

FIRING LINES

A place to express your views and opinions...

High praise for DSC1

This past February I had the chance to undertake the Deer Stalking Certificate 1 course (DSC1). I was lucky enough to do the course at the BASC centre in Trochry, Dunkeld. The instructing staff of Donald, Cameron and Colin made all feel welcome with tsunami amounts of coffee and plenty of biscuits. There were about 13 of us from all different walks of life. Some were doing the course for work, others for leisure and some to start their journey in deer stalking. We had all studied the DSC1 training manual over the past few months and were itching to get started.

The main grasp of the course is to give a novice stalker the knowledge of our six deer species in the UK; their biology, ecology, relevant legislation, health and safety considerations, and things to think about before, during and after taking the shot.

Two phrases were mentioned quite a few times through the course. One being 'death by PowerPoint'. Now there's not really another way to present all the information in a timely fashion so be prepared to sit and read. The other phrase was passed around by Donald, our well-seasoned instructor who had an anecdote on every point of the course. He melded humour and teaching seamlessly and made even the most mundane handwashing seminar entertaining. He would frequently say "trust yer gut, lads", always encouraging us to trust what we had learned and not to overthink.

What I took away from the course was that there are so many like-minded people in this community. What can be seen as quite a closed and 'gatekept' community is in reality very open and accepting. BASC does such a good job of making knowledge and advice accessible to people. The only way the shooting community survives and grows is by welcoming in new blood and teaching them how to become competent and respectful outdoors people. A big old thank-you to Donald, Cameron and Colin at BASC Scotland.

STAR
LETTER

Ryad Black

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Trophy hunting – an urgent appeal

If we wish to conserve our entire ecosystem and the creatures within it, it is imperative that ethical, sustainable utilisation of the natural world continues.

All those who partake in or operate this system of conservation are duty bound to ensure its conduct is in keeping with the times.

The present time poses the greatest threat ever. If 'trophy hunting' is to play its vital role of positively reducing indiscriminate, barbaric poaching well into the future, we have to change the unacceptable 'Americanisation' of conduct and standards which so many worldwide find thoroughly cruel and offensive.

We must lobby the governments of Tanzania, Botswana and Namibia to impose new and stringent best practice laws to minimise needless wounding and

to respect animal welfare. I am already doing this. Principally we must seek:

- 1) A ban on all bow hunting
- 2) Allow only the appropriate calibres, bullet and powder weights to be used for hunting
- 3) No neck or head shots allowed, apart from crocodile and hippo
- 4) Professional hunters and clients to be accompanied by a game warden to monitor conduct
- 5) No shooting of prime breeding males – it is too damaging to the gene pool.

The trophy import ban also applies to exports and is a threat to rural communities in the UK that depend on income from visiting hunters.

We must respond to these threats now!

Stephen Salmon

Shooting deer out of season

I was pleased to see that Insight (page 3) was given over to 'Wild meat for people in need', an article written by S J Hunt, CEO of the charity The Country Food Trust, in the March/April edition of *Shooting and Conservation*. In particular, the Wild Venison Project deserves to be fully supported by all those who care about the British countryside.

Incredibly, some retailers still import farmed venison from New Zealand when southern England is overpopulated with wild deer. There are huge herds in the home counties, and I have spoken to deer managers who have been reluctant to discuss the number killed as it is akin to pest control, not deer stalking as many of us would think of it. Even so, there are still far too many. All those who are in a position to do something about it, should be encouraged to do so as far as they can.

It does not seem to be particularly well known (even among the shooting fraternity) that deer can be lawfully shot out of season on enclosed farm or forestry land where they are causing damage to crops or trees and are likely to continue to do so, pursuant to Section 7 of the Deer Act 1991. Therefore, many deer shooters do not need to stop during the summer.

Simon Duncan

BASC deer officer James Sutcliffe writes:

Although Mr Duncan is correct that Section 7 can be a useful tool for deer managers in certain circumstances, there are some important considerations to keep in mind.

Firstly, Section 7 provides a defence, not a legal exemption. If you were challenged for shooting deer out of season and couldn't satisfy that you had acted under the conditions of Section 7, it is possible an offence could have been committed.

Secondly, when acting under Section 7 it is hugely important to be highly selective. Through the late spring and summer months, you are likely to be focusing on male deer to avoid orphaning any dependent young. Shooting male deer may well help with damage issues but will not have much effect on the overall population.

Finally, it is worth noting that some dealers or game outlets may refuse to purchase deer carcasses shot out of season.