



TEAM CULLING



Aim

The effectiveness of a cull operation may be increased by several rifles and support staff working as a team. The purpose of this guide is to describe factors to be considered when planning and implementing a team culling operation, whilst ensuring that safety and deer welfare standards are maintained. For this guide a team is taken to be more than two stalkers operating in either forest or open range environments.

Advantages

- ◆ Improves efficiency.
- ◆ Particularly useful to assist with large culls.

Constraints

- ◆ Requires ability to recover and larder large numbers of carcasses.
- ◆ Deer behaviour and movement may change in response to repeated collaborative culling operations.
- ◆ Carcasses may be spread over a wider area.

Most efficient where

- ◆ Weather and terrain combine to slow deer movement and increase the ability to predict how the deer will move.
- ◆ Rifles can move into position before the deer are aware of their presence.
- ◆ Rifles are positioned in areas which deer will move into.

Planning

Pre-operation planning should take into account the fact that the culling, extraction and processing of large numbers of carcasses is likely to be time consuming and labour intensive.

- 1 Carry out a risk assessment.*
- 2 Ensure compliance with relevant HSE Guidance** e.g. working time & manual handling regulations.!
- 2 Ensure that specialist training has been provided in advance.
- 2 Ensure that all communications equipment has been checked and is fit for purpose.
- 2 Ensure that all team members have been equipped with the necessary protective clothing and equipment.
- 3 Determine or identify:
 - The number of deer using the area where the cull is required, seasonal or weather variations, and how deer are likely to behave when disturbed or moved from the area;
 - Suitable culling areas;
 - The most effective method of extraction, taking into consideration number of carcasses expected, distance and terrain;
 - Procedures to deal with the number of carcasses expected;***
 - Whether helicopter support would be effective.****

- 3 Consult with neighbours prior to carrying out a substantial cull.

Communications

Communication is an essential component of any deer management activity involving a team and is particularly important in a culling operation.

- 2 Ensure all team members are equipped with radios operating on a dedicated channel. Hands free radios make communication more efficient.
- 2 Agree protocols for radio procedures before the start of any operation. Send, receive and acknowledge are essential steps. In addition team members should be clear on:
 - Definition of terms to be used;
 - Commencing and ending the operation;
 - Moving position;
 - Methods of relaying;
 - Emergency procedures;
 - Channel allocation.

Team requirements

- 2 Establish clear command and control structures, identify who will be responsible for the overall operation, who will co-ordinate operations, and who the rifle-team leaders are.
- 2 Ensure all team members are briefed on their role and the operational plan.
- 2 Ensure all team members understand and are able to follow procedures***** for:
 - Radio communications (see Communications above);
 - Moving during the operation;
 - Dealing with wounded deer;
 - Carcass traceability;
 - Monitoring welfare;
 - Carcass extraction;
 - Contingencies including dealing with emergencies and severe weather;
 - Arrival in area of third parties not involved in the operation.

- 2 Ensure that the individual with overall responsibility for the operation is satisfied that all those participating are capable of fulfilling their role.
- 2 Ensure that there is communication between all team members.
- 2 As an aid to safety, high visibility jackets should be worn by stalkers to help identify stalkers' positions, particularly when the team size exceeds 4 people. The size of teams will be dictated by the nature of the ground but the effectiveness of the team is likely to decrease if the team size exceeds 12 rifles.
- 3 It is helpful if team members have knowledge of the ground and local deer movements.

Moving deer to culling area

Under authorisation from DCS,***** deer may be legally moved using a vehicle to areas where they may be culled more efficiently or safely.‡

- 2 If using a vehicle to move deer, ensure that DCSG Driving Deer: Code of Practice is followed.

Culling operation

- 2 Rifles move into position and only commence firing on instruction from the team leader.
- 2 Stalkers targeting a specific group of deer must be aware of the location of all the members of the team targeting that group and be aware of arcs of fire.
- 2 Any wounded animals are dealt with as a priority.
- 2 All culling must stop at the instruction of the stalker in charge; all must acknowledge this instruction.
- 3 Rifles to alert others when they cease firing.

* See BPG Risk Assessment ** See BPG Health & Safety Principles *** See BPG Handling Exceptional Numbers of Carcasses **** See BPG Use of Helicopters: Support ***** See BPG Reaction & Follow-Up, BPG Humane Dispatch, BPG Carcass Inspection, BPG Welfare Definition & Assessment, BPG Carcass Extraction ***** See DCS Approvals & Authorisations

¹ Legislation: Health & Safety at Work etc Act 1974; Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Legislation available from the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) (publications are available online at www.opsi.gov.uk or can be obtained from the The Stationery Office (for address and contact details see BP Contacts). Further useful information also available on HSE's website: www.hse.gov.uk or can be obtained from HSE Books (for address and contact details see BP Contacts) ‡Deer (Scotland) Act 1996