

ENGLAND &  
WALES **BEST  
PRACTICE  
GUIDES**

# Team Culling.

Culling Deer





# Introduction

**D**eer are often culled by individuals operating alone but occasionally a team of deer stalkers is assembled for a particular purpose.

The aim of this guide is to describe the factors to be considered when planning and implementing a team culling operation to ensure that safety and deer welfare standards are maintained.

This guide links to the Moving Deer and Cross Boundary Liaison guides.

Note: For the purposes of this guide the term “stalker” refers to a member of the team who will be shooting.

## Reasons for team culling

Using a team (2 or more deer stalkers operating together) can have a number of advantages:

- More efficient use of stalker time.
- A team covers more ground than an individual.
- Brings more resources than would otherwise be available.
- Culling can be concentrated over a shorter period meaning less disturbance and the possibility of re-deploying resources elsewhere at a later date.
- Large culls can be achieved more rapidly.
- Can make culls more successful in difficult areas or at times of day when deer are not normally active (ie by moving deer).



## Principles

The principle of team culling is that two or more stalkers stalk, or sit out at vantage points in the same area at the same time, covering more of the area than a single stalker could.

In addition participants might arrange that deer were to be gently moved from inaccessible or unsafe areas to places where they could be culled.

## Planning

Coordinating the efforts of a number of people requires careful planning. The main elements of a team cull to be planned are:

- **Risk assessment** – A risk assessment should be carried out. Factoring in specific risks to be taken into account in each situation.
- **Roles and responsibilities** – Clear command and control structures should be established. A coordinator for each team should be the sole reference point for changes to planned activities and they alone should make decisions affecting the team.
- **Safe arcs of fire** – A map exercise, confirmed on the ground, should establish safe arcs of fire, taking into account safe backgrounds, public access, thoroughfares and buildings. It may be necessary to use markers on some sites.
- **Communications** – Good communications are essential. All team members must be able to contact the coordinator and preferably each other.
  - Contact may be through mobile phone, messaging app or radio network. In areas of poor reception, contingency communication should be arranged.
- **Personnel** – Stalkers must be suitably experienced and will most likely need to hold appropriate qualifications. It is helpful if they are familiar with the area to be covered. It is sensible to confirm attendance before the cull in case alternative arrangements have to be made on the day.
- **Firearms and insurance** – Stalkers must use legal firearms and have the appropriate conditions on their Firearms certificate, plus third-party liability insurance. Certificates must be checked prior to any shooting. It may be necessary



to arrange for written permission to shoot for visiting stalkers.

- **Follow up** – Contingency plans must be made for following up a wounded animal. Having access to trained tracking dogs is recommended.
- **Shooting positions** – Shooting may be either from vantage points with a safe background or from high seats. In both cases it is important that fields of fire are as clear as possible, especially close to the shooting position. High seats are very useful for team shoots. Additional seats may have to be arranged or existing ones moved or cleared. They should be inspected for safety and usability before use.
- **Briefing** – All team members should be briefed on and understand their role, and the operational plan. Each team member should be issued with a written summary of the briefing including a map marked to show the position and routes of other personnel and public access. The briefing will include: Reason for the team cull, which age/sex and species of animals are to be shot and how many, start and end times for the cull, emergency procedures
- **Making contact** – All team members must be able to contact the coordinator, and each other as appropriate. It is helpful if communications are kept short and to the point, avoiding unnecessary chatter. Everyone must be clear about the emergency procedures and about timings.
- **Individual locations and/or moving position during the cull** – Everyone must know exactly where they are to be positioned relative to other participants, public access routes and buildings. Usually, each stalker will remain in their position for the duration of the cull. If they are allowed to move from their position, they must be clear as to when and by what route. High seats users should be warned to take care and to check the seat for safety before use.

Individuals must be clear about transport to and from their position.

- **Firearms safety** – All stalkers should be aware of where they may and may not shoot and be reminded to ensure that they have a safe backstop before taking any shot. Rifles should be loaded only at times stated by the coordinator and unloaded at an agreed time or signal, after which no more shots should be fired. Rifles must be unloaded when climbing up or down high seats. Firearms should not be left unattended unless locked out of sight with the bolt removed.
- **Use of hi-vis clothing** – This should be regarded as compulsory for the walkers when moving deer towards waiting rifles. In poor light a torch will be useful both to help find the way and to alert others of a stalker's presence.
- **Deer welfare** – Shoot at static animals only, with chest shots being preferable. Shoot within personal capabilities e.g. discourage long shots. Shoot only animals of the stated species sex and age. For all shots taken at deer, the position of the strike should be noted in case follow up is required.
- **Dealing with carcasses** – Usually carcasses are left where they fall until shooting ceases. Stalkers must be advised whether they are expected to begin gralloching in the field or

whether the carcasses will be collected and all gralloching done centrally. Thought needs to be given to the storage and/or delivery of larger numbers of deer carcasses.

- **Public access** – Participants must be aware of where the public might be present and to inform the coordinator if a safety issue develops. Advise on procedure if approached by a member of the public during the cull.
- **De-Brief** – Its often useful to hold a short de-brief to discuss sightings, issues and other pertinent points.

