

NIGHT SHOOTING CODE OF PRACTICE



Introduction

The Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 restricts the shooting of deer at night* to those people with written authorisation from the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS).

The Commission may authorise an occupier of agricultural land or of woodland or any person nominated in writing by such an occupier, to shoot at night, any species of deer for the purpose of crop protection if such a person is considered fit and competent. The Commission must also be satisfied that night shooting is necessary to prevent serious damage and that no other method of control, which might reasonably be adopted, would be adequate. Authorisations are subject to such conditions as may be specified, including the precise area to be covered and the Commission will determine the period of its validity.

If requested by the owner of the land, an occupier is obliged to supply, as soon as practicable after being requested to do so by the owner, information as to the numbers of deer of each species killed under

such authorisations within the period of 12 months immediately preceding the date of request.

Firearms safety, the humane dispatch and welfare of deer are paramount in the issue of night shooting Authorisations and must be the overriding considerations of operators.

Best Practice Operations

- ◆ Operations: Best practice night shooting operations should involve a driver, marksman, and light operator. The duties of each person are:
 - Driver: To position the vehicle and to confirm the location of the fallen animals.
 - Marksman: To discharge the shot.
 - Light operator: To locate and select the most suitable targets and keep count of kills.Whilst two people can operate successfully, a third makes the operation safer and more efficient. Where a vehicle is not used, an independent light operator is essential.

(* The statutory definition is the period between the expiration of the first hour after sunset and the commencement of the last hour before sunrise.)

This note is prepared and published by DCS in pursuance of Section 37(5)(a) of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 and any person issued with a night shooting authorisation is obliged to comply with this Code of Practice. Failure to do so can result in an authorisation being withdrawn.

- ◆ Telescopic Sights: Should not be less than 4 x 36. The use of light-intensifying, heat sensitive or other special sighting devices is prohibited under Section 5 of the Deer (Firearms etc.) (Scotland) Order 1985.
- ◆ Dogs: In woodland, a suitable dog must be present to track wounded deer and prevent unnecessary suffering.
- ◆ Location: Before night shooting takes place operators must make themselves thoroughly familiar with the location where shooting is to be carried out. Neighbouring occupiers and police should be informed. Shooting should only be carried out in areas where there are suitable backstops. Particular attention must be paid to human habitation, roads, railways, footpaths and livestock.
- ◆ Visibility: Deer must be fully visible and clear of obstructions such as tree branches or foliage before a shot is attempted. The recommended distance is under 100m and the target area is the shoulder. Head or neck shots should not be attempted.
- ◆ Vehicles: The provisions of Section 20(1)(a) of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 make it illegal to shoot deer from a moving vehicle. A vehicle bonnet or a roof hatch can, however, provide a platform for marksmen to gain accurate shots. Modern swivel type bipods can be advantageous. Shots should never be taken by stretching across the driver or passenger or across the roof of a vehicle because of the risk of someone emerging from the opposite door or simply walking unseen in front of the rifle. The use of an externally mounted shooting rail can enhance the efficiency of night shooting. Communication between the marksman and cab crew is essential and no person should step outside the vehicle unless given the all-clear by the marksman.
- ◆ Spotlights: Spotlighting is particularly effective for dealing with small groups of deer. When shooting at large groups consideration should be given to the management implications of the deer, who will quickly come to associate spotlights and vehicles with danger.

- ◆ Safety: A first aid kit should always be carried and portable communication equipment is recommended. Details of location and expected time of return should be given to a third party.

Standard Authorisation Conditions

1. The authorisation document must be completed and returned to the Commission not later than seven days after the date of expiry with details of any deer killed under this authorisation entered in the appropriate columns overleaf.
2. The Commission reserves the right to accompany controllers at any time to determine that the terms and conditions of the authorisation are being applied.
3. The Commission may withdraw this authorisation at any time.
4. That the person authorised will comply with the Commission's Code of Practice for Shooting Deer at Night (updated 4 July 2003).
5. That the person authorised will inform the local police and neighbours of the times night shooting will take place.
6. That prior to commencement of shooting, the person authorised will warn any person, who to that person's knowledge is likely to be on the land at the above mentioned location, of the issue of this authorisation and the intention to take or kill deer.
7. The authorised person must comply with the Deer (Firearms etc.) (Scotland) Order 1985 and appropriate sections of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996.
8. A minimum of 2 persons are required to operate under this authorisation.
9. In woodland, a suitable dog must be present to track wounded deer and prevent unnecessary suffering.
10. Name of Constabulary Police Authority which has been notified of the issue of this authorisation.

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