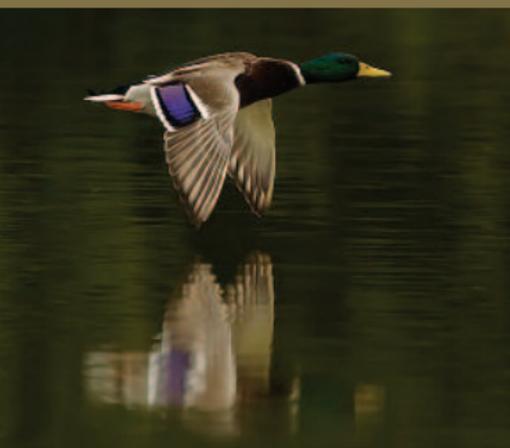


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SHOOTING OVER FLIGHT PONDS IN THE UK

A CODE OF PRACTICE

1. INTRODUCTION

At its broadest definition the flight pond is an open area of fresh water or marsh used by wildfowl in the evening, when they flight from their daytime resting places on estuaries or large water bodies in order to feed. Flight ponds can therefore provide wildfowl shooting at dusk. Duck can also be shot as they leave a flight pond in the early morning. The wildfowl using such ponds may have been reared and released, or bred in the wild locally, or have travelled long distances to overwinter in the British Isles. Mallard are most common but ponds can also attract teal and other species. Excessive or inconsiderate shooting is unacceptable, bad for conservation and is likely to reduce shooting success and bring all shooting sports into disrepute. If this code is followed, flight ponds will continue to provide excellent shooting with benefits to conservation which can be demonstrated to, and enjoyed by, a wider public.

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

The code provides advice at two levels:

Advice that **must** be followed in order to deliver sustainable shooting – 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. In order to ensure the future of the sport, participants must meet the standards described in this code, show respect for the countryside, due regard to health and safety and consideration for others.
2. The sportsman’s aim is to achieve the instantaneous kill of each bird that he or she shoots at, and then its retrieval so that it is put to good use.
3. Every bird is a sentient creature and should not suffer unnecessarily as a result of our sporting activities.
4. Shooting should not take place more than once every two weeks.
5. Guns should always be in place half an hour before expected flight time.

2. BEHAVIOUR IN THE FIELD

Location of flight ponds

When considering the creation of a new pond, investigate the need for consents from the local planning authority and the Environment Agency in England and Natural Resources Wales in Wales. In Scotland consult the planners and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and in Northern Ireland consult the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

When creating a new pond, choose the location with care; boggy, wet grassland can have a higher conservation value than an inappropriately placed area of open water.

Consider the special status of surrounding or nearby land, particularly nature reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or other land managed for shooting. Make sure you contact surrounding land managers to ascertain how best to integrate your own shooting plans with theirs.

Safety

Safety is of paramount importance and this Code of Practice recommends that:

- Clear instructions are given – and are followed – about where guns are placed, where it is safe to shoot and when shooting can start and must stop.
- Hides must be constructed and positioned to maximise safety.
- Guns must know where any dog handlers may be positioned and when any shot wildfowl will be retrieved.
- Guns must not be loaded until shooting can start and must be unloaded as soon as it ends.
- The BASC's *Shotgun Safety Code* must be followed at all times.

Ensure that the location will minimise disturbance to nearby residents and livestock. To avoid livestock damaging the margins of the pond it will be worth considering the need to install a fence around the perimeter. If livestock are using the pond for drinking water, an area can be left unfenced to allow access.

Respect for quarry

It is advisable to pattern your gun/cartridge combination to make sure it will deliver the appropriate killing load – provided, as ever, you can consistently centre your pattern on the target. Understand your own limitations with the gun and cartridge combination you are using. Further advice is available from BASC.

Immediately mark all shot quarry, ensuring that it is retrieved as soon as it is safe to do so. Dispatch any wounded bird immediately, humanely and acceptably. A sharp knock on the head with a heavy stick or a priest can be effective as can the use of a purpose-made bird dispatcher.

The use of a trained gundog is essential in flight pond shooting, to find and promptly retrieve shot birds, especially those which fall in water. If you do not have a retrieving dog, only take shots which will result in birds falling on dry land and which you can retrieve. This may include times when the pond is frozen, since it can be dangerous to send a dog over ice.

Keep any dog under control at all times as livestock and other wildlife are often in the vicinity.



Always allow enough time for the retrieval of all shot birds before leaving the pond, and aim to leave the pond before the last birds arrive.

Practical considerations

Guns should always be in place half an hour before expected flight time. Remember to always remove cartridge cases and all other litter.

Feeding wildfowl

If supplementary feeding is carried out, this Code of Practice recommends that care should be taken to avoid excess feed being left in or around the pond; it encourages pests such as rats and may lead to a degradation of the water quality.

Additional feeding may be needed in severe weather and if necessary on top of ice. As a guideline, increase the amount of food provided until some is left and then cut back slightly. Generally a 10 litre (2 gallon) bucket of barley per 100 duck per day is sufficient

Wildfowl release

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 provide that mallard eggs may be collected from the wild (under general licence) until 31 March in England, Wales, and Scotland and in Northern Ireland until 10 April. Collected eggs must be incubated and every effort made to rear the ducklings. They must be released into the wild by 31 July.

In addition, this Code of Practice recommends that: The number of birds released must be appropriate to the size and other characteristics of a flight pond, so as not to damage the habitat, of value to other wildlife. As a guide, when releasing mallard, 600 birds per hectare (250 birds per acre) of water is a maximum.

Any ducks must be released by 31 July.

3. QUARRY SPECIES AND SEASONS

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 provide for waterfowl shooting in the United Kingdom, with respect to quarry species, seasons and other aspects of the sport.

DUCK	GEESE	WADERS	OTHERS
Gadwall	Canada goose	Common snipe	² Coot
Goldeneye	Greylag goose	Golden plover	² Moorhen
Mallard	Pink-footed goose	¹ Jack snipe	
Pintail	³ White-fronted goose	Woodcock	
Pochard	Notes: ¹ Northern Ireland only ² England, Wales and Scotland only ³ England and Wales (voluntary moratorium in parts of Wales)		
¹ Scaup			
Shoveler			
Teal			
Tufted duck			
Wigeon			

Full details of open seasons for all legal quarry species are available from BASC by contacting head office, country or regional offices or by visiting www.basc.org.uk

Inland wildfowl seasons (All dates are inclusive)

- England, Wales and Scotland 1 September – 31 January
- Northern Ireland 1 September – 31 January

4. GUNS AND CARTRIDGES

For most flight pond shooting, where shooting ranges are typically short, a 12 bore gun with 28 – 32g (1 – 1 1/8oz) cartridges will normally be appropriate. For large ducks (mallard) pellet size no. 4/5 (UK, i.e. 3.1/2.8mm) is widely used, for small ducks (teal) no.6 (2.4mm), and for geese no.3 (3.3mm) or 1 (3.6mm) when using high density shot types like bismuth and tungsten-based shot. When using low-density types like steel, increasing pellet size by at least two sizes is recommended (i.e. from no. 6 to no. 4) and use a larger load weight (e.g. 32g to 34g or 36g) to ensure adequate number of pellets in the pattern.

Steel shot

Steel shot is very hard and it is important to use steel cartridges that are suitable for the gun you intend using. The International Proof Commission (CIP) has defined two types of steel cartridge, standard and high performance. Broadly, standard steel cartridges can be used in standard/magnum-proved guns but high-performance cartridges must be used only in guns that have passed special Steel Shot Proof. Cartridge lengths up to 70mm typically will be standard but 76mm and larger, high performance. The performance of each type of cartridge is

regulated too, in terms of its velocity, momentum and pellet size, and, with large pellet size, choke is limited to no more than half. The cartridge box should say if the cartridges are high performance.

Non-lead shot

Bismuth shot is available in many cartridge and pellet sizes and can be used through any choke, including traditional game guns. It is recommended that at least one shot size larger is used compared with lead, due to it being slightly less dense. Bismuth is often chosen by shooters using 65 or 70mm-chambered guns.

Impact Tungsten Matrix (ITM) shot is close to the density of lead and is available in many shot size and cartridge combinations. It can be used through any choke. The same size shot as was used in lead can be used but one size larger may also be worth trying.

Hevi-shot is a combination of tungsten, steel and nickel and is denser than lead. As for steel, it should be fired from plastic-wadded cartridges. CIP regulations now treat the current form of Hevi-shot, unlike the previous form, as lead and not subject to the rules for steel shot. This shot can perform well but should not be used to extend your shooting range beyond your own limits. A pellet size slightly smaller than you would use in lead is worth trying as it could increase the lethality of the load.

A growing variety of non-lead shot types, based on the above materials, is becoming available. Further information and advice on non-lead shot can be obtained from the BASC's wildfowling department.

Effective loads

Many shooters have their own views as to what constitutes a killing load. The best available guidance at present is based on American scientific studies on steel shot, and, most recently, Hevi-shot. The measure of potential effectiveness is the count of pellets in the traditional 30 inch circle placed over the centre of the pattern. For example: geese need a minimum 55 pellets in that circle; large ducks (mallard) need 90+; small ducks (teal) some 140. Effective pellet sizes vary accordingly.

You need to pattern your gun/cartridge combination to make sure it will deliver the appropriate killing load – provided, as ever, you can consistently centre your pattern on the target. Advice is available from BASC.

Effective range of the gun

The maximum effective range of your shotgun in relation to a given kind of quarry is the greatest range at which you are reasonably certain that a clean kill will be made by a truly-aimed shot. Consistently hitting and killing your target, with the appropriate gun/cartridge combination, is the most important

factor in successful shooting. In effect, this means that with an appropriate 12-bore cartridge the maximum effective range could be some 32-37m (35-40yd), but it may well be less than this, depending on your ability to shoot well. If you cannot hit and kill your target consistently at, say, 25yd, you should not attempt to shoot at that range. As your shooting skill improves, through practising on clays for example, you can extend your range.

5. THE LAW

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 provide for wildfowl shooting in the United Kingdom.

Shooting on Sunday and at night

England and Wales – Before the passing of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, orders prohibiting the shooting of wildfowl on Sundays were made under the Protection of Birds Act 1954. These orders have not been rescinded and so the following counties/part counties are still affected: Anglesey, Brecknock, Caernarfon, Carmarthen, Cardigan, Cornwall, Denbigh, Devon, Doncaster, Glamorgan, Great Yarmouth County Borough, Isle of Ely, Leeds County Borough, Merioneth, Norfolk, Pembroke, Somerset and North and West Ridings of Yorkshire.

Scotland – Wildfowl and waders may not be shot on Sundays or Christmas Day.

Northern Ireland – All wild birds are protected on Sundays, Christmas Day and at night, this being defined as the period from one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise. In addition, many wildfowl are migratory. Estuaries and inland wetlands are often of national and international importance for wildfowl populations. Everyone has a responsibility to safeguard them and their environment.

Lead shot restrictions

Following the ratification of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) by the UK Government in 1999, the use of lead shot for all duck shooting has been made illegal in England and Wales, and for all shooting on or over wetlands (including foreshore) in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

For further details or more information please visit the BASC website or contact the BASC Wildfowling department.

In addition to the law the *Code of Good Shooting Practice*, endorsed by the major shooting and countryside organisations, calls on all shooters to avoid depositing lead shot into wetland areas used by feeding waterfowl.

Severe weather

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 provide for periods of special protection for all wildfowl (including reared mallard, woodcock and snipe) in prolonged severe weather. Prior to such statutory protection being introduced by the government, BASC may recommend voluntary restraint where appropriate.

Details of the suspension of shooting due to severe weather are posted in the national press and sporting magazines. Information and guidance is made available through BASC head office, regional offices and the BASC website (www.basc.org.uk). It is important for the image of shooting to be seen to be acting responsibly during such periods.

6. INSURANCE

It is advisable to have adequate legal liability (third-party) insurance when shooting. Membership of BASC currently provides insurance <http://basc.org.uk/join-basc/basc-members-insurance/>

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Information on the creation and management of ponds is available from BASC's conservation team at head office.

References

- *Code of Good Shooting Practice*
- *BASC Handbook of Shooting*
- *BASC Respect for Quarry*
- *BASC Shotgun Code of Practice*
- *BASC Wildfowling Manual*
- *BASC Handbook – Wildfowling* [Quiller 2007]

BASC is the largest representative body for sporting shooting.

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