

THE CODE OF GOOD SHOOTING PRACTICE

The Code of Good Shooting Practice contains important advice and provides essential guidance for everybody involved in shooting. We all share a personal responsibility to promote the safety, integrity and reputation of our sport. Our activities are under public scrutiny as never before. Public and media opinion will be major catalysts for change. The public will judge shooting and shoot management practices by the way that participants and providers behave.

The following Four Golden Rules apply:-

- No more birds shall be released than can be sustained without damaging the environment and surrounding habitat, or being detrimental to the health and welfare of the stock.
- All birds shall be released before the commencement of shooting for that particular species on the area concerned, and shooting should not commence until all the birds are mature and fully adapted to the wild.
- Birds shall not be caught up from the wild for release during the same shooting season.
- Shot game is food and should be treated as such.

Codes of practice for the management of game and game shooting are guidelines. They embody the spirit of sportsmanship, a fundamental respect for the quarry species and care for the environment. The Code covers three areas: managing game and game habitat, shoot day management and behaviour in the field.

The Guidelines

1. Shoot Management

- It is the responsibility of all involved to ensure that shoot days comply with this code of practice and all relevant legislation. It is the employers' legal responsibility to ensure their employees comply with the law relating to health and safety, firearms, game management and conservation.

2. Wild Game

- The aim of wild game management is to produce a harvestable surplus of game living naturally in the wild.
- The rearing and release of birds is a valid method of increasing or sustaining a stock of game especially where wild populations cannot produce a harvestable surplus

3. Predator and Pest Control

- Predator and pest control is an essential part of game management and should be carried out humanely within the law and with due consideration for other countryside users.

- It is good practice to keep accurate records of pest and predator control.

4. Bag Sizes

- Game numbers which are excessive for the habitat and circumstances of the shoot will bring shooting in to disrepute and should be avoided.
- Observation of this code will ensure that the shoot organiser can decide the bag size and the number of shoot days that the ground and stock can sustain.

5. Consideration for Others

- Those involved in shooting must always have regard for other countryside users and act accordingly.
- The frequency of shooting must not cause significant nuisance.
- Avoid spent shot or birds falling onto public places or neighbouring property.
- Wherever possible cartridges with biodegradable wads should be used and cartridge litter removed.

6. Non-Toxic Shot

- The government has prohibited the use of lead shot over all salt marsh and foreshore, over SSSIs important for waterfowl, and for the shooting of all ducks, geese, swans, coot, moorhen and, possibly, common snipe and golden plover.
- In order to avoid lead shot contamination of wetlands important for feeding waterfowl, non-toxic shot should be used for game and pest shooting over such wetlands.

7. Retrieval and Handling of Game

- Proper provision should be made to retrieve all shot game.
- Wounded game must be retrieved and despatched as quickly as possible.
- Guns should make every effort to assist in the retrieval of shot game.

8. Game is Food

- Suitable arrangements should be made for the collection, transport and storage of the anticipated bag.
- All freshly-killed game must be handled in a way that avoids bruising and allows body heat to disperse as quickly as possible.
- All game must be transported to a suitable game larder at the earliest convenience to avoid deterioration of food quality.

9. Cessation of Shooting

- A day's game shooting should finish early enough to allow time for pickers up to complete their task before birds start to go to roost.

- Shooting should be cancelled if adverse or severe weather conditions mean that birds cannot be presented in a sporting manner, shot and retrieved safely.

Rearing Game

The aim of game rearing is to provide fit, healthy birds, well adapted for release into the wild. Provided it is carried out within the terms of this code, such releasing is an entirely valid method of game conservation; indeed it is fundamental to British game shooting and its attendant conservation benefits.

Whatever the species being reared or the methods being used, the over-riding principle, which must guide everyone involved, is:

Game husbandry shall be conducted with all due consideration for the health and welfare of the birds concerned.

This principle can be met only if the following rules are followed throughout the entire process.

- Those responsible for captive gamebirds must be caring, considerate, conscientious, knowledgeable and skilled. They must be well prepared and take professional advice from veterinarians and qualified game consultants whenever necessary.
- Captive gamebirds must have ready access to fresh water and an appropriate diet to maintain growth, health and vigour.
- They must have an environment appropriate to their species and age, including correct heating, lighting, shelter and areas of comfortable resting.
- Every precaution must be taken to avoid pain, injury or disease. If they occur, diagnosis, remedial action and the correct use of medication must be rapid.
- Captive gamebirds must be provided with appropriate space, facilities and company of their own kind to ensure the avoidance of stress.

Releasing Game

- The Wildlife and countryside Act 1981 Section 8 (3) (a) states;

Every person who -

- a. promotes, arranges, conducts, assists in, receives money for, or takes part in, any event whatever at or in the course of which captive birds are liberated by hand or by any other means whatever for the purpose of being shot immediately after their liberation; or
- b. being the owner or occupier of any land, permits that land to be used for the purposes of such an event, shall be guilty of an offence.

Pheasant and Partridge

- Release pen area and habitat should always be appropriate and sufficient for the needs of the birds.
- Partridge release pens should be removed before shooting begins in that area.

- Release pens should, wherever possible, be sited away from public highways, footpaths and bridleways.
- Professional advice is available from the main shooting and conservation organisations on release pen size, design and construction.

Duck

- Duck must always be released into suitable wetland habitat, and in numbers which are appropriate.
- Wetland areas are particularly sensitive, and overstocking with reared birds will quickly deter wild stocks and damage the habitat.

Medication and Veterinary Treatment

- Medicines used for treating gamebirds should only be used when prescribed by a veterinary surgeon and all withdrawal periods must be strictly adhered to.
- Records of the use of all medicines must be maintained in accordance with the law.

Shooting Behaviour

The public will judge shooting and shoot management practices by the way that participants and providers behave. All those who are involved in shooting must act as good ambassadors. The way in which those involved in shooting must conduct themselves is enshrined in the following:-

- Safety, the law and good manners are paramount.
- Respect your quarry.
- Don't be greedy.
- Seek to help and support the relevant associations which promote your sport.

Glossary

The code of Good Shooting Practice was produced by the following organisations:-

Country Land and Business Association

British Association for Shooting and Conservation

Countryside Alliance

Game Farmers Association

Campaign for Shooting

Scottish Game Keepers Association

National Game Dealers Association

National Gamekeepers Organisation

The Game Conservancy Trust

The Scottish Landowners Federation

It is endorsed by leading sporting agents and game farmers

For further information on the code contact: The Secretary, Code of Good Shooting Practice, Marford Mill, Rossett, Wrexham LL12 0HL. Tel: 01244 573019 Fax: 01244 573001

The CLA Shooting Lease Advisory Handbook

INTRODUCTION

The shooting world has moved on since the last publication of the CLA Shooting Lease in 1995, and the 2001 version takes into account changes to background legislation and the ever increasing threat to the sport since that date.

In particular, case law on liability has raised the profile of this difficult issue, and the moves by the animal welfare lobby to target shooting has emphasised the need for all involved to take a careful look at what is done on the ground.

When considering the grant of a new shooting lease, or the renewal of an existing arrangement, it is recommended that the question of the management of the shoot is given careful consideration.

Expert advice on the development of shoots, and in particular on the best practice that may be adopted on the ground in order to promote the welfare of the quarry and biodiversity is available from the Game Conservancy Trust. Prospective sporting tenants might be asked to obtain and adhere to such advice in order to ensure the long term interests of the shoot and the land.

At the very least, owners interested in the long term future of shooting and the value of their shoots should seek to ensure that the provisions of the Code of Good Shooting Practice are included in the lease, and that both the letter and spirit of the Code are properly enforced.

It may be that the highest shooting standards are incompatible with the highest rents, at least in the short term. Best practice, however, demands that a longer term view is taken. The reputation of a shoot can be damaged (with a consequent loss in value) by inappropriate management. Overstocking can damage natural regeneration in woodlands, and lead to friction with farming enterprises, quite apart from leading to increased disease burdens that affect wild populations. These factors should be taken into account when selecting shooting tenants and assessing their plans for the shoot.

A copy of the CLA Shooting Lease Advisory Handbook is available from:

The publications department, CLA, 16 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PQ. **Price: £20.00, reduced member's price: £15.00 (inclusive of postage and packing).**

Telephone orders may be taken on 0207 235 0511 (*Please have a credit card and your membership number, if applicable, to hand*).

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