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PICKING UP (QUARRY RETRIEVAL)

A CODE OF PRACTICE

“It is very unlikely that the opposition to shooting sports will ever be completely overcome, but there is no need to be daunted by it, provided we continue to concentrate on the education and training of newcomers, and on the voluntary observance by all members of the codes of practice.”

HRH The Prince Philip Duke of Edinburgh

1. INTRODUCTION

This code of practice aims to provide guidance to newcomers. It acts as a reminder to those with experience who enjoy using their own dogs as part of a team of pickers-up in the shooting field.

High standards underpin public and political support for shooting, now and in the future.

This code provides advice at two levels:

Advice that **must** be followed in order to achieve best practice – unless otherwise stated the term ‘must’ only applies to meeting the standards set by this code of practice and does not refer to a legal obligation.

Advice that **should** be followed in order to achieve best practice – any deviation from which would need justification.

THE FOLLOWING GOLDEN RULES APPLY:

1. Organisers of shoots must ensure there is adequate provision made for retrieving shot game.
2. Dogs used for picking up must be trained, under control and responsive to your instructions.
3. Remember game is food. It must be handled appropriately to ensure that it reaches the table in the best condition.
4. Wounded game must be retrieved first.
5. All game must be retrieved as soon as it is safe and practical to do so.

2. BEHAVIOUR

Pickers-up

A good team of pickers-up is essential to the enjoyment and success of a day’s shooting. It is also essential to avoid suffering and the waste of game. Everyone who shoots live quarry should ensure that there is always a dog available for retrieving.

Organisers of shoots must ensure that adequate provision is made for retrieving shot game.

Traditionally, picking-up is carried out immediately after each drive. However when a bird is wounded it should be picked up and humanely dispatched immediately, provided it is safe to do so.

You should:

- Find out before the shoot day how it will be organised and what your responsibilities are.
- Arrive on time and report to the shoot organiser or the head of the picking-up team. You should then be briefed on the order in which the drives will be shot and what is required of you and your dog(s) throughout the day.
- Be proficient in the humane dispatch of wounded game.
- Never take a young or inexperienced dog to a shoot without permission.
- Never take a bitch that is in season (oestrus – period of sexual receptivity) to a shoot.
- Exercise your dog(s) before setting out and, if appropriate, provide a light feed.

Dogs used for picking up

They should:

- Be trained, under control and responsive to your instructions.
- Deliver game readily to hand and without damage. A hard-mouthed dog (one which damages game) should not be working in the shooting field.
- Be trained to mark (note the position of) falling birds and be capable of being directed to game which they did not see fall.
- Be able to retrieve shot game quickly, or as soon as practicable, from all kinds of cover and, where necessary, from water.
- Be steady to (not chase or run-in) fur, feather, deer or livestock.
- Remain silent (not whine or bark) while waiting to retrieve.



Picking up on driven pheasant shoots

- Make sure Guns are aware of your position. Unless instructed differently, pickers-up usually stand well back from (behind) the line of Guns (you may be required to pick up for more than one Gun). Always choose a position which is safe and from where you can mark falling birds.
- Always mark shot game carefully. Decide how you will accurately remember the number of birds that are to be picked up and their last seen position.

- Pay particular attention to birds that may have been hit but carry on flying, watching where they fall. They should be retrieved immediately, if appropriate so to do, or as soon as possible after the drive is over.
- Wounded game should be retrieved before game which is known to be dead.
- If it is necessary to retrieve wounded game during the drive, only send an experienced dog, and only if it is safe to do so.
- If you are using more than one dog, only one should be worked at a time unless you can handle more than one.
- On some drives it may be necessary to leave one or two pickers-up behind to ensure that all shot game has been collected after the Guns, beaters and other pickers-up move on.
- The shoot organiser or the head of the picking-up team should be told at the earliest opportunity if game has not been picked-up.
- Do not allow your dog into an area that may be part of a later drive. Wounded game, however, should be retrieved as soon as possible.
- Guns often bring their own dogs and, if they wish to pick-up their own shot game, allow them to do so before they move to the next drive. However, check that all their game has been collected.
- Once the Guns have left the drive, check behind the pegs (numbered markers indicating firing positions) before moving on.
- The basics of good handling of shot game includes keeping it clean, protecting it from contamination, rapid cooling and correct storage until it is processed. The process of good game handling begins as soon as the shot bird is in the hand.



Partridge and grouse shooting

The guidance for pheasant shoots generally applies to other types of driven shooting but note the following in particular:

- On partridge and grouse shoots pickers-up may be positioned next to the Guns or well out of range of shot, well behind the line of Guns. With these types of driven

shooting lower birds than those on a pheasant shoot are likely to be shot both in front of and behind by the Guns. Care should be taken to ensure your position is safe, allows a good view of any birds which may be shot and does not distract the Guns.

- Make sure before the drive starts that the Guns know where you are.
- If not up front then stand out of range of shot and wait until the drive has finished before moving forward.

Flight ponds and wetlands

- When picking up during evening flight on ponds or from moving water, you may receive instructions to pick up while shooting is still in progress. All wounded duck should be recovered as soon as practicable and all quarry should be recovered immediately from running water. If in doubt, ask.
- Extra care needs to be taken when retrieving birds from or across moving water, as dogs tire very quickly. Only experienced dogs should be used.
- When retrieving from moving water, the handler, if possible, should walk downstream during the retrieve to avoid the dog returning against the current. The handler should also assess where the dog can get out of the water before the retrieve is commenced.
- Always carry a torch but do not use it until the end of the flight has been signalled.
- Never send a dog onto water covered by ice.



During and after the shoot

Remember the health and welfare of your dog is paramount.

- Check your dog regularly for cuts or thorns and treat them promptly.
- Always have a first aid kit available for your dog.
- If you have to leave the shoot to get veterinary attention for your dog always remember to tell someone you are leaving.
- Seed heads can get into dogs' eyes, ears and toes and long-haired breeds can become tangled with burrs. These should be removed.



- Make sure that your dog has regular access to drinking water, especially on warm days.
- Fences, especially barbed-wire, can cause serious injury to dogs and great care should be taken when crossing these.
- Always attend to your dog before yourself; ensure it is warm and dry before travelling. If you have a long journey home, your dog may need food and a drink before you leave.

3. EQUIPMENT CHECK LIST

This could include a whistle, leads, game dispatcher, game carrier (device for carrying dead game), first aid kit, waterproof clothing, towels to dry yourself and your dog, drinking water and food for your dog.

4. THE LAW

Basic points of law

If you own or are responsible for a dog, even on a temporary basis, you have a legal obligation under animal welfare legislation to care for it properly.

- In public places all dogs (including gundogs) must wear a collar with the owner's name and address, except where the dog is being used for sporting purposes at the time. Sporting purposes include shooting, beating, picking up and training.
- Dogs must be kept on a lead when on a designated road, except where the dog is being used for sporting purposes at the time.
- It is an offence to have any dog dangerously out of control.
- Gundogs must not be sent to retrieve game that has fallen beyond a shoot boundary without the prior consent of the adjoining landowner or occupier; to do so constitutes civil trespass.
- It is a legal requirement for all dogs over eight weeks old to be microchipped.



The control of dogs

Owners and handlers of dogs commit an offence if their dogs worry livestock on agricultural land.

- Landowners and occupiers (or their servants) have a defence in law for shooting a dog that is not under the close control of its owner on agricultural land, if it is, or has been worrying livestock, and there is no other reasonable means of preventing the worrying.
- If a dog kills or injures livestock, the keeper (owner or person in possession) is liable for damages to the livestock owner.

Transport of animals

Be aware that if you are transporting your dog in connection with an economic activity you may be subject to rules and regulations governing the transport. Recreational shooting, beating and picking up are not normally considered to be an economic activity.



5. INSURANCE

Membership of BASC provides third party liability insurance and cover for you and your dog while it is working or participating in a related activity such as training.

It is advisable to consider additional insurance for your dog. The following are Included in BASC dog insurance policies:

- A choice of either up to £6,500 or £12,500 veterinary fees' cover each year.
- A choice of excesses to help members tailor their premium to their budget.
- Travel and accommodation costs if a dog needs to be referred to a specialist.
- Advertising and reward costs to help a member find a lost, stray or stolen dog.

- Multi-pet discount for members insuring more than one pet.
- Half price for the first two months.
- Free access to the Pet Health Helpline – providing advice from qualified veterinary staff, 24 hours a day.
- Free 'Pet 24' lost and found service.
- Other optional cover and benefits.

For more details contact the BASC marketing department on 01244 573 012 or see the BASC website.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further help and advice call the BASC gundog helpline on 01244 573 019 or email gundogs@basc.org.uk

Details of the BASC gundog (non-shooting) membership pack can be obtained from the marketing department on 01244 573 012.

For nutritional advice call the Chudleys helpline on 0870 442 3322.

BASC is the largest representative body for sporting shooting in the UK.

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