

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR DRIVEN GROUSE SHOOTING

GENERAL

Grouse shooting takes place on heather moorland in the uplands of Northern England and Scotland typically between 700 ft and 3,000 ft above sea level. At these altitudes the weather can change very quickly and at certain times of the year flooding, ice and snow can be a significant risk.

Due to the nature of driven grouse shooting and the number of people involved over rough terrain it can be a dangerous activity. The shoot organiser will guide you and you should listen carefully to any safety talks prior or during the sporting activity. In the event of an emergency please seek immediate assistance from the shoot organiser or the head keeper.

Anyone involved in grouse shooting should carry out a risk assessment before and during the shoot. Shooting will usually take place from numbered "Butts", with a line of 8-10 guns shooting a series of drives where birds are driven towards the line of guns by a team of beaters. In addition, there will be flanking parties at each end of the gun line as well as pickers-up with dogs behind and out of shot of the gun line. Each gun will draw a number at the start of the day, and will change his position in the gun line each drive.

Please read the summary below to remind you of the main procedures and risks involved:-

1. CLOTHING

- Assess the weather and take suitable clothing and take additional layers of warm clothing. Suitable clothing for the weather should normally include a waterproof coat, leggings and headgear with an additional layer for colder conditions.
- Wear supportive walking boots or robust boots, as the ground will be rocky, uneven and wet in areas.
- Safety glasses and ear protection should always be worn during a grouse drive.
- Do not wear light colored clothing. Clothing should be of muted natural colors to blend in with the surroundings. Grouse are wild bird and will avoid you if they can see you. Always wear a hat!

2. THE ENVIRONMENT

- Be aware that a degree of physical fitness is required for grouse shooting.
- Please take care in accessing your grouse butt and follow instructions for the best route.
- Seek assistance if you have difficulty crossing a burn, negotiating a steep bank or crossing a fence.
- Use gates where possible and leave them as you find them.
- Avoid electric fences and barbed wire fences or seek assistance.
- Be aware of fire risk in dry weather and avoid smoking or lighting matches.
- Bring suntan lotion and drinking water on hot days to reduce the risk of sunburn or sunstroke.
- Be aware of power lines in close proximity.
- If instructed move to lower ground or a protected area in the event of thunder and lightning.
- Avoid deep wading or risky river crossings and seek assistance from the keepers.
- Be aware of rights of way and public highways in the vicinity of the shooting area. These should be highlighted to you by the Shoot Organiser/Head Keeper.

3. EQUIPMENT

- Ensure you are proficient in the understanding and use of your Shotgun before shooting live quarry. If you are inexperienced in shooting driven grouse, highlight this in advance.
- Always make sure your shotgun is unloaded between drives and do not point the gun at anyone. Do not swing through the line of guns during the drive.
- Make sure your equipment is kept clean and in good working order at all times.
- Check that your cartridges are appropriate for the shooting activity. Fibre wads are recommended, and on many moors cartridges with plastic wads are now forbidden.
- Carry your shotgun certificate with you, and any relevant insurance documents (third party/bad weather cancellation).

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4. PROCEDURES DURING THE DRIVE

- On arrival at your butt check the position of the adjacent butts. Some butts can be slightly out of line or at a different height and you must allow for this during the drive.
- Check the butt floor and find a level and unobstructed area to stand.
- Guests and dogs should sit out of the way, preferably lower down, but inside the butt. Never leave the butt during a drive. Your butt becomes “LIVE” (ie you can commence shooting) as soon as all guns and flankers/pickers up are in position, but always be aware of your neighbours and beaters/flankers/pickers up, and only shoot when it is safe to do so. You can shoot in front and behind, subject to your arcs of fire.
- Always use butt sticks and delineate the arc of the fire by placing the sticks in the front corners of your butt. Some moors have permanent butt sticks and butt line markers. NEVER swing through the line, and always be aware that other butts in the line may be at a higher/lower elevation.
- If you are in the end two butts, always acknowledge the position of the flankers with a wave and mark their progress during the drive.
- If using double guns practice the change with your loader. When passing a gun always ensure the safety catch is in the safe position.
- During the drive always make sure that your gun is pointing forward.
- Always check that the barrels are free from obstructions. In the event of a misfire unload the gun with barrels pointed away from others.
- Be aware of the location of the beating line and do not fire in front when the beaters are within 150-200 meters of the guns. Normally the keepers will blow a whistle or sound a horn to confirm that there should be no more shooting in front. The signals to be used will be pointed out as part of the pre-shoot safety briefing. Guns can continue to shoot behind the line after the signal to stop shooting in front, but on no account fire above the beaters.
- If you have poor visibility or a short horizon, please ask your neighbours if the beaters/or flankers are approaching. Warn your neighbours if they are unaware.
- Guns should always be unloaded at the end of the drive and put away in slips before you retrieve game. Do not move out of your butt or let a dog off its lead until the drive has fully finished.
- Mark your birds carefully, and it is helpful to remain in the vicinity of your butt after the drive is over until all your birds have been picked. Pickers-up may well ask you where your birds have fallen, and it is useful if you indicate to them once all your birds have been collected.
- Be aware that shotgun pellets can ricochet off water and can therefore be a safety hazard.
- If the drive is disrupted for any reason, then shotguns should be unloaded and placed in their slips.

5. HEALTH HAZARDS

- If you are on medication please bring it with you.
- If you are allergic to bee or wasp stings please remember to take antihistamine medication with you. Midge repellent can also be helpful and apply to exposed skin as appropriate.
- If you have sensitive eyes take eye wash/lotion with you.
- On hot days please take water with you and avoid drinking excessive alcohol.
- If alcohol is consumed it will impair your judgement and could be a significant safety hazard.
- Hats should always be worn during the drives. On sunny days they will reduce the risk of sunstroke. Suntan lotion may be necessary in August/September.
- In cold conditions hypothermia or exposure can be a risk especially on higher ground. Please bring adequate waterproof clothing.
- If shooting from a wooden butt, these are often treated with wood preservative and this can stain clothing or irritate skin or eyes.
- Barrels can get hot on occasions and leather gloves (or equivalent) or a barrel guard can avoid problems.
- First aid kits stored in vehicles are worth considering.
- Do not light matches in dry conditions to avoid the risk of fire.

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- Ticks are common on some moorland areas and should be removed from clothes or skin as quickly as possible. Ticks can cause infection or in some cases Lyme's disease and is a risk to be aware of. The best defence is to keep the skin covered and check your skin and clothing frequently.
- Tetanus boosters are recommended as tetanus infections can occur through cuts, abrasions or puncture wounds.

6. VEHICLES

- If you are bringing a four wheel drive please make sure that you have suitable experience or training to drive on hill roads. If you are in any doubt please ask an experienced driver to take over. Please be particularly careful if you are driving a vehicle with a trailer on rough tracks.
- Please ensure that there is sufficient room between you and the car in front as hill roads can become extremely dangerous in wet or icy conditions.
- Please follow instructions clearly when going from one drive to another and park in the correct place.
- When travelling in an Estate vehicle please be aware that the ride can be uneven and uncomfortable. Avoid trailing loose clothing which could become entangled especially in Argocats or tracked vehicles.
- Please take advice from the shoot organiser or keeper if your vehicle has to cross a deep gully, ford or go up steep tracks.
- You should not drive any Estate vehicles unless specifically instructed or requested to do so.

7. WILDLIFE AND LIVESTOCK

- Please be aware of livestock and avoid disturbance or causing injury to sheep or cattle. Sheep are often in close proximity to the butts especially towards the end of a grouse drive.
- Adders can be found on moorland areas and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- Please make sure you are aware what quarry you are permitted to shoot on the day as some species such as black game, grey partridges, ptarmigan or blue hares may be protected by the Estate. **DO NOT** shoot ground game at any time during a drive

8. COMMUNICATIONS

- Be aware of instructions and advice from the shoot organiser or keepers during the day. Pass on any instructions to adjacent guns as quickly as possible.
- Whilst mobile telephones are helpful for communication and can be used in an emergency, they should generally be switched off during drives to avoid distraction.
- Be aware of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and communicate with any access users in the vicinity of a shoot.
- Follow instructions by Estate staff at all times. Ignoring instructions could jeopardise your safety or enjoyment of the sporting event or could even result in cancellation of the event.
- If you have any uncertainty as to the procedure on a shoot day do not hesitate to ask.

9. ANTI FIELD SPORT SABOTEURS –

If saboteurs happen to appear in the field then confrontation should be avoided at all costs.

- Any and all interaction should be carried out by estate staff.
- If the team are in the field when the saboteurs make an appearance, guns should be immediately sleeved and dogs placed on a lead.
- If the saboteurs are some distance away then the team should proceed immediately to their vehicles and await instructions from the head keeper or his representative.
- If the saboteurs are in close proximity the flankers will join the occupant of the end butt and proceed to the vehicles gathering the remaining individuals from their butts as they travel.
- If saboteurs appear whilst participants are driving, they should remain their vehicles at all times

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- The police will be called as soon as the saboteurs are spotted and if at all possible they will not be allowed to ruin the day and every effort will be made to shoot elsewhere on the estate although this will not always be possible.

10. PROCEEDURE IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY

Determine who is the designated First Aider and ensure that all parties are aware of who it is. In the event of an emergency an estate keeper, together with the designated First Aider, should be immediately made aware of the situation. Grouse moors are often in remote places with few typical landmarks. It is essential, therefore, for any call to the emergency services to be made by someone who has a clear knowledge of both the location of the accident and the appropriate directions to get there. First aid kits can be found in estate vehicles.

The above is intended as a guide when you go grouse shooting. Most of the comments are common sense but please do take time to read this guide and ask if you are unsure. Please note this document should be read alongside the **Scottish Lands & Estates – Due diligence good practice guide** and **The Code of Good Shooting Practice** documents available to download.



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January 2018

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