



PONY EXTRACTION (I)



Aim

The aim of this guide is to provide information on carcass extraction by pony in order to help ensure the safety of the operator/s and to minimise contamination to the carcass. The BP guide Mechanical & Manual Extraction should be seen as a complementary guide to this subject.

Background

Good for extraction where the ground is too rough for vehicles, or where there is a need to minimise damage to the habitat. Deer extraction using a pony is almost exclusively limited to red deer on Highland estates.

Health & safety

For all extraction activities, ensure the following:

- 1 Carry out appropriate risk assessment.*
- 2 Familiarise yourself with relevant HSE Guidance.**
- 2 Minimise the risk of injury and physical effort to pony and handler – plan and modify the route, e.g. brash routes through trees, mark pony paths.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) establish clear steps for dealing with risks from manual handling. These are:

- 1 Avoid hazardous manual handling operations (e.g. dragging, lifting, carrying) so far as reasonably practicable.
- 2 Assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided.

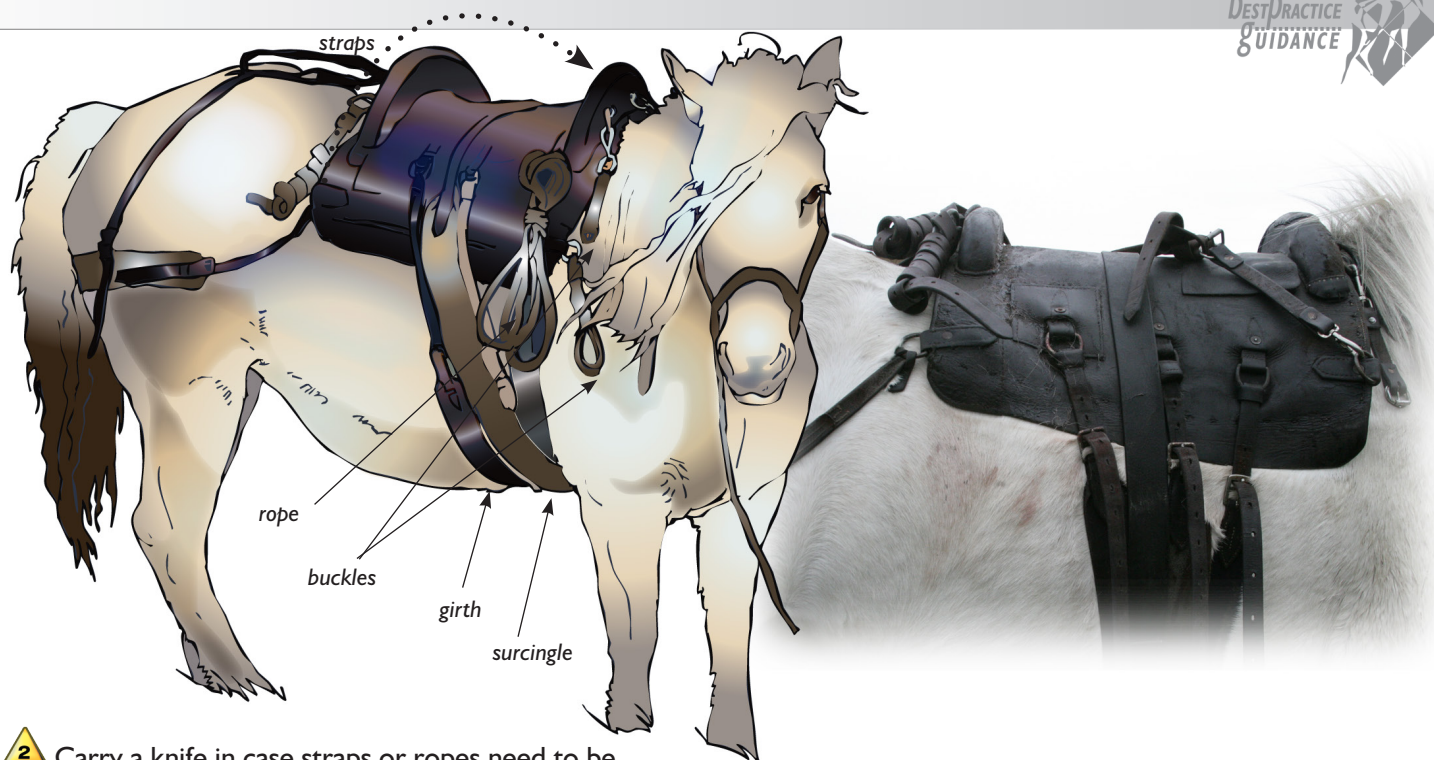
- 2 Reduce the risk of injury so far as reasonably practicable.

Pony

- 2 Every care should be taken to ensure that the welfare of the pony is taken into account, during and after any extraction activity (e.g. protect the pony from antlers, be vigilant for signs of fatigue or injury, ensure the pony is dried off after wet outings).
- 2 Ensure pony is properly trained.
- 2 Care should be taken to ensure that the saddle fits both correctly and comfortably.
- 2 Deer ponies should be shod both front and back, with the rear shoes having 'caulkers' or heel cleats to help in a steep descent.

Handler

- 2 Ensure the pony handler is trained and confident in all aspects of handling ponies.
- 2 Ensure the handler has been equipped with adequate clothing and equipment for the terrain and weather.
- 2 Ensure effective means of communication with the handler.
- 2 Ensure the handler has been adequately briefed. It will be helpful if the handler is already familiar with the ground and pony paths.
- 2 Minimise risk of injury to pony and handler – plan and modify the route, marking paths through boggy ground and river crossings.



- 2 Carry a knife in case straps or ropes need to be cut quickly in an emergency.

Equipment

- 3 Stalkers should ensure that all tack used on the pony is kept clean and well maintained, and is regularly checked and repaired as necessary. It is advisable to carry an extra girth and deer straps.

Loading a pony

Essentials

- 2 It will require a minimum of two persons to load a pony safely. The pony will also require to be held steady whilst loading.
- 3 Traditionally most ponies are led and loaded from the left side.
- 3 Wherever possible stand the pony on flat ground, well away from steep drops or rocky ground, against a bank or elevated ground to make loading easier.
- 3 Prior to loading the pony re-tighten the girth.
- 3 The load must be securely fastened on the pony's saddle. Three straps attached to the saddle are used to secure and balance a deer on the saddle. One around the antler (for stags), one around the front left foreleg and chest, and a final strap between the hind legs.
- 3 The load must be balanced: after loading, the pony should be observed from the rear when walking to check that the saddle and load are not swinging about excessively.
- 3 For young or nervous ponies it may be advisable to tie the front and back feet of the carcass together before loading, to prevent them

'slapping' the pony while loading and moving. Covering the pony's eyes whilst loading may also help keep the pony calm.

- 3 When crossing a burn or on unfamiliar ground, let the pony find its own way – it will rarely get into difficulty.

Loading a stag on a pony

1. Lie stag on its right side, preferably onto a bank, and pull head onto chest resting antler on ribcage. Using belt or rope tie head down by sliding rope/belt under carcass, and just over coronet of right hand antler. Pass one end of rope through looped end, pull head down onto chest and tie off. The buckle strap or loop must be towards the brisket so you are pulling the nose of the stag down into the chest. Lift back left leg up and pull towards head so that left-hand antler is trapped in between stag's legs (see Figure 2 in Pony Extraction (2)).
2. Tighten girth straps and surcingle on pony and unfurl all the deer straps. If using 2 girth straps, cross them over each other to opposite buckles. If using 3 straps, the front and rear ones should be crossed with each other and the centre one tied straight across. The surcingle should then be passed over the saddle and the centre point of the 3 girth straps. There should be a minimum of 3 deer straps for holding the stag on the saddle. A tail strap, a chest strap and a centre strap with a recommendation of 1 spare strap for each.

continued in Pony Extraction(2)