

## GUIDANCE NOTES FOR DEER STALKING IN SCOTLAND

### GENERAL

Deer Stalking takes place on both upland and lowland areas of Scotland. Upland areas may be in excess of 2000ft above sea level, and at these altitudes the weather can change very quickly. At certain times of the year rain and flooding, high winds, ice and snow can be a significant risk.

Due to the nature of deer stalking, and the rough terrain that may be encountered, it can be a hazardous activity. Stalking may be undertaken on your own or more usually you will be accompanied by an estate stalker. He will guide you and you should listen carefully to any safety talk prior to or during the sporting activity. In the event of an emergency please seek immediate assistance from the stalker in the first instance. If you are stalking on your own, you should have notified a 3rd party of where you are going, and when they can expect your return. Carry a mobile phone with you, but be aware that coverage is not always available given the likely terrain.

### 1. CLOTHING

- Assess the weather, wear suitable clothing and take additional layers of warm clothing, as necessary, including hat and gloves.
- Take suitable clothing for the weather; this should normally include a waterproof coat, leggings and headgear and an additional layer for colder conditions.
- Wear supportive walking boots, as the ground will be rocky, uneven and wet in areas.
- Due to the nature of deer stalking, which may involve kneeling and crawling, you may get wet. There are now excellent fully waterproof stalking specific garments for wearing on the hill. Consider taking spare clothing in the vehicle.

### 2. THE ENVIRONMENT

- Be aware that deer stalking can be a very strenuous activity, and a reasonable degree of physical fitness is required.
- Seek assistance from the stalker if you have difficulty crossing a burn, negotiating steep banks, rocky ground, gullies and fences.
- Use gates whenever possible and close them behind you.
- Avoid electric fences and barbed wire fences, or seek assistance.
- Be aware of fire in dry weather and avoid smoking or lighting matches.
- Bring suntan lotion and drinking water on hot days to reduce the risk of sunburn and sun stroke.
- Be aware of power lines in close proximity.
- Move to lower ground or a protected area in the event of thunder and lightning.
- Avoid using river crossings, particularly after heavy rain.
- Be aware of rights of way and public highways in the vicinity of the shooting/stalking area.
- Be aware that hill walkers may be in the vicinity, and always check carefully before taking a shot.

### 3. EQUIPMENT

- Rifles and Ammunition used must be fit for purpose, regularly cleaned and maintained.
- A legal rifle for the killing of deer in Scotland must conform to a minimum specification including type of bullet, bullet weight, muzzle velocity and muzzle energy.
- Legal Limitations – for the killing or taking of deer in Scotland, firearms, ammunition and sights must conform to requirements laid down in the Deer (Firearms etc) (Scotland) Order 1985.

Lynedoch House, Barossa Place, Perth PH1 5EP

Tel: 01738 451111 | Fax: 01738 451900 | [perth@galbraithgroup.com](mailto:perth@galbraithgroup.com) | [galbraithgroup.com](http://galbraithgroup.com)

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- These are stated as follows:

Deer Species	Min Bullet Weight	Min Muzzle Velocity	Min Muzzle Energy
For all species	100 grains (6.48 grams)	2,450 ft/sec (746.76 mtrs/sec)	1,750 foot pounds (2,373 joules)
For Roe only	50 grains (3.24 grams)	2,450 ft/sec (746.76 mtrs/sec)	1,000 foot pounds (1,356 joules)

*NB – ensure that all three minimum conditions are met for your chosen caliber of rifle.*  
Rifle bullets must be of an expanding type designed to deform in a predictable manner.

- Ensure rifles are serviced regularly by a competent gunsmith.
- If you do not provide your own rifle, an estate rifle can usually be supplied by request (and it is worth arranging this in advance).
- It is normal practice, whether supplying your own rifle or using an estate rifle to zero the rifle on a target prior to any stalking taking place. One should expect to achieve a 3 shot group of 4" or smaller at 100 metres as a minimum level of shooting competence to ensure a humane kill. Please take the opportunity to familiarize yourself with the workings of the rifle. (Trigger, safety catch, loading and unloading, focusing of telescopic sights). Be particularly aware of rifles with a 'Set' or continental trigger.
- Full bore rifles are lethal weapons, and are able to kill at a distance of well over a mile.
- Consider such aids as Bipeds, Sound Moderator and Range Finder. These items will assist in ensuring a one shot humane kill.
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#### 4. FINAL STALK AND TAKING THE SHOT

Safety points to note are:

- Do not crawl with a loaded rifle behind the stalker.
- Be aware of the position of the rifle muzzle at all times. (It should never be pointed at anyone, loaded or unloaded) and keep it clear of the ground.
- Do not load the rifle until the final stalk is about to take place.
- Always maintain the safety catch until the shot is about to be taken.
- Be aware of muzzle clearance when the shot is being taken (watch out for rocks, vegetation etc. and the chance of ricochets) (The line of sight of the telescopic sight is well above that of the barrel).
- Be aware of muzzle blast when in close proximity to the rifle. Wear hearing protection when firing or close to the rifle. Consider wearing eye protection.
- Only shoot at a beast that has been positively identified as appropriate.
- Only shoot at a beast if there is a safe backdrop (Avoid shooting if the target is sky lined or partially obscured).
- After the shot, be aware of the status of the rifle. When moving forward, remain behind the muzzle of the rifle, in case of the need for a follow-up shot. Always unload prior to Gralloching.
- Ensure the rifle is fully unloaded once the stalk has been completed.
- Ensure that firearms and ammunition are securely stored and transported.

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## 5. DEER SEASONS

In Scotland, each species has a specific season, and may not be shot out with these periods.

	Season Open	Season Close
Red Deer Stags	1 July	20 October
Red Deer Hinds	21 October	15 February
Fallow Bucks	1 August	30 April
Fallow Does	21 October	15 February
Sika Stags	1 July	20 October
Sika Hinds	21 October	15 February
Roe Bucks	1 April	20 October
Roe Does	21 October	31 March

\* All species may be shot traditionally (on open hill or woodland) or from a High seat.

## 6. 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 wash/lotion with you.
- On hot days please take water with you and avoid drinking alcohol. If alcohol is consumed it will impair your judgment and could be a significant safety hazard.
- Hats should always be worn. 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.
- 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. Tick hooks are effective and can be purchased from Veterinary practices. Ticks can cause infection; Lyme disease is a risk to be aware of. The best defense 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.

## 7. CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE – PROTECTING SCOTLAND’S DEER

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a highly infectious disease which has devastating effects on many populations of wild and farmed deer. Red deer are also susceptible. CWD affects only deer and at present CWD is restricted to the United States of America and Canada.

CWD is caused by a prion and belongs to the same group of diseases as scrapie, which affects sheep and goats and 'mad cow disease' (bovine spongiform encephalopathy of 'BSE@'. This group of diseases are known collectively as 'transmissible spongiform encephalopathies' or 'TSE' for short and CDW is the most infectious of these as shown by it being the only one that is maintained in a wild population.

- CWD has resulted in the death of every known infected deer.
- There are currently no treatments or vaccines available to control the disease.
- Efforts to control the spread of CWD in the USA/Canada have failed and it may be beyond control.

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The prion is transmitted in deer body fluids and body parts including urine, faeces, saliva, central nervous system tissues and meat. The prion can remain infectious for up to ten years when bound to soil, several years on stainless steel and if defies normal farm disinfection processes. It is not known whether it can be disseminated via a carrion eater's digestion system.

Animals may take 18-24 months to exhibit clinical signs after becoming infected and become more infectious to other as the incubation period progresses.

CWD, like and TSE, is a Notifiable Disease and suspicion of the disease in any animal must be reported to your local Animal Health Office.

Disease surveillance carried out in some European countries has so far failed to find evidence of CWD present. However, if it were to become established in wild deer it would have major consequences:

- Loss or large numbers of the wild deer population
- Restrictions on sales of venison and live deer
- Restrictions on stalking activities

If the disease became established stopping its spread might be extremely challenging or practically impossible.

A possible (likely) route of transmission into the UK could be through countryside users bringing in contaminated clothing and equipment. A specific risk group might be hunters or stalkers who have hunted parts of North America where CDW is present.

### **What can I do to limit the risk of disease spread?**

CWD is highly infectious and is very resistant to both weather conditions and traditional disinfectants so it can remain in the environment for a long time. Additionally, it has been shown to stick to soil particles very efficiently for up to ten years. The only way to rapidly inactivate the infectious agent of CWD is to soak articles in a solution for one hour. This treatment would obviously be highly detrimental to most clothing, footwear and hunting equipment and so is mostly impractical.

### **As a countryside user visiting the UK/USA/Canada**

- Consider whether you need to take clothing/equipment with you. Clothing and equipment bought or borrowed, used and then left in North America poses no risk to UK deer populations.
- If you need to bring such clothing or equipment to the UK, make sure it is scrupulously clean of all potential contamination – soil, blood, faeces etc.
- Meticulous cleaning of all adherent debris from equipment and clothing, especially footwear, will significantly reduce the risk of introducing CWD into this country, although it will not eliminate the risk.
- Do not bring any trophies or body parts back to the UK.

### **As a Host/Sporting Agent**

- Send this leaflet to North American stalking guests and also those who may have visited North America so they are aware of their responsibilities.
- Check all of their kit for cleanliness (it is unlikely that their kit will have been inspected for appropriate cleanliness at border control).
- Don't assume that because they are visiting from North America they will be aware of the risk of CWD transmission.

By adopting these guidelines you can help minimise the risk of transmission of this harmful disease into the UK.

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## 8. 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.
- When traveling 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 Argo cats or tracked vehicles.
- Please take advice 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.
- In the event of an emergency, it is generally better to stay with the vehicle to aid identification from afar.
- First Aid kits should be carried in Estate Vehicles. It is worth considering carrying small first aid kit with you on the stalk.

## 9. WILDLIFE AND LIVESTOCK

- Please be aware of livestock and avoid disturbance or causing injury to sheep or cattle.
- Adders can be found on moorland areas and are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

## 10. COMMUNICATION

- Be aware of instructions and advice from the stalker, if accompanied. Pass on any instructions to followers.
- Whilst mobile telephones are helpful for communication and can be used in an emergency, they should generally be switched off to avoid distraction.
- If you are going out on the hill by yourself then please leave an accurate description of your route and timings.
- Be aware of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and communicate with any access users in the vicinity of Stalking.
- Follow instructions by Estate Stalkers at all times. Ignoring instructions could jeopardize your safety, and that of others.
- If you have any uncertainty as to the procedure on a stalking day do not hesitate to ask.

The above is intended as a guide when you go deer stalking. Most of the comments are common sense but please do take time to read this guide and ask if you are unsure.



**GALBRAITH**

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