

Introduction:

This Code Of Practice is designed to guide everyone involved in game hunting in the safe practice of the sport within current legislation, while showing due consideration for landowners and the general public.

Our sport of sustainable game hunting is under constant and detailed scrutiny and we must demonstrate that we conduct it to the highest standards.

We must always have respect for quarry species, and care for the environment.

This Code primarily addresses the subject of shooting “game birds”, which include all of the traditional game birds; pheasant, partridge, grouse, duck: however, many of the principles apply equally to other quarry species including pest species and to pigeon, crow, rabbit, hare etc.

We strongly recommend that all Clubs and Members affiliated to Kildare Regional Game and Wildlife Council (KRGWC) comply with this Code of Practice.

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1. General Shooting Behaviour:

All those who are involved in hunting and game shooting should act as good ambassadors for the sport. We can help protect the future of shooting by complying with this Code and by encouraging others who shoot to do the same.

This Code of Practice requires us to:

Observe all safety rules while shooting

Observe all laws in force regarding firearms and their use

Abide by all legislation regarding wildlife and their habitats

Have respect for farmers and landowners over whose ground we shoot

Have respect for quarry, habitat and for the wider countryside

2. Responsible Shooting:

It is incumbent on all hunters to ensure that they familiarise themselves fully with the hunting area and be constantly aware of the location of roads, pathways, rights of way, club boundaries, farming and forestry operations, sanctuary areas, buildings, and areas regularly frequented by the public, and never fire in their vicinity or in their direction.

We should take account of the size of bags and frequency of shooting.

Members must ensure they know and recognise the intended quarry species and comply with relevant lead shot regulations.

We must be competent at estimating range and shoot within the limitations of their equipment to kill cleanly and consistently.

Inexperienced hunters should improve personal shooting skills through practice on clay targets and must ensure that they are accompanied and supervised by a suitably experienced person.

The depositing of lead shot in wetlands important to feeding waterfowl should be avoided.

Steel shot should not be used in woodlands, to avoid damage to chainsaw blades.

3. Consideration for Others:

All Club members must ensure that their activities take account of other people's activities in the countryside; due care and courtesy is a guiding principle.

We must have regard for others and their safety at all times.

The frequency of shooting must not give rise to unreasonable nuisance (particularly noise) to neighbours.

Do not shoot close to houses, farm yards or farm animals.

Do not shoot over roads or public rights of way.

We must ensure that shooting does not obstruct, cause danger or alarm to users of the public highway, including roads, bridle ways, footpaths and other rights of way.

Cartridges with degradable wads should be used where possible.

Spent cartridge cases and other litter must be removed at all times.

Hunters should have the utmost consideration for forest workers, other forest users and neighbouring landowners, and avoid causing them any undue disturbance or nuisance.

4. Countryside Code:

The countryside is a working environment and is increasingly used by the general public for recreational activities. The unique countryside we have inherited has been shaped by the hands of our forefathers over many centuries and we have a responsibility to protect this countryside now and for future generations to come.

Please show respect to farmers and landowners by complying with the following advice:

It is common courtesy and respect to identify yourself by voluntarily showing your membership card and insurance cert to landowners.

Respect the working life of the countryside, as the livelihood of its inhabitants and the safety and of animals can be adversely affected by our actions.

Do not interfere with livestock, crops, fences, gates, stiles, or other farm property.

Always repair, or arrange to be done later, any damage done to fences or gates.

Farm animals can sometimes behave unpredictably if approached too closely, especially if with their young; the rule is – 'give them plenty of space'.

Do not allow dogs to enter fields where there are horses or farm animals with their offspring.

Under no circumstances enter a field where a bull or suckler cows with calves are kept. Most farmers will post signs where bulls are kept.

Under no circumstances light or attempt to light a fire.

'Leave all farm gates as you find them'. Sometimes gates may be left open by the farmer or landowner to allow livestock access to water or for other reasons.

Report immediately to the farmer if animals appear to be sick or in distress and if sheep or cattle that have broken out of their field.

Always use gates, stiles or gaps in field boundaries when provided. Climbing over walls, hedges and fences can cause damage and increase the risk of farm animals escaping.

Immediately report to the farmer or landowner any damage caused by your actions .

Do not obstruct farm yard entrances and entrances to land when parking.

Be polite at all times and show consideration when leaving for home. And take away all litter, and any shot animals/birds.

5. Hunter Competence:

Prior to hunting live quarry all hunters should develop their skills and competencies fully. Regular practice on approved clay shoots or target ranges will assist a hunters maintain proficiency with their firearm.

It is highly recommended that all hunters complete a recognized and certified, firearms safety training course.

Kildare Regional Game & Wildlife Council provides this course for its members. Please contact the Regional Safety Officer through this website for more details.

6. Insurance Cover:

All responsible hunters should possess adequate Personal Accident and Legal Liability Insurance cover.

It is a condition of affiliation to KRGWC and affiliated Clubs, that members hold a current Insurance Policy. KRGWC accepts insurance cover from the following:

IFA Countryside Insurance Policy.

Countryside Alliance Ireland Polciy.

The NARGC Compensation Fund

KRGWC recommends the IFA Countryside (FBD Plc.) Policy which covers all hunting and field sport activities and is allied to the Insurance policy of most of our farming hosts. The IFA Farm Insurance Policy provides adequate cover for our farmer club members.

7. Personal Safety:

It is incumbent on all hunters to ensure that they familiarise themselves fully with the hunting terrain and be constantly aware of dangers to themselves and others.

Some hunters prefer to shoot alone, however the norm is two or sometimes three. Groups in excess of three are not recommended as it can become dangerous when shooting; some landowners may get anxious when they see large groups on their lands.

Lone hunters should always carry a mobile phone in case of an emergency.

Always let someone know where you are going to shoot/hunt and your approximate return time.

Always carry a first aid kit in your vehicle, and pack of medical plasters on your person.

A good pocket knife is essential should a dog become entangled in barbed wire or heavy brambles.

It is useful to carry a torch and a whistle when on long lone hunting trips over hilly or rough terrain.

Do not hunt in foggy conditions or where there is limited visibility or fading light.

Never shoot towards a hedge at any time, without a clear view of the terrain on the other side.

8. Quarry Respect and Identification:

The highest respect must be afforded to all quarry species including “pest” species. It should be the objective of every responsible hunter to properly identify and ensure the clean, humane kill, and efficient retrieval of any target quarry species.

All hunters should aim to improve their knowledge and understanding of the ecology of their quarry and its environment. They should willingly share their knowledge with other hunters.

Hunting should only be undertaken at levels that do not adversely affect the sustainability of the wild quarry populations.

No carcasses of any shot animal or bird should be displayed in a manner that may cause offence to others. They must all be retrieved and carried discretely from the hunting field.

9. Shooting on Forestry Lands:

All quarry species shot on forestry lands must be retrieved without delay and humanely dispatched and removed from the lands on the cessation of hunting. It is incumbent on all hunters to ensure that this is achieved.

All persons hunting game on Coillte's, and other forestry lands must have immediate access to a dog, trained and competent in locating and recovering quarry killed.

Every effort must be taken to recover all shot quarry before continuing to hunt.

Members should not shoot into a forestry without a clear view of the target and its surrounds.

10. Retrieval & Handling of Game:

Shooting should not be conducted where it would be impossible to retrieve shot game.

Shooting should not be conducted without a gun dog to locate and retrieve shot game.

Wounded game must be retrieved and humanely dispatched as quickly as possible.

All shot game including vermin must be removed immediately and never left on the land.

Shooting should be suspended if adverse weather conditions would compromise game species and personal safety - e.g. foggy or in semidarkness, stormy, or where visibility is restricted.

11. Bag Records:

Clubs, who have Coillte lettings, are required to provide annual bag returns of all native quarry species shot.

All Club members are requested to submit bag records to their Club Secretaries at the end of each shooting season for game shot over Coillte lettings.

Club members are recommended to keep a count of the vermin species they have killed and report them to their Club Secretary.

12. Firearms - Legal Requirements:

All firearms must be licensed in accordance with current firearms legislation.

All firearms must be serviceable and safe to use.

All Club Members must be in possession of their Club KRGWC Membership Card and Firearms License while out hunting.

13. Firearms - Ammunition:

Always ensure that the gun you intend to use is in a good working order and is safe to use. All firearms should be checked on a regular basis by a competent gunsmith to prevent accidents as a result of faulty equipment.

Ensure that the ammunition you intend to use is in good condition and is suitable for that particular firearm and is appropriate to the intended quarry.

Cartridges of different bore sizes should never be mixed together.

Do not use steel shot in woodland areas which may increase the risk of ricochet or potentially damage a chainsaw later.

14. Firearms – Handling & Safety:

Firearms used for game hunting are lethal weapons, capable of killing or causing serious injury. Safety is paramount and must be foremost in the minds of all hunters when handling and using firearms.

No shots should ever be fired if there is the slightest doubt about safety.

All hunters should adhere to basic shotgun safety guidelines while hunting:-

Always check the barrels for obstructions before loading.

Ensure the barrels are pointed in a safe direct while loading and re-loading.

When closing a shotgun, the stock should be raised and not the barrels, which should remain, pointed downwards in a safe direction.

Only load a shotgun when you intend to commence hunting.

Always apply the safety catch, only releasing it just before you intend to fire.

Extra care must be taken with non-automatic safety catches.

Always re-apply the safety catch after the shot is taken.

Always carry a shotgun with the barrels pointing in a safe direction, and never pointing at anyone.

When in close company the shotgun should be carried unloaded with barrels broken.

When passing a shotgun to another person, do so with stock first, barrels broken and only after demonstrating that it is unloaded.

Unload your shotgun before negotiating an obstacle or when walking across difficult terrain.

The triggers should never be touched until you intend to fire.

In the event of a miss-fire, re-apply the safety catch and keep the barrels pointing in a safe direction while opening the shotgun to investigate the cause.

Never put a loaded shotgun on the ground and never place on the roof of a vehicle or leaning against something where it may fall.

Special care must be taken when using self-loading or pump-action shotguns.

Never shoot in the direction of power lines or telephone cables.

Never shoot unless you have properly identified the target and are sure that it is safe to do so.

15. Environmental Considerations:

The cases of all used cartridges must be collected and removed from Coillte's forestry and landowner's property and disposed of in a proper manner.

Only cartridges loaded with biodegradable wads should be used.

Only non-toxic shot must be used when shooting alongside rivers, streams, ponds and other wetland areas.

Do not use steel shot in woodland areas which may damage forestry equipment during felling operations.

Do not shoot into vegetable crops or other crops grown for human consumption.

16. Control of Dogs:

Gun-dogs should always be kept under control and should be kept at a safe distance from farm livestock.

Under the Control of Dogs Act 1986 as amended by the Control of Dogs (Amendment) Act 1972, all local authorities in Ireland are responsible for the control of dogs. They have the power to appoint dog wardens, provide dog shelters, seize dogs, impose on-the-spot fines and take court proceedings against owners.

You are liable for injury or damage caused by your dog to people or livestock.

It is advisable that any damage caused by dogs be reported to the landowner and the hunter's insurers as soon as possible.

17. Vermin Control:

Those involved in vermin control should carry out their lawful activities discretely and with due consideration to local residents and other countryside users.

Traps/snares are widely used in vermin control and all legal provisions on inspection and their use must be observed.

In general, all non lethal traps and snares should be checked at least once a day. Trapped animals must be removed promptly on inspection and disposed of lawfully.

In the case of live capture traps and snares, all target animals must be dispatched humanely and as quickly as possible.

Larsen Traps must be inspected daily and call birds must have food and water at all times.

The decoy must also be provided with a roost and shelter.

Carcasses of any shot animal or bird should not be displayed, it serves no useful purpose and will offend other countryside users.

Accurate records for vermin control should be kept and reported to Club Vermin Control Officers or Secretaries.

It is an offence to intentionally kill, damage or destroy birds of prey, their nests or eggs.

It is an offence under Irish law to use certain poison baits.

Section 4 (1) of the European Communities [Birds and Natural Habitats] Restrictions On Use Of Poison Bait Regulations 2010 states: "A person shall not place, cause to be placed or permit to be placed or have with him or her any poisoned or anaesthetic bait that is animal or contains animal substance or other animal derivative in any place to capture, kill, poison, stupefy, anaesthetize, harm or injure or where it is likely to capture, kill, poison, stupefy, anaesthetize, harm or injure any species referred to in Article 1 of the Birds Directive, or any species of wild fauna listed in Annexes IV(a) and V(a) to the Habitats Directive, except in accordance with a license".

18. Fox Shooting (Lamping):

While the most effective way of controlling foxes is by shooting at night time (lamping) this is a skilled job requiring intimate knowledge of the landscape.

Powerful lamps will pick out the reflection from the foxes eyes and you must be able to distinguish the fox's eye reflection from that of sheep or other farm animals.

Having clearly identified the fox you must be able to judge whether the shot is safe and the distance to ensure a clean kill.

As rifles are the most effective means of shooting foxes you must know the terrain to ensure that there is a backdrop for safety.

All shots either with a shotgun or rifle must be taken within the ability of the firearm and its user.

Shooting foxes from a public road is not allowed, and avoid shooting towards a public road.

It is highly recommended that hunters seek the permission of landowners to hunt foxes at night and it is also advisable to inform the local Gardai.

LIST OF USEFUL LEGISLATION:

Note – this is NOT a full list of legislation – For a full list of Government Legislation, please go to <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>.

Firearms Legislation

S.I. No. 17 of 1925 - Firearms Act 1925.

Criminal Justice Act 2006 - Number 26 of 2006.

S.I. No. 307 of 2009 - Firearms (Secure Accommodation) Regulations 2009.

S.I. No. 311 of 2009 - Firearms Act 1925 (Prescribed Firearm Certificates) Regulations 2009.

S.I. No. 337 of 2009 - Firearms (Restricted Firearms and Ammunition) Amendment Order 2009.

The Garda Commissioner's Guidelines as to the Practical Application and Operation of the Firearms Acts, 1925-2009. (Issued in accordance with section 3A of The Firearms Act, 1925 as inserted by section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act, 2006).

Legislation on the Use Of Poison Baits

S.I. No. 12 of 1861 - Poisons Act 1961.

S.I. No. 511 of 2008 - Poisons Regulations 2008.

S.I. No. 481 of 2010 - European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Restrictions On Use Of Poison Bait Regulations 2010.

Control of Dogs

S.I. No. 17 of 1960 - Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1960.

S.I. No. 320 of 1986 - Control of Dogs Act 1986.

S.I. No. 307 of 1992 - Control of Dogs (Amendment Act) 1992.

Wildlife Legislation

S.I. No. 39 of 1976 - Wildlife Act 1976.

1979 European Birds Directive.

S.I. No. 254/1986 — European Communities (Wildlife Act, 1976) (Amendment) Regulations, 1986.

Regulation on Control of Pigeons and Pest Species.

Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000 - Number 38 of 2000.

Occupiers Liability

Occupiers Liability Act 1995 – Number 10 of 1995.

2002 Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act - Control of Trespass.

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