



© GWCT

8. Game as food

One of the Code of Good Shooting Practice's five golden rules is that game is food and must always be treated as such from the moment it is shot to the time it reaches the consumer. Failure to observe this rule demonstrates lack of respect for the quarry and brings shooting into disrepute. Guns have a responsibility to ensure any game shot is looked after and made good use of, whether it is being sold on or they are taking it home themselves.

Shoot managers should aim to produce fully mature, healthy and marketable game, a high percentage of which is fit for human consumption. No game should be shot within the withdrawal period for any medicines for which the birds have been treated (see chapter 9). It is unacceptable to shoot game that you know will not be fit for eating. On shoot day this begins with ensuring birds are picked up or collecting the birds as soon as possible. Birds should not be allowed to enter the food chain if they have been contaminated, for example, by landing in animal faeces.

The Code of Good Shooting Practice has prepared a Guide to Good Game Handling, which states that 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. Regulations associated with the sale of game require it to undergo rapid cooling and that small game is stored at 4°C or lower. For most shoots that store game this will mean the need to use a suitable chiller.

Shoot participants such as Guns and pickers-up should put shot game in 'game carriers' which aid the cooling process, rather than closed bags. Good circulation of air helps cool game quickly, especially on warm early season days, so space birds out – lay them separately, and on their backs – never leave them in heaps as they will quickly begin to deteriorate. Any birds which are damaged or unfit for consumption should be kept separate from consumable game.

When game is being transferred to a suitable storage facility, a separate game cart or designated area within a vehicle should be used, again keeping space between the birds to encourage airflow between them. Shot birds should be taken to the game larder regularly throughout the day.

Any contaminated or otherwise unfit game should be kept separate and disposed of promptly within the law. Undiseased whole carcasses can be buried as long as it is done well away from any watercourse and beyond the reach of carnivorous animals. Any diseased game or part processed game (e.g. birds that have been breasted out) qualify as controlled waste and must either be incinerated in a Government-approved incinerator or rendered (pressure cooked) before going to landfill. Many shoots use a contractor for the disposal of birds properly deemed unfit for human consumption and the correct means of disposal is essential so that actions such as burying are not misinterpreted as callous waste of good food.

Unless the game is being collected or delivered on the same day, the correct storage facility should be in place. The larder or chiller must be clean, fit for purpose, able to keep out flies and other contamination and be in good working order.

If game is not sold locally or to the end consumer it should go to a game dealer or an Approved Game Handling Establishment (AGHE). One of

the legal requirements of an AGHE is that a trained person on the shoot has inspected the carcasses and holds Lantra's Level 2 Certificate in wild game meat hygiene or an equivalent. The one-day course is available through local colleges, and shows how to care for game destined to enter the human food chain. The Guide to Good Game Handling also strongly advises that those who supply game to third parties read the Wild Game Guide which explains the legal requirements in more detail www.food.gov.uk/business-industry/farmingfood/wildgameguidance

Follow the Code

Getting game into the foodchain

"Shoot managers must ensure they have appropriate arrangements in place for the sale or consumption of the anticipated bag in advance of all shoot days."

"Shoot managers should always offer Guns a brace of birds which Guns should accept. The practice of making oven-ready birds available is to be encouraged where practicable."

Did you know?

Game meat exports

Between 50-70% of British game meat is exported to Europe.

Ask the shoot

1. Before the shooting season, what provision do you have in place to sell your game?
2. Do you abide by the Guide to Good Game Handling?
3. Is your game sold to an Approved Game Handling Establishment?
4. Does someone on the shoot have Lantra's Level 2 Certificate in wild game meat hygiene or an equivalent?
5. Do you have a chiller?
6. Do you have a game cart?
7. What temperature do you keep your game?
8. Do you give Guns a brace at the end of the day and encourage them to take them?