



# PICKING UP (QUARRY RETRIEVAL)

A CODE OF PRACTICE

## 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 sustainable shooting, now and in the future.**

### **This code provides advice at two levels:**

Advice that **must** be followed 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 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 it reaches the table in the best condition.
4. All game must be retrieved as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. Wounded game should be retrieved first.

## 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, using a priest or methods such as manual neck dislocation, 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, such as using a priest or manual neck dislocation.
- 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 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 picking up 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 and 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 and watch where they fall. They should be retrieved immediately, if appropriate to do so, 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**

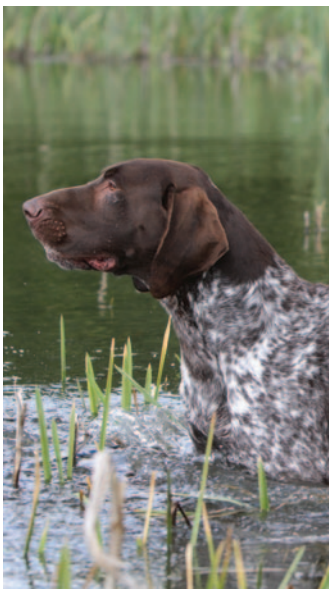
The guidance for pheasant shoots generally applies to other types of driven shooting but note the following in particular:

- 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 flights 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.
- At an evening flight carry a torch but do not use it until the end of the flight has been signalled.
  - Never send a dog on to 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 must 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 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 and 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 CHECKLIST

This could include a whistle, leads, implement to dispatch wounded game such as a priest, 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 (identified as such by the local authority), 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.
- Dogs 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 to be microchipped and registered on a recognised microchip database by the time they are eight weeks old.



### **The control of dogs**

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

- Landowners and occupiers, or a person entitled to act for the protection of that livestock, 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 for journeys over 65 km (40 miles). Recreational shooting, beating and picking-up are not normally considered to be an economic activity.

## **5. INSURANCE**

It is advisable to consider additional insurance for your dog. BASC Working Dog insurance policies are available and for more details, or to obtain a quote please visit: [agriapet.co.uk/gun-dog-insurance-basc/](http://agriapet.co.uk/gun-dog-insurance-basc/) or call 03330 308 205.



## 6. BECOME A BASC GUNDOG MEMBER TODAY

Join the largest field sports organisation in the UK and benefit from first resort liability insurance when working and training your gundog\*, advice from our specialist departments, access to training opportunities, exclusive member offers and much more.

Your membership also supports the continued fight for the future of sustainable shooting and conservation across the UK and beyond.

Discover your BASC membership.



## 7. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further help and advice, call the BASC gundog helpline on 01244 573 019 or email [gundogs@basc.org.uk](mailto:gundogs@basc.org.uk)

The Code of Good Shooting Practice and Guide to Good Game handling can be found on the BASC website along with other relevant BASC codes of practice.

For nutritional advice, call the Skinner's helpline on 01379 384 247.

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

Head Office,  
Marford Mill, Rossett,  
Wrexham LL12 0HL  
Tel: 01244 573 000  
[basc.org.uk](http://basc.org.uk)  
Email: [enquiries@basc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@basc.org.uk)



\*Insurance cover can vary between different BASC membership categories. Visit our website to find out more.

BASC is a trading name of the British Association for Shooting and Conservation Limited which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) under firm reference number 311937.