

ENGLAND &  
WALES **BEST  
PRACTICE  
GUIDES**

# Moving Deer.

Culling Deer





# Introduction

**D**eer moves are a form of collaborative cull involving a team.

Whilst the general principles are the same as for any team culling operation, moving deer to static rifles is sufficiently specialist to warrant its own guidance.

Both the Cross-boundary Liaison and Team Culling guides should be considered essential companion reading to this guide.

## Why move deer for culling?

A deer move is a means of moving deer from an area that is difficult to access, to an area where they can be safely culled.

Deer moves can also be carried out at times of day when deer are not normally active thereby extending opportunities to cull. This could be particularly useful during winter when days are short.

A deer move is not normally necessary where a well-planned and applied cull programme is already in place but could be useful where a reduction cull is required, or normal resources are insufficient to obtain the required cull.

## Terminology

“walkers” – team members who move deer from one area to another

“rifle” - a member of the team who will be shooting, usually from a fixed position.

## Principles

The basic principle of deer moves is simple; walkers gently move the deer to where they can be seen, selected, and culled.

The object is not to panic the deer by driving them, but for them to lift and move quietly with the least amount of disturbance, into an area where they feel comfortable enough to stop and assess the situation.

Rifles will be waiting in such places, usually at vantage points or high seats, overlooking a safe shooting area.



## Organisation

A deer move is organised in the same way as any team culling operation but there are a number of additional features:

## Local knowledge

Local knowledge is critical for predicting how the deer will move, the route the walkers should take and where the rifles should be placed to be most effective and safe.

## Briefing

A briefing is essential to ensure safe practice and to make the move efficient. In particular, rifles must be aware of their precise firing points and safe arcs of fire.

They must know which direction to expect the walkers to arrive from and to keep a good watch for them.

## The walking team

- The number of walkers required is not large. Even in dense cover they can be placed a hundred metres or more apart as long as they are able to stay in contact. In small areas a single walker could be enough.
- Walkers should not have to make a lot of noise, an occasional tap with a stick is sufficient both to alert the deer and the waiting rifles.
- They must wear hi-vis clothing so that they can be seen by each other and the rifles.
- The pace should be a slow stroll.
- It is important that at least the team coordinator knows exactly where to go but ideally the whole walking team will also be familiar with the area.

## The rifles

- The rifles should have a good track record as reliable, safe and humane shots.
- They should be experienced at selecting deer that may be moving towards them and be able to ensure that deer are stationary before they are shot and that there is a safe backstop.



- Less experienced rifles should be placed under the supervision of a more experienced rifle to ensure safety.

## Welfare

- Deer can cope easily with the degree of disturbance usually encountered on a deer move.
- It is not necessary to push them to the point that they are dangerously stressed, nor should they be placed in danger of accidents e.g. on roads.
- Shots should only be taken at stationary deer where it is apparent that there are no other deer behind or immediately near to it.
- Chest shooting is to be preferred given the likelihood of a fast shot needing to be taken, other shot placements should be discussed as part of the briefing.



## Tactics

- Care should be taken to avoid disturbance before the rifles are in place and to ensure that rifles take their places quietly.
- Deer tend to have preferred routes they will take when escaping an area.
- It is important to be aware of these routes and likely temporary havens, so local knowledge is vital to success.
- When disturbed, deer will generally seek cover, with such places usually not being on rides or other open areas where high seats are typically sited. Indeed the last place that a deer that has been disturbed probably wants to be is in an open area where it feels exposed.
- In areas of scattered small woods deer will often move readily from one wood to the other, crossing open areas to do so, but possibly not stopping on the way.
- In large woodlands deer will often circulate within the woodland complex and may not leave the trees at all.
- Despite the temptation to cover all of the open areas it is usually most productive to place the rifles in the woods. This will mean that high seats may have to be moved or additional seats supplied for the day.
- Rifles in safe vantage points at ground level (not in high seats) can be very effective. In this case, it is important that all rifles are aware of their precise location and any areas used must have clearly identified arcs of fire with safe backstops.
- Tactics vary with habitat.
- The scale of the planned move may be quite large and may involve a number of landowners, this is particularly relevant with herding species such as red, fallow and sika.
- In many circumstances it is useful to place rifles behind the intended direction of the move and to leave them in place for a considerable time after the walkers have gone through. The territorial species in particular may return quite quickly to where they started.
- Deer moves should not be carried out too frequently, successive moves can become less effective if the interval between them is short.
- A short de-brief can help to plan for the next occasion.

## Further Information

- **Team Culling guide**  
[https://thedeerinitiative.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RHMC0820\\_Team-Culling-Guide-V3.pdf](https://thedeerinitiative.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/RHMC0820_Team-Culling-Guide-V3.pdf)

