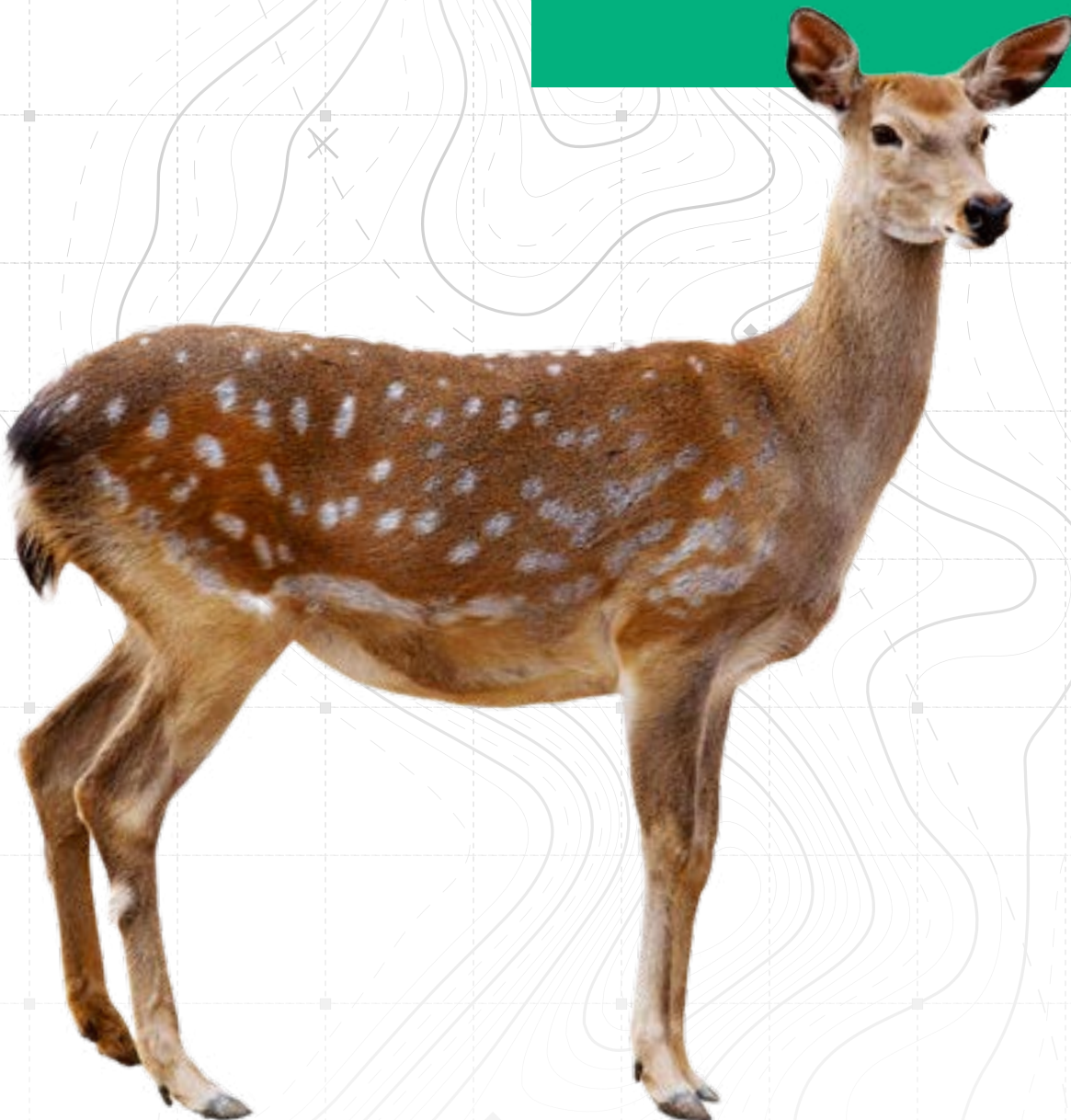


ENGLAND &
WALES **BEST
PRACTICE
GUIDES**

Shot placement.

Culling Deer





Introduction

This guide describes how the anatomy of a deer determines where shots should be placed to achieve a rapid, humane death, and at the same time avoid carcass contamination. The Follow up, and Firearms and Ammunition guides are essential companion reading.

Humane death

The objective of good bullet placement is to induce unconsciousness as swiftly as possible, rendering the animal insensitive to pain, and for this to be quickly followed by death. A correctly placed bullet causes death within seconds.

A safe and humane shot is the key objective. Factors such as meat damage and carcass value should not be the main influence in shot placement.

Anatomy

It is important to be familiar with the anatomy of deer so that the position of the vital zones can be located at various angles and positions.

See the following diagrams...



Fig. 1

Red areas indicate the vital zones referred to in the text.

Vital areas

A deer has several “vital areas”. These are areas of the body that, when hit with a well-placed bullet, will result in a quick and humane death. The main vital areas of a deer are detailed below.

Chest

- **It is recommended that the ideal shot to take on a deer is to the heart/lung area within the chest.**
- This vital area is centred on the complex of blood vessels just above the heart. Damage, either to these blood vessels, the heart itself and/or the lungs that surround it, will cause a rapid loss of consciousness and death through loss of blood circulation and respiration.
- Because the chest vital area is by far the largest and least mobile it should be the shot of choice in most circumstances.
- For an animal standing broadside, the aim point is halfway up the chest and in line with the vertical line of the foreleg(s), see Fig2.
- A common reaction to a lethal chest shot is that the deer will run a short distance, then collapse, dead. Placing the shot slightly further forwards to hit the shoulder blade or foreleg will usually cause the animal to drop on the spot.
- A tell-tale sign of a good chest shot is often a loud thud sound upon the bullet striking the animal.

Head

- Head shooting relies upon destroying the brain of a deer.
- This is a very small and highly mobile target, as such the head shot is not recommended as the initial choice of shot placement.
- A bullet that strikes the nose, jaw or any other part of the head will likely not prove fatal, and a deer hit in these areas will be very hard to follow up.
- Only consider head shooting at sensible ranges and if you are confident and familiar with your equipment and experienced enough to make the shot and deal with any unintended consequences.
- A successful head shot will destroy the brain and cause instant paralysis and death.
- The brain is located high and towards the back of the skull, a shot fired on the horizontal must strike above the level of the eyes. If a head shot becomes necessary, a shot from behind is preferred.
- For humane dispatch at extreme close range the ideal shot would ideally be taken from the front but may have to be from any angle. Be aware that your bullet will strike lower than your point of aim at extreme close ranges, so make sure to learn where your rifle shoots in a humane dispatch scenario.



Fig. 2

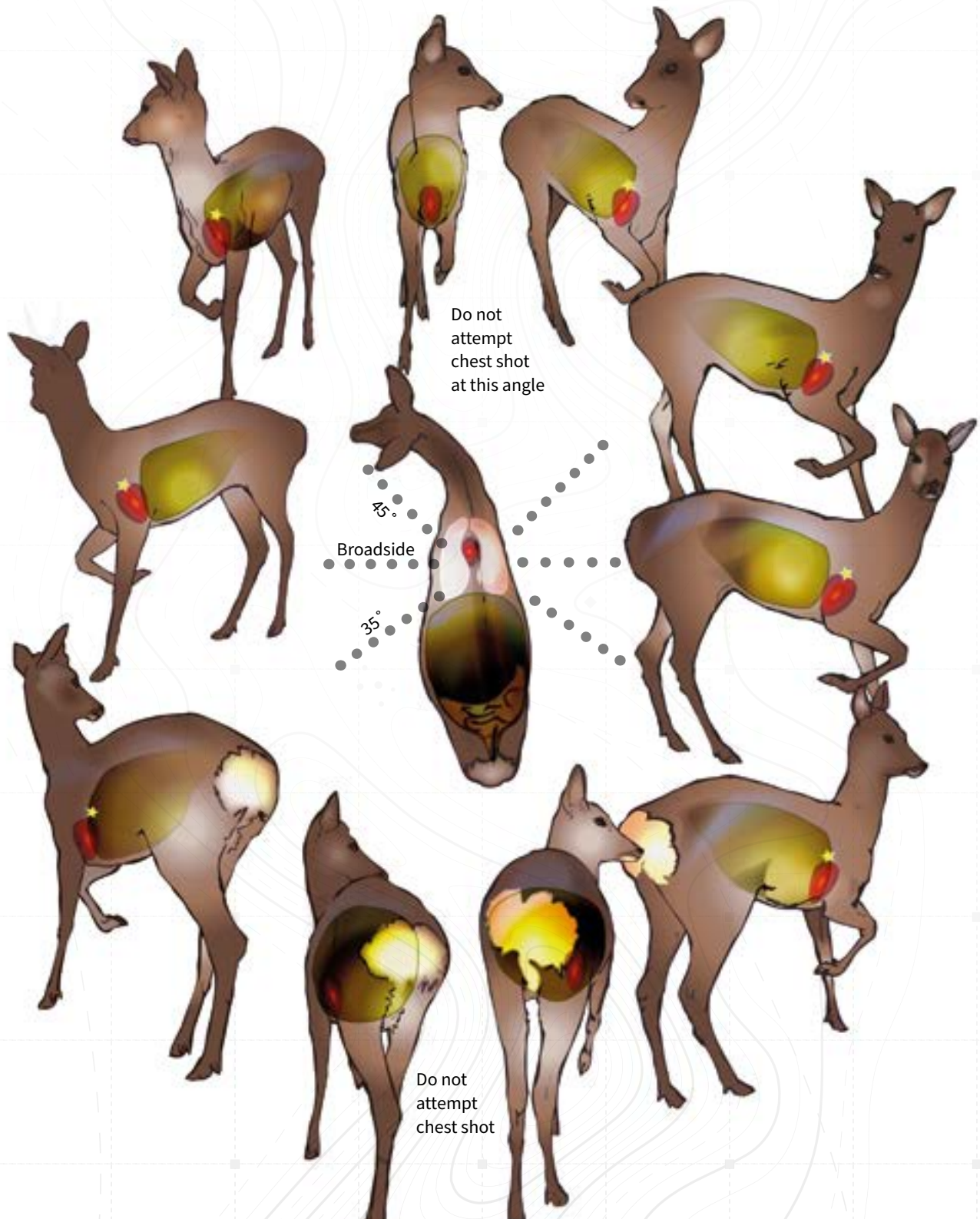
The white circles indicate the aim points for a chest, neck and head shot

Neck

- A successful neck shot relies upon severing the spinal cord of a deer, causing instant paralysis and a quick death.
- As with head shooting, the target area is small, curved and very mobile. As such, this shot should only be considered when confident in your ability and equipment and only be taken at appropriate ranges.
- Be aware that even with a successful neck shot, the deer may still react to an eye blink test for several minutes, so appropriate action to dispatch the deer should be taken, such as a second shot or use of a knife to bleed the animal.
- If a neck shot becomes necessary, it should ideally be taken from behind or from the front due to a lower risk of wounding.

Shooting Clock

Yellow star indicates the aim point required for the bullet to pass through the centre of the vital zone. Note that only over a narrow range of angles (at or close to broadside) is the shot likely to be “clean” and not involve the rumen. The gut completely obscures the chest from behind and will be damaged over a wide range of angles in other positions. Do not attempt chest shots outside of the angles indicated.



Other areas

Shots elsewhere in the body will be the result of a stray shot. They should be rare but are unlikely to be immediately fatal and must be followed up appropriately.

Such shots include:

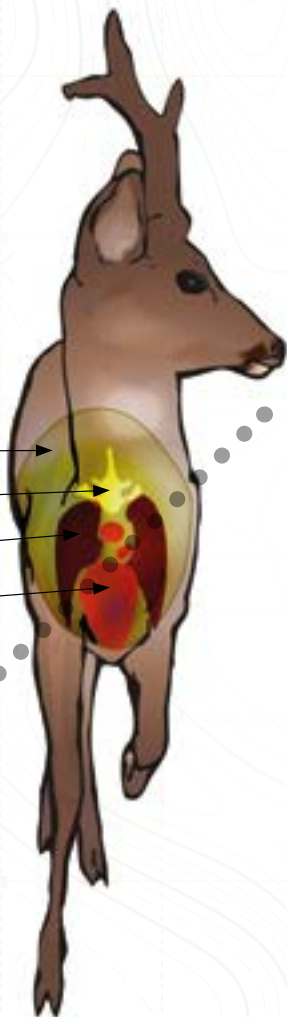
- Extremities such as legs
- The digestive tract or “gut”
- The liver
- The spine

For more information on these shots, what to expect and how to deal with them, please see the Follow-Up guide.

Fig. 3

Shoulder blade —
Spine —
Lungs —
Heart —
(note it sits low in the body)

Any line of shot taken from a steep angle above or below must consider bullet entry point and the angle of the path of the bullet through the body.



Further Information

- ¹ See Follow Up of Shot Deer guide
- ² See Rifles and Ammunition guide
- ³ See also Deer Vehicle Collisions guide
- For the target used in the above image please visit Buswear- <https://www.bushwear.co.uk/products/4-pk-double-sided-roe-target>