thedeer initiative

ENGLAND & WALES **BEST PRACTICE GUIDES**

Rifles and Ammunition.

Firearms

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to describe the factors to be considered when choosing a rifle/ammunition combination for deer stalking and to highlight important aspects of rifle ballistics. This guide should be read with the Zeroing and Shot placement guides.

It specifically covers:

- The legal limitations on which rifles and ammunition can be used.
- A description of why expanding ammunition is required to shoot deer.

Legal limitations

For the killing or taking of deer in England and Wales, firearms and ammunition must conform to requirements laid down in the Deer Act 1991(as amended) These are stated as follows:

Species	Minimum Calibre	Minimum Bullet Weight	Minimum Muzzle Energy
Red, Fallow, Sika and Roe deer	.240	None	1700ftlbs
Muntjac and Chinese Water Deer	.220	50gr	1000ftlbs

- The above information will be noted on the box for factory loaded ammunition. For home-loaded ammunition, make sure your load achieves all the above criteria.
- For the purpose of humane dispatch of wounded or injured deer, any firearm and ammunition may be used to prevent suffering (see Follow-up and Deer Vehicle Collision guides)

Ammunition type

The Deer Act 1991 (as amended) states that only certain ammunition may be used in a rifle for the taking of deer.

It states that rifle bullets must be “either hollow nosed or soft nosed”. This is generally interpreted to include “ballistic tip” and other bullets designed to deform in a predictable manner.

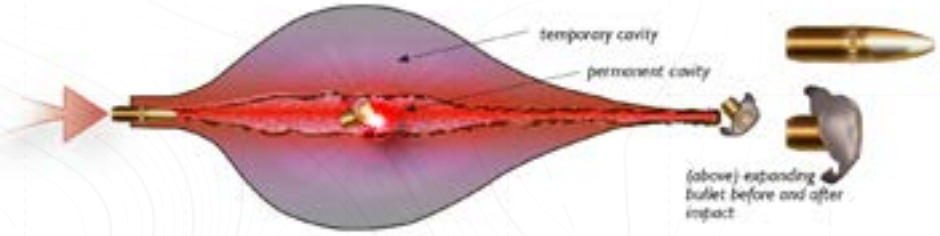
Why use expanding ammunition?

Expanding ammunition is designed to deform upon impact. This deformation means that a huge amount of energy is rapidly transferred into the target.

This rapid transfer of energy creates both a permanent and a temporary wound cavity.

- Permanent wound cavityThis is the hole or tract left by the bullet passing through
- Temporary wound cavity: This is the cavity caused by rapid expansion of tissue caused by the energy of the expanding round

These cavities cause huge internal damage and, with a correctly placed shot, lead to the rapid and humane death of the deer.



Accuracy

A bullet has to strike the correct place in order to achieve a humane kill. The appropriate aim points for deer are discussed in the Shot Placement guide.

The ability to place a bullet consistently and accurately is key to the humane culling of deer. There are a number of key factors that help to ensure this:

- An accurate pairing of rifle and ammunition
- Confidence and familiarity with your rifle
- Regular practice on inanimate targets
- Recognition of your own limitations

The minimum standard for accuracy is that any shooter, rifle and ammunition combination should be able to consistently shoot 3 rounds into a 10cm circle at 100m.

This means that the chest vital area of any UK deer can be hit at typical deer stalking ranges.

External factors

There are a number of factors that can affect the ability to shoot accurately:

Distance

- The further you attempt to shoot a target, the more factors there are to contend with. Bullet drop (the effect of gravity on a bullet) will become far more noticeable, as will the rate at which groupings open up. Typically, a 2.5cm group at 100m will open to a 5cm group at 200m and so on.
- There are many variables to consider when shooting long ranges, so it is key to stay within practiced ranges and general ability when shooting live quarry.

Wind

- Wind will have an impact on the bullet, causing it to drift to the left or right of the intended target.
- The longer the range, the more effect the wind will have. At most normal stalking ranges, even the strongest wind should not affect your ability to hit the vital areas of a deer.
- If considering shooting deer at longer ranges, practice often and only shoot within your ability.

Equipment

- Even minor issues with rifles, scopes and ammunition can have a significant impact on accuracy.
- Rifle action screws and scope fitment screws can all become loose over time which will lead to a loss of accuracy. So too will any major fouling or damage to the rifle barrel or moderator.
- Regular checks, maintenance and cleaning will limit these issues.