



# REACTION to SHOT & FOLLOW UP



## Aim

The behavioural and physiological response of a deer to being shot will vary depending on the physical and behavioural condition of the animal and where the bullet has struck it in the body. The aim of this guide is to provide information to assist the deer manager in identifying and recognising these responses, in order to assess whether a second shot may be required. The guide also describes procedures to follow after the initial shot has been taken. The BPG Shot Placement should be regarded as an essential introduction to this topic. Where the use of a dog is prescribed refer to BPG Use of Dogs.

## Introduction

Shooting, following Best Practice should result in the majority of shot deer dying within 5 minutes.\*

## General

- 2 After the shot is taken watch for any signs of impact and the reaction of the deer through the telescopic sight and be prepared to take a second shot.
- 2 Never assume that a deer that you have shot at and that has run off has been missed. Always check where the animal was standing for evidence of a strike.
- 2 When a deer is wounded follow up until all chance of finding it or signs of a hit have been exhausted.
- 2 Ensure that a trained dog is present in woodland and when shooting at night.

## Immediately after the shot

- 2 Try to see bullet strike and initial reaction.
- 2 Reload, and stay in the aim position, observing through the telescopic sight. Only target a new deer when you are satisfied that either no follow-up action is required or that follow-up

action being taken by someone else has been confirmed.

- 2 If you suspect the deer is wounded, shoot again, moving to another safe firing position if necessary for a clear line of fire. Specifically when the deer:
  - a) begins to move off out of sight;
  - b) remains standing for more than 10 seconds after being shot (however, in woodland you should shoot as soon as possible);
  - c) lies down after showing signs of being hit, rather than falls down, or
  - d) falls, but then raises its head or struggles to rise.
- 2 Using features such as trees, rocks and other vegetation, mark where you were when the shot was fired and mark the spot where the deer was standing when shot, and where it was last seen.
- 2 Before moving forward, allow enough time to account for suspected shot placement and ensure the rifle has a bullet chambered with the safety on, ready for use.\*\*

## Reaction to shot

The reaction of a deer to being shot will differ depending on where it is hit. Other factors include the calibre and type of bullet, the range and angle of the shot and the condition of the deer. As a general guide, the reactions or signs outlined in the following tables may help to assess where the bullet has struck. Refer to the Procedures section overleaf for the correct steps to follow up to ensure deer are dispatched in a timely and humane manner.



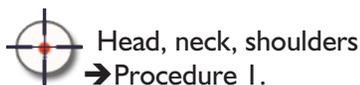
**Collapses immediately.** Jerky or twitchy movement may indicate head, high neck or spine shot.



reaction observed



possible shots (for details see BPG Cull Records) → Follow-up procedure



Head, neck, shoulders  
→ Procedure 1.



**Collapses immediately but attempting to sit up.** If the deer has been paralysed, the point at which the bullet has damaged the spinal column will determine the extent of movement in the head, neck and upper body.



Saddle, upper haunch  
→ Procedure 2.



**Moves a short distance before collapsing.** Moves in uncoordinated way.



Chest  
→ Procedure 1.



**Stands with body hunched, or may walk off slowly with a stilted gait.** The animal may, if undisturbed, lie down after a short period.



Stomach, intestines, liver  
→ Procedure 2.



**May collapse initially, but gets up and runs off immediately.**



Mid haunch, back leg, front leg, brisket, outer neck and head.  
→ Procedure 2.

## Procedures

### Follow-up Procedure 1.

**3** Remain concealed and wait for any other deer in the vicinity to depart.

**3** Move downwind of the deer to the spot where the deer dropped and approach quietly.

Be prepared to shoot again if the deer shows signs of rising – follow Procedure 2.

**2** When closer, check at intervals with binoculars for signs of life.

**2** If it is suspected that the deer is wounded, shoot from a position giving the clearest possible shot, taking care to avoid disturbing the deer in the process and taking care that the backstop is safe.

**2** Where there are no obvious signs of life



reaction observed



possible shots (for details see BPG Cull Records) → Follow-up procedure

\* See BPG Shot Placement \*\*\* See BPG Firearms Safety \*\*\*\* See BPG Humane Dispatch \*\*\*\*\* See BPG Use of Dogs

ascertain death by testing for blink reflex in the eye. If necessary dispatch humanely.\*\*\*

### Follow-up Procedure 2.

**2** When possible, if safe to do so, the deer should immediately be shot, even if it is moving.

**3** When it is not possible to shoot again, if a dog is present which is capable of securing the deer, then have it do so immediately.\*\*\*\*

**2** Where dog is not capable of securing the deer, or where a dog is not present, allow the deer time (15 to 30 mins) to lie down and settle.

**3** If the deer has moved out of sight, approach the point where the deer was shot. Assess for signs of hit/strike (see Additional physical evidence below) and follow any clear blood trail. If no obvious trail use a trained dog to locate the deer.\*\*\*\*

**2** In open country, remain out of sight while keeping the deer in view until it slows up or lies down and can be stalked again.

**2** If not possible to use a firearm to dispatch a wounded deer then consider using other methods.\*\*\*

## Additional physical evidence

The presence of the following may help confirm shot placement:

- ◆ Blood:
  - Light red frothy blood may indicate lungs;
  - Dark thick blood may indicate liver/guts.
- ◆ Gut contents.
- ◆ Tissue (i.e. light coloured spongy tissue may indicate lungs).
- ◆ Hair (clumps with skin and muscle possibly attached).
- ◆ Bone fragments.

## Follow-up across property boundaries

Section 25 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 provides 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. In such circumstances the landowner should be notified of the action as soon as possible, whether before or after the event.