



Deer (Scotland) Act 1996

1996 CHAPTER 58

PART III

OFFENCES IN RELATION TO DEER

[^{F1}Unlawful killing, taking and injuring of deer]

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 17 cross-heading inserted (1.1.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) (asp 6), [ss. 30\(2\)](#), [43\(1\)](#) (with [s. 41\(1\)](#)); [S.S.I. 2011/433](#), [art. 2\(1\)\(f\)](#)

17 Unlawful killing, taking and injuring of deer.

- (1) Subject to section 25 of this Act, any person who, without legal right to take or kill deer or without permission from a person having such right, takes or wilfully kills or injures deer on any land shall be guilty of an offence.
- (2) Subject to section 25 of this Act, any person who, without legal right to take or kill deer on any land or without permission from a person having such right, removes any deer carcase from that land shall be guilty of an offence.
- (3) Subject to section 25 of this Act, any person who wilfully kills or injures any deer otherwise than by shooting shall be guilty of an offence.

^{F2}(4)

Textual Amendments

- F2** S. 17(4) repealed (1.1.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) (asp 6), [ss. 30\(3\)](#), [43\(1\)](#) (with [s. 41\(1\)](#)); [S.S.I. 2011/433](#), [art. 2\(1\)\(f\)](#)

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996, Part III. (See end of Document for details)

[^{F3}Register of persons competent to shoot deer

Textual Amendments

F3 Ss. 17A, 17B and cross-heading inserted (1.1.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), **ss. 30(4), 43(1)** (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(1)(f)

17A Register of persons competent to shoot deer

- (1) The Scottish Ministers may by regulations—
 - (a) make provision for the establishment and operation of a register of persons competent to shoot deer in Scotland;
 - (b) prohibit any person from shooting deer unless the person is—
 - (i) registered; or
 - (ii) supervised by a registered person;
 - (c) provide that being a registered person is sufficient to meet the requirements as to fitness and competence under sections 26(2)(d) and 37(1);
 - (d) require registered persons or owners or occupiers of land to submit cull returns to SNH.
- (2) Regulations under subsection (1) above—
 - (a) may make such supplementary, incidental or consequential provision as the Scottish Ministers think fit and may, in particular, make provision (or allow SNH to make provision) in relation to—
 - (i) who is to keep and maintain the register;
 - (ii) applications for registration (or for amendment of, or removal from, the register);
 - (iii) the determination of applications for registration (including the criteria to be used to determine whether a person is competent to shoot deer);
 - (iv) the imposition of conditions on the granting of an application (including conditions about compliance with any requirement for a registered person to submit a cull return);
 - (v) the amendment of the register;
 - (vi) the removal of a person from the register (including by revocation of registration);
 - (vii) the charging of fees in connection with registration;
 - (viii) appeals against decisions to—
 - (A) refuse to register a person;
 - (B) impose conditions on the granting of an application;
 - (C) remove a person from the register;
 - (ix) circumstances in which a person shooting deer is to be regarded as being, or not being, supervised by a registered person;
 - (x) the information to be included in cull returns;
 - (xi) the periods in respect of, and within, which cull returns are to be submitted;
 - (xii) the form and manner in which cull returns are to be submitted;
 - (xiii) the repeal of [^{F4}sections 40 and 40A]; and

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- (xiv) consequential modification of any of sections 5, 16, 18, 26 or 37 of, or Schedule 3 to, this Act; and
 - (b) may make different provision for different purposes.
- (3) Before making regulations under subsection (1) above, the Scottish Ministers (or a person nominated by them) must consult such persons and organisations as they consider (or, as the case may be, the nominated person considers) have an interest in the regulations.
- (4) Any person who shoots a deer on any land in contravention of regulations made under subsection (1)(b) above is guilty of an offence.
- (5) Subsection (4) above does not apply where a person shoots a deer for the purpose mentioned in section 25 of this Act.
- (6) Any person who—
- (a) fails without reasonable cause to submit a cull return [^{F5}within the meaning given by subsection (7)(a) or (b)(i)] in accordance with regulations made under subsection (1)(d) above; ^{F6}...
 - ^{F7}(aa) [fails without reasonable cause to submit a cull return within the meaning given by subsection (7)(b)(ii) in accordance with regulations made under subsection (1)(d) above, or]
 - (b) knowingly or recklessly provides any information in a cull return [^{F8}referred to in paragraph (a)] which is, in a material particular, false or misleading,
- is guilty of an offence.
- (7) In this section, “cull return”—
- (a) when required to be submitted by a registered person, means a written statement showing the number of deer of each species and of each sex which to his knowledge has been killed; and
 - ^{F9}(b) when required to be submitted by an owner or occupier of land, means—
 - (i) a written statement showing the number of deer of each species and of each sex which to his knowledge has been taken or killed on the land, or
 - (ii) a written statement showing the number of deer of each species and of each sex which are planned to be killed on the land in the following year.]

Textual Amendments

- F4** Words in s. 17A(2)(a)(xiii) substituted (28.6.2016) by [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(asp 18\)](#), **ss. 81(3)(a), 130(1)** (with s. 128); S.S.I. 2016/193, reg. 2(1), Sch.
- F5** Words in s. 17A(6)(a) inserted (28.6.2016) by [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(asp 18\)](#), **ss. 81(3)(b)(i), 130(1)** (with s. 128); S.S.I. 2016/193, reg. 2(1), Sch.
- F6** Word in s. 17A(6) repealed (28.6.2016) by [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(asp 18\)](#), **ss. 81(3)(b)(ii), 130(1)** (with s. 128); S.S.I. 2016/193, reg. 2(1), Sch.
- F7** S. 17A(6)(aa) inserted (28.6.2016) by [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(asp 18\)](#), **ss. 81(3)(b)(iii), 130(1)** (with s. 128); S.S.I. 2016/193, reg. 2(1), Sch.
- F8** Words in s. 17A(6)(b) substituted (28.6.2016) by [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(asp 18\)](#), **ss. 81(3)(b)(iv), 130(1)** (with s. 128); S.S.I. 2016/193, reg. 2(1), Sch.
- F9** S. 17A(7)(b) substituted (28.6.2016) by [Land Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2016 \(asp 18\)](#), **ss. 81(3)(c), 130(1)** (with s. 128); S.S.I. 2016/193, reg. 2(1), Sch.

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17B Review of competence etc. by SNH

- (1) SNH must carry out a review of the following matters if the power in section 17A(1) is not exercised by 1st April 2014—
 - (a) levels of competence among persons who shoot deer in Scotland;
 - (b) the effect of such levels of competence on deer welfare.
- (2) In any such review, the matters SNH must consider include—
 - (a) the extent to which such persons have been trained to shoot deer and the availability and nature of such training;
 - (b) any available evidence as regards any effect of the absence of such training, or the nature of such training, on the welfare of deer which have been shot.
- (3) If SNH carries out a review, it must—
 - (a) when doing so consult such persons and organisations as it considers have an interest in the review; and
 - (b) publish a report of the review.]

[^{F10}Other offences and attempts to commit offences]

Textual Amendments

- F10** S. 18 cross-heading inserted (1.1.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), **ss. 30(5), 43(1)** (with [s. 41\(1\)](#)); [S.S.I. 2011/433](#), **art. 2(1)(f)**

18 Taking or killing at night.

- (1) Subject to sections 25 and 41(2) of this Act and to subsection (2) below, any person who takes or wilfully kills or injures deer between the expiration of the first hour after sunset and the commencement of the last hour before sunrise shall be guilty of an offence.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything contained in any agreement between the occupier of agricultural land or of woodland and the owner thereof, but subject to section 37 of this Act, [^{F11}SNH] may authorise such an occupier or any person nominated in writing by such an occupier to take or kill, and to sell or otherwise dispose of, any deer on any such land or woodland during the period specified in subsection (1) above, where [^{F12}it is] satisfied that—
 - [^{F13}(a) the taking or killing is necessary—
 - (i) to prevent damage to crops, pasture, human or animal foodstuffs, or to woodland; or
 - (ii) in the interests of public safety; and]
 - (b) no other means of control which might reasonably be adopted in the circumstances would be adequate.

Textual Amendments

- F11** Word in Act substituted (1.8.2010) by [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 8\)](#), **s. 134(7), Sch. 1 para. 6**; [S.S.I. 2010/221](#), **art. 3(2), Sch.**
- F12** Words in s. 18(2) substituted (1.8.2010) by [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 8\)](#), **s. 134(7), Sch. 1 para. 21**; [S.S.I. 2010/221](#), **art. 3(2), Sch.**

Changes to legislation: There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996, Part III. (See end of Document for details)

F13 S. 18(2)(a) substituted (1.1.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), ss. 26(5), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(1)(f)

19 Use of vehicles to drive deer.

- (1) Subject to section 41(2) of this Act and to subsection (2) below, any person who uses a vehicle to drive deer on any land with the intention of taking, killing or injuring them shall be guilty of an offence.
- (2) Subject to section 37 of this Act, [^{F11}SNH] may authorise the owner of any land which deer are on, or any person nominated in writing by him, to use any vehicle to drive deer in order to take or kill them for the purposes of deer management.
- (3) In subsection (2) above—
 - “deer management” does not include driving deer in the course of any sporting activity; and
 - “vehicle” does not include any aircraft or hovercraft.

Textual Amendments

F11 Word in Act substituted (1.8.2010) by [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 8\)](#), s. 134(7), [Sch. 1 para. 6](#); S.S.I. 2010/221, art. 3(2), Sch.

20 Other offences connected with moving vehicles.

- (1) Subject to sections 25 and 41(2) of this Act and to subsection (2) below, any person who—
 - (a) discharges any firearm, or discharges or projects any missile, from any moving vehicle at any deer; or
 - (b) uses any aircraft for the purposes of transporting any live deer other than in the interior of the aircraft,shall be guilty of an offence.
- (2) Nothing in subsection (1)(b) above shall make unlawful anything done by, or under the supervision of, a veterinary surgeon or practitioner.
- (3) In subsection (2) above—
 - “veterinary practitioner” means a person who is for the time being registered in the supplementary register; and
 - “veterinary surgeon” means a person who is for the time being registered in the register of veterinary surgeons.

21 Firearms and ammunition.

- (1) The Secretary of State shall have power to make such order as he thinks fit regarding the classes of firearms, ammunition, sights and other equipment which may lawfully be used in connection with killing or taking deer, and the circumstances in which any class of firearms, ammunition, sights or other equipment may be so used.

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- (2) Before making an order under subsection (1) above the Secretary of State shall consult any organisations which in his opinion represent persons likely to be interested in or affected by the order.
- (3) Any person who fails to comply with an order under subsection (1) above shall be guilty of an offence.
- (4) No order shall be made under this section unless a draft of the order has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.
- (5) Any person who uses any firearm or any ammunition for the purpose of wilfully injuring any deer shall be guilty of an offence.

22 Offences committed by more than one person.

Where two or more persons acting together do any act which would constitute an offence under any of sections 17 to 21 of this Act, every such person shall be guilty of an offence.

23 Illegal possession of deer.

- (1) A person who is in possession of a deer or of firearms or ammunition in circumstances which make it reasonable to infer that—
 - (a) he obtained the deer by committing a relevant offence; or
 - (b) he had used the firearm or ammunition for the purpose of committing a relevant offence; or
 - (c) he knew that—
 - (i) a relevant offence had been committed in relation to the deer; or
 - (ii) the firearm or ammunition had been used for the purpose of committing a relevant offence,
 shall be guilty of an offence.
- (2) It shall be a defence in proceedings for an offence under subsection (1) above for the accused to show that no relevant offence had been committed, or that he had no reason to believe that such an offence had been committed.
- (3) For the purposes of this section a “relevant offence” is an offence under any of sections 5 or 17 to 22 of this Act.
- (4) A person shall not be guilty of an offence under subsection (1) above in respect of anything done in good faith, including conduct which would otherwise constitute a relevant offence in relation to any deer, where what is done is done for purposes connected with the prevention or detection of crime or the investigation or treatment of disease.
- (5) It shall be lawful to convict a person charged under subsection (1) above on the evidence of one witness.

24 Attempts to commit offences.

Without prejudice to the operation of section 294 of, and paragraph 10 of Schedule 3 to, the ^{MI}Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995, any person who—

- (a) attempts to commit; or

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(b) does any act preparatory to the commission of,
an offence under section 5(5) or this Part of this Act shall be guilty of an offence.

Marginal Citations

M1 1995 c.46.

Exemption for certain acts

25 Action intended to prevent suffering.

A person shall not be guilty of an offence against this Act or any order made under this Act in respect of any act done for the purpose of preventing suffering by—

- [^{F14}(za) a deer which is starving and which has no reasonable chance of recovering;]
(a) an injured or diseased deer; or
(b) ^{F15}... any deer calf, fawn or kid deprived, or about to be deprived, of its mother.

Textual Amendments

F14 S. 25(za) inserted (1.1.2012) by Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (asp 6), ss. 31(2)(a), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(1)(f)

F15 Word in s. 25(b) repealed (1.1.2012) by Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (asp 6), ss. 31(2)(b), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(1)(f)

26 Right of occupier in respect of deer causing ^{F16}... damage to crops etc. on certain ground.

- (1) ^{F17}... it shall be lawful for a person to whom this subsection applies to take or kill, and to sell or otherwise dispose of, any deer found, as the case may be, on—
(a) arable land, improved permanent pasture (other than moorland) and land which has been regenerated so as to be able to make a significant contribution to the productivity of a holding which forms part of that agricultural land; or
(b) on enclosed woodland,

where the occupier has reasonable ground for believing that ^{F18}... damage will be caused to crops, pasture or human or animal foodstuffs on that agricultural land, or to that woodland, if the deer are not taken or killed.

[^{F19}(1A) Subsection (1) above does not apply during any period fixed by order under section 5(1) of this Act in relation to the sex and species of the deer concerned.]

- (2) Subsection (1) above applies to the occupier in person and, if duly authorised in writing by the occupier for the purposes of that subsection, to any of—
(a) the owner in person;
(b) the owner's employees;
(c) the occupier's employees, or any other person normally resident, on the land;
(d) any other person approved in writing by [^{F11}SNH] as a fit and competent person for the purpose.

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[^{F20} And in relation to enclosed land (other than moorland) which is part of a common grazing, the subsection also applies to a person who for the purposes of the subsection is both duly authorised in writing by the grazings committee (provided the grazings committee have such reasonable ground as is mentioned in that subsection) and approved as is mentioned in paragraph (d) above.]

[^{F21}(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2)(d) above, an approval may be by electronic communication (as defined in section 15(1) of the Electronic Communications Act 2000 (c. 7)), which has been recorded and is consequently capable of being reproduced.]

(3) Nothing contained in any agreement between an occupier of agricultural land or enclosed woodland and the owner of that land shall prohibit any act made lawful by subsection (1) above.

(4) Any authority given to a person under subsection (2) above shall expire—

- (a) at the end of such period as the occupier[^{F22}, or as the case may be the committee,] may specify in it;
- (b) when a person to whom it was given under paragraphs (b) or (c) of that subsection ceases to be in the employment of the owner or, as the case may be, the occupier, or ceases to be normally resident on the land;
- (c) when a person to whom it was given under paragraph (d) of that subsection ceases to be so approved;
- (d) if the occupier[^{F23}, or as the case may be the committee,] revokes it.

Textual Amendments

- F11** Word in Act substituted (1.8.2010) by [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010 \(asp 8\)](#), s. 134(7), [Sch. 1 para. 6](#); S.S.I. 2010/221, art. 3(2), Sch.
- F16** Word in s. 26 title repealed (1.4.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), ss. [29\(3\)\(a\)](#), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(3)
- F17** Words in s. 26(1) repealed (1.4.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), ss. [29\(3\)\(b\)\(i\)](#), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(3)
- F18** Word in s. 26(1) repealed (1.4.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), ss. [29\(3\)\(b\)\(ii\)](#), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(3)
- F19** S. 26(1A) inserted (1.4.2012) by [Wildlife and Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2011 \(asp 6\)](#), ss. [29\(3\)\(c\)](#), 43(1) (with s. 41(1)); S.S.I. 2011/433, art. 2(3)
- F20** Words in s. 26(2) added (25.6.2007) by [Crofting Reform etc. Act 2007 \(asp 7\)](#), s. 43(3), [Sch. 1 para. 4\(a\)](#) (with ss. 40, 43(2)); S.S.I. 2007/269, art. 2, Sch.
- F21** S. 26(2A) inserted (23.6.2006) by [Electronic Communications \(Scotland\) Order 2006 \(S.S.I. 2006/367\)](#), arts. 1(1), [3\(5\)](#)
- F22** Words in s. 26(4)(a) inserted (25.6.2007) by [Crofting Reform etc. Act 2007 \(asp 7\)](#), s. 43(3), [Sch. 1 para. 4\(b\)](#) (with ss. 40, 43(2)); S.S.I. 2007/269, art. 2, Sch.
- F23** Words in s. 26(4)(d) inserted (25.6.2007) by [Crofting Reform etc. Act 2007 \(asp 7\)](#), s. 43(3), [Sch. 1 para. 4\(b\)](#) (with ss. 40, 43(2)); S.S.I. 2007/269, art. 2, Sch.

Changes to legislation:

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996, Part III.