



# HUMANE DISPATCH(I)

line of shot:  
at right angles to forehead, down  
through the brain stem

## Aim

This guide aims to provide advice on the most appropriate procedures for the humane dispatch of injured deer.

## Legal issues

Section 25 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 exempts individuals from being guilty of any offences involving the taking or killing of deer at any time if it is done for the purpose of preventing suffering by:

- (a) an injured or diseased deer; or
- (b) by any deer calf, fawn or kid deprived, or about to be deprived, of its mother.

Consequently the Deer (Firearms etc.) (Scotland) order 1985 which details the legal weapons and ammunition combinations for the culling of uninjured deer is not applicable.

- 2 To ensure humane dispatch no rifle of less than a minimum calibre of .22, or a shotgun of a gauge no less than .410 should be used.

The act of slaughtering or killing an animal must be carried out without causing unnecessary suffering.

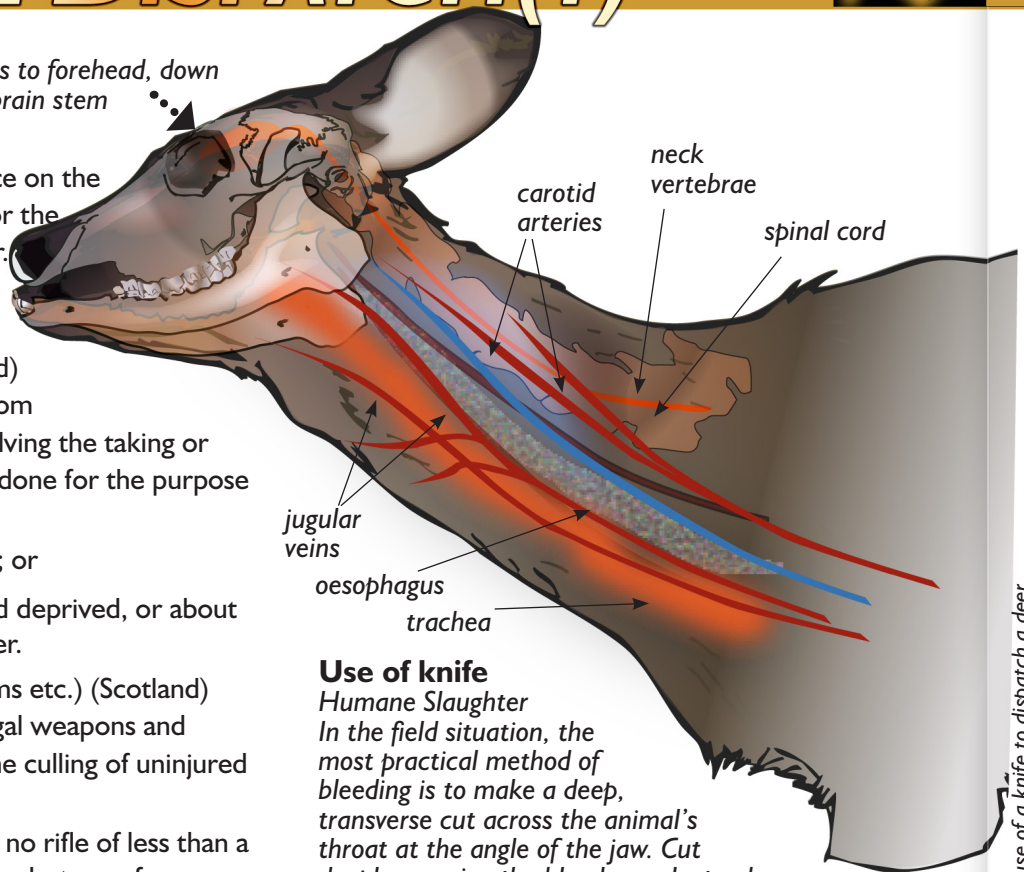
## General principles

### Situation assessment

A situation assessment must be carried out as to if, how and when to dispatch. The assessment should take into account factors such as risk to the safety of the operator, public safety and sensitivities, deer welfare and operator competency.

### Safety

- 1 Ensure that a Risk Assessment is undertaken before carrying out any humane dispatch activity.
- 2 Approach and handle injured animals with caution. An immobile injured deer may still be capable of leg or head movement. Be aware of the potential risk of injury to yourself and to those in close proximity, particularly from sharp antlers or hooves.
- 2 Be aware of the risks to public safety particularly regarding:
  - Use of firearms or other dispatch equipment;
  - Deer carcasses posing a threat to other road users;



### Use of knife

#### Humane Slaughter

In the field situation, the most practical method of bleeding is to make a deep, transverse cut across the animal's throat at the angle of the jaw. Cut deeply, severing the blood vessels, trachea and oesophagus, until the blade of the knife touches the spine. There should be two powerful jets of blood from the carotid arteries and a flow from the jugular veins. The heart may continue to pump until the carcass is exsanguinated. To carry out this task effectively, the operator needs a sharp knife with a blade at least 120mm (five inches) long.

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- Risks of Deer Vehicle Collision (DVC) deer carcasses entering human food chain.

### Welfare

The aim of the dispatcher should be to carry out a single action resulting in rapid loss of consciousness and death, without causing unnecessary suffering.

- 2 Injured animals should be approached carefully and quietly in order to assess the extent of injuries and to minimise stress and alarm.
- 2 All deer incapacitated from their injuries should be dispatched. The welfare implications of transporting injured wild deer for veterinary treatment or rehabilitation are such that this should not be considered a practical option.
- 2 Where an injured female deer is believed to have dependent offspring, carry out an assessment taking into account the extent and seriousness of injuries. Where possible, ensure any dependent

young are also dispatched. For information on the dependency period, see BPGs for Ecology & Behaviour.

### Operator competency

- 2 Practitioners should only attempt to carry out humane dispatch (using any method) if they have the necessary skills, training or experience.

## Reasons for carrying out humane dispatch

Under what circumstances would you dispatch?

- ◆ Wounded (i.e. as a result of inaccurate shot placement);
  - ◆ Diseased;
  - ◆ Injured (including DVC);
  - ◆ Trapped.
- 1 If a deer is dispatched on ground where you do not have deer control rights (e.g. an injured deer that has moved onto neighbouring ground), ensure that the owner/occupier is informed and has given permission to remove the carcass, or is informed as soon as possible thereafter.

### Dispatching wounded deer, diseased or injured deer encountered during deer management activities

Ensuring that you have a good understanding of best practice as it relates to the use of firearms and shot placement will go a long way to helping you shoot accurately.\*

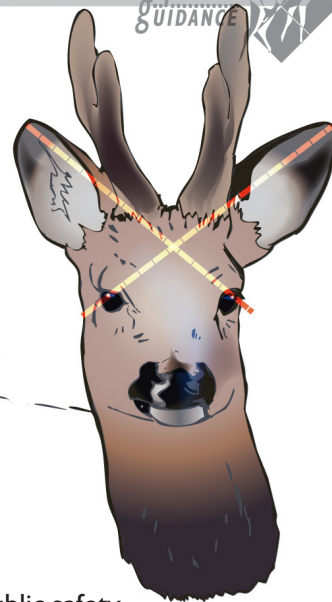
However, occasionally human or mechanical error will result in a deer being wounded and the need for humane dispatch.\*\*

- 2 Any deer encountered during deer management activities displaying serious injuries or debilitating abnormalities should be dispatched.

### Dispatching trapped, but uninjured deer

There may be circumstances where deer become trapped but are uninjured. Examples range from deer caught in a fence to deer trapped in a fenced corridor or garden. In such cases an assessment of the specific circumstances should determine whether release or humane dispatch is appropriate.

The aim of a shot to the head, is to cause maximum damage to the brain. This is the ideal shot placement, however it should only be attempted if there is no risk to safety, and if it is certain to result in a clean kill – i.e. if the animal is suitably immobile. **About the shot:** range 5-25cm from forehead – never against forehead. The angle of shot follows down the brain stem at the crossing point of two imaginary lines drawn from the middle of each eye to the top of the opposite ear.



- 2 Be aware of the risks to public safety of moving or releasing a deer into an area where it may pose a threat to public safety

## Methods of dispatch

The method used should be appropriate to the specific circumstances of each case, and will depend on operator and public safety, the competency of the operator using the appropriate method and taking into account the time to dispatch. The method used will also depend on whether the deer is mobile or immobile.

### Use of a firearm

Shooting is the preferred method of dispatch, provided it is safe to do so and has been authorised, where appropriate, by the Police.\*\*\*

'Firearm' in the context of this guide includes Centre-fire high velocity rifles, .22 Rim-fire rifles, shotguns, specialist pistols and humane slaughtering instruments.

- 1 Safe use of firearms: ensure that an appropriate risk assessment for any activities involving the use of firearms has been carried out.\*\*\*\*
- 1 Practitioners should hold the necessary firearms, and their firearm certificates should not preclude their use for the humane dispatch of deer.

continued in Humane Dispatch(2)

\* See BP Firearms guides and BPG Shot Placement  
 \*\* See BPGs Reaction to Shot & Follow-up and Use of Dogs  
 \*\*\* See BPG Firearms: Safety \*\*\*\* See BPG Risk Assessment

Further reading : BDS/BASC Road Traffic Accidents and the Humane Dispatch of Deer-an advice note available directly from BDS or BASC (see BP Contacts for contact information)