

ENGLAND &
WALES **BEST
PRACTICE
GUIDES**

Extraction and Transport.

Meat Hygiene





Introduction

A freshly shot carcass needs to be extracted from where it was shot and transported to storage or further processing.

The carcass should at all stages be considered as food and every care taken to prevent contamination.

This guide describes methods of extraction and transport of carcasses and links to the Gralloching, Meat hygiene legislation and HACCP guides.



Unfit carcasses

Firstly, the carcass needs to be inspected and assessed as to whether or not it is fit to enter the food chain. If, at this initial stage, it is not fit then a decision may be made to leave the carcass in the field to decompose naturally or to consider disposal via an approved waste handling system.

Equipment used to transport carcasses should be cleaned thoroughly after contact with a suspect carcass. For notifiable diseases such as Foot and Mouth there is a legal requirement to notify them and there may be prescribed methods of cleaning up after handling them.

See Carcass Inspection guide.

Manual extraction

It is frequently necessary to extract a carcass by hand before it can be placed in a vehicle.

Health and safety

In all cases, a plan for extraction should be considered before the shot is taken. If a suitable extraction plan is not identified, it may be appropriate to choose not to shoot.

Particular care should be taken when carrying or dragging carcasses, especially on uneven ground or when dealing with antlered deer.

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) establish clear steps for dealing with risks from manual handling for employees.

These are:

- Avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as reasonably practicable,
- Assess any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided,
- Reduce the risk of injury so far as reasonably practicable.

Techniques

If possible the gralloched carcass should be extracted without dragging on the ground.

Small deer can be carried by one person, using ropes, bags or sacks. When carrying deer close to your body, be aware of the risk of ticks transferring from the carcass to yourself.

Larger deer can be lifted over short distances by two or more persons.



However, in many cases dragging is the only practical option for extracting a carcass. In this case:

- Avoid unnecessary contamination and use a “drag bag” or sled if possible, this prevents direct contact with the ground.
- Plan the route carefully, avoiding particularly dirty or difficult areas.
- Consider leaving the carcass un-gralloched for the duration of the drag to limit internal exposure to contamination. If gralloching is essential, minimise the number and size of your cuts to keep the carcass as “closed” as possible.

If dragging with a rope:

- Attach it by looping around the antlers and/or neck, then put a half hitch around the nose. This will prevent the nose digging into the ground and will raise the shoulders off the ground.
- Use an appropriate thickness and length of rope.
- If dragging from the front, keep the rope very short, thus lifting the head.
- A toggle handle or wrapping the rope around a length of stick, may prevent rope burns.
- Pull slowly, maintaining constant pressure. Don't jerk and snatch at the load or allow the carcass to build up such momentum that it slides out of control.

- Never wrap the rope around any part of your body or directly attach yourself to the carcass.
- For very steep ground, wherever possible, use two people- One in front to pull and one at the back to keep the carcass stretched out and from rolling onto the front person.
- If alone on steep slopes, lower the carcass in front of you.



Winches and snatch blocks

- Good for extracting animals from very steep gullies or slopes or winching deer out of forestry clear-fell areas. A winch can either be portable or vehicle mounted.
- When extracting deer with a long rope, especially in forestry areas, a snatch block and strop can be especially useful if operating along a roadside. The strop is looped high around a tree, and the snatch block, or pulley wheel, is attached by a bow shackle. The rope is passed through this, and one end attached to the carcass, the other end to a vehicle or a capstan winch.
- When laying out a rope for the extraction of a carcass take as short and as direct a route as possible, avoiding bends and major obstacles.
- Use a polypropylene rope approximately 200m long. The strength or 'breaking strain' of the rope should always comfortably exceed the maximum stall rating of the winch.
- Use gloves when operating winches, particularly for wire ropes.
- Check that all drums are correctly lubricated.
- Do not use excessive pressure if a load becomes stuck.
- Do not attempt to fix or work on a winch under load pressure.
- Be aware of the danger of electrocution when using electric winches in wet conditions or in proximity to overhead power lines particularly in ravines etc., where there is a risk of the winch cable springing into the air and making contact.

Operators

- Operators must be aware of the relevant Health and Safety Executive requirements and are trained in vehicle and equipment use.
- When working alone, HSE guidance should be followed.
- Operators should only be asked to undertake tasks within their capabilities.
- Balance the load and secure it to ensure stability.
- Try to minimise manual handling and lifting, especially where large deer are being transported. This can be done by placing the carcass on a bank and sliding it onto or into the load area or using a small winch or lifting device.

- Winches should be used for lifting heavy carcasses into vehicles, where the cargo deck is more than 75cm above the ground and assistance is not available.
- Take extra care when operating winches particularly those using wire ropes.
- There are numerous things which can go wrong with winches not least the unforeseen release of loads.
- Never smoke when operating or refuelling.
- Cover loads where carcasses are in view of the public.

Hygiene

- Ensure that all carcass carrying areas are made of impermeable material and cleaned before and after use and disinfected regularly with food-safe products.
- Preferably carcasses will be carried in a container dedicated to that use only.
- Before using any cleaning chemicals the operator must read, understand and comply with any label instructions and warning labels.
- Keep dogs, fuel and all other potential contaminants in a separate part of the vehicle or in containers separate from carcasses.
- Cover loads where carcasses may become contaminated with dust, mud or water.

Vehicles (general)

Registration

Note that when working from premises registered as a food business operation, vehicles used to transport carcasses may be considered as part of the premises registration and be subject to inspection.

Planning

- Consider whether or not it is appropriate or essential to use a vehicle.
- Take into account the nature of the terrain in the context of Health & Safety.
- Vehicles should be suitable for the application and able to undertake the operation safely.
- Minimise the impact caused by vehicles on habitats and associated species, particularly on sensitive sites such as SSSIs.



- Plan the extraction route and walk the ground prior to using a vehicle on a rough site.
- Avoid risky situations e.g. steep, slippery or rocky slopes, soft ground, watercourses.

Maintenance

Ensure that vehicles and associated equipment are in good working order, well maintained and regularly checked and serviced.

Any equipment that is used for lifting operations will need to comply with the Lifting Operation and Lifting Equipment Regulations (1998).

Modifications made to machine/vehicle(s) should not invalidate existing insurance cover or constitute a potential hazard to the operator.

Specialised vehicles

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are primarily designed for use off road and come in two main types:

- Sit-in machines (Mule, Argocat etc) which have good stability and carrying capacity and can be made reasonably weatherproof.
- Sit astride machines (Quad bikes) which have good manoeuvrability but are less stable and can only carry, trail or drag lighter loads.

When using an ATV for carcass extraction:

- Never exceed the capabilities of the machine or driver, or cross potentially dangerous ground to reach a carcass.
- Never drag down steep slopes, unless in a rigid sled, as the load may overtake the ATV.
- “Sit on” ATV operators must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment including a protective helmet.
- Fit any trailers with a ball hitch that rotates through as wide an angle as possible, this will allow the trailer to run smoothly at different angles to the vehicle.
- Fit a sheet or cover over carcasses to prevent dirt thrown up by the wheels landing on the carcass.
- It is essential that all ATV users are trained and that HSE guidance is followed.
- Ensure all loads are balanced and secured.

Other methods of extracting can include pony extraction and helicopter extraction. These are mostly used in Scotland. For more information, see the Scottish Best Practice Guides.

Further Information

- **Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992**
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/l23.pdf>
- **Pony and Helicopter extraction**
<https://bestpracticeguides.org.uk/guides/>
- **HSE information sheet on ATVs**
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ais33.pdf>
- **Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998**
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/work-equipment-machinery/puwer.htm#:~:text=PUWER%20requires%20that%20equipment%20provided,adequate%20information%2C%20instruction%20and%20training>
- **HSE guidelines for working alone**
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/lone-working/>