

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR DRIVEN WOODCOCK SHOOTING

GENERAL

Woodcock shooting can take place in a wide variety of habitats with different exposure and altitudes. At higher altitudes the weather can change very quickly and at certain times of year flooding, ice and snow can be a significant risk.

Due to the nature of woodcock shooting and the number of people involved over potentially 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 woodcock shooting should carry out a risk assessment before and during the shoot. Please read the summary below to remind you of the main procedures and risks involved:-

1. CLOTHING

- Assess the weather and take suitable clothing.
- Suitable clothing for the weather should normally include a waterproof coat, leggings and headgear and an additional layer for colder conditions.
- Wear supportive walking boots or robust boots, as the ground may be rocky, uneven and wet in areas.
- We recommend that safety glasses and ear protection should always be worn during any shooting activities by guns and guests.

2. THE ENVIRONMENT

- Be aware that a degree of physical fitness may be required for woodcock shooting.
- Please take care in taking access to your shooting position.
- Seek assistance if you have difficulty crossing a burn, negotiating a steep bank or crossing a fence.
- Use gates where possible and close them behind you.
- 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.
- 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.

3. EQUIPMENT

- Only use shotguns if you have had appropriate training or have a loader monitoring your shooting during the drive.
- 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. This is particularly important in shooting woodcock as they fly low and unpredictably, often between guns.
- 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. Please note that most shoots now only allow fibre/biodegradable wads and it is your responsibility to make sure you comply.
- Carry your Shotgun Certificate and any relevant Insurance documents (Third Party/Bad Weather Cancellation).

4. PROCEDURES DURING THE DAY

- At the start of the day, there will be a safety briefing by the shoot organizer or head keeper. Please pay attention, and if you are unsure of any aspect of the briefing, please ask for clarification. You will then draw numbers to ascertain your position in the line (your peg number). The safety brief will include the mechanism for your position change each drive. Be quite clear as to the quarry you are allowed to

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shoot on the day. Shooting of ground game (rabbits, hares etc) is usually expressly forbidden on all driven shoots.

- On arrival at your shooting position check the location of the adjacent guns. Some stands can be slightly out of line and at a different height and you must allow for this during the drive.
 - Check the shooting position and find a level and unobstructed area to stand.
 - Guests and dogs should sit out of the way, and not obstruct the person shooting. Never leave the shoot position during the drive.
 - Please review the safe areas where you can shoot during the drive and carry out a risk assessment before it starts. For safety reasons, always make sure that you have clear sky beyond your target before you shoot. Do not be tempted to take low birds either in front or behind, or low birds crossing through the line. If in doubt, do not shoot.
 - Please look to see if you can see any beaters or pickers up. If they are close to you then acknowledge their position with a wave and mark their progress during the drive. Even if you do not see them, they will likely be in the vicinity.
 - 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.
 - Guns should always be unloaded at the end of the drive and put away in slips before you retrieve game. Do not pick up until the drive has fully finished.
 - 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.
 - It is a part of shoot etiquette to tip the head keeper in cash at the end of the day. (Ask for advice if you are unsure of the appropriate rate) It is usual to receive a brace of birds at the end of the day.
 - We would suggest as a guide:
Up to 100 birds - £30 per gun
100 to 200 birds - £40 per gun
200 + birds – £50+ per gun.
- OVERAGE**
- You should have a shoot contract from the shoot organiser or agent. Please familiarise yourself with the details, particularly the clause pertaining to overage (i.e. those birds over and above the number you have contracted for), which must be paid for as an additional charge retrospectively.

5. **HEALTH HAZARDS**

- 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 are recommended and should always be worn by guns and guests during shooting. On sunny days they will reduce the risk of sunstroke. Later in the season they will prevent you from getting cold or wet.
- In cold conditions hypothermia or exposure can be a risk especially on higher ground. Please bring adequate waterproof clothing.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

6. **VEHICLES**

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- 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. Livestock are often in close proximity to the shoot.
- Adders can be found in woodland 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 grey partridge, black game, snipe or brown hares may be protected by the Estate.

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.
- If in Scotland, 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.

The above is intended as a guide when you go woodcock 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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