Deer (Scotland) Act 1996, Part 3, Section 25 (a) (b).

Section 25 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 may provide a reasonable defence in law if there is a need to follow a wounded deer onto adjacent property and dispatch it in order to prevent suffering. However, firearms legislation requires that anyone taking a firearm onto any land must have the permission of that landowner, preferably in writing. In such circumstances the landowner should be notified and permission granted before entry. A prior arrangement is a good way to avoid misunderstanding or prosecution. If it is necessary to temporarily abandon a search on adjacent property, then recommence later, it is essential to clarify with the landowner that all persons involved are again permitted to do so.

For authorised night shooting in woodland, the presence of a suitable dog is a requirement. \*\*\*.

\*See BPG Reaction to Shot and Follow-Up \*\*see BPG Humane Dispatch  
\*\*\* See DCSG Night Shooting: Code of Practice