

Mandatory Certification for licensed deer hunters – 2021/22 Season

Mandatory training and certification for first time applicants for deer hunting licenses is being introduced.

Under the Wildlife Acts, annual licences are required to hunt deer during the Open Season which is the period during which deer can be legally shot. The Open Season for deer operates generally from 1 September to 28 February of the following year, depending on the species and gender of deer. About 5,500 deer hunting licences are issued each year of which in the region of 1,000 are first time applicants. For the 2021/22 deer hunting season which starts on 1 September 2021 it will be a requirement for first time applicants to have the necessary training and certification.

The Department will put in place an appropriate oversight regime to ensure that the training and certification are delivered to an appropriate standard. Details of the course syllabus are as follows:

NPWS TRAINING, ASSESSMENT & CERTIFICATION SYLLABUS

1. Format for Training

- Thirty-hour self-study required based on suitable Stalker Training Manual or other reference Material
- Participation in One-day Training Course/Workshop required of candidates
- 50-question Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) examination (80% to Pass)
- Range Test based on 12-shot (three position) test of accuracy and safe handling of firearms test
- Successful Candidates issued with certification.

2. WORKSHOP AND MCQ SYLLABUS (In No Particular Order)

Principles of deer management

- aims and objectives
- current problems facing deer in Ireland
- methods of population assessment
- breeding capacity and size of cull
- planning the cull; cull selection
- shooting calendar & shooting plan
- record keeping
- PR

Basic Deer Biology

- Species recognition, species distribution (For Red, Sika, Fallow, Muntjac)
- Species habits & habitat (For Red, Sika, Fallow, Muntjac)
- Life cycle of deer
- The Rut
- Pregnancy and birth

- Vocalisation, hearing, powers of scent
- Antler growth
- Aging deer & tooth eruption and wear
- Coat change and colouration
- Scent glands – identification, use and purpose

Deer Impacts

Impacts of Deer on forestry, Agriculture and Nature Conservation Habitats - damage recognition and damage limitation.

Carcass Handling & Disease Recognition

- Bleeding & evisceration
- Carcass examination & disease recognition including Anthrax, Bluetongue, Bovine Tuberculosis, Brucellosis, Foot & Mouth Disease, Warble Fly Infestation
- Notifiable diseases
- Game Meat Directive and other food meat legislation relevant to deer
- Carcass preparation, venison joints etc.

Deer Stalking Aids and Techniques

- Use of High Seat
- Binoculars and other optics
- Field craft
- Clothing
- Knives
- Use of Dogs
- Aiming Points
- Reaction to the shot
- Dealing with a wounded animal

Deer hunting & the Law

- Wildlife Act 1976 (As amended)
- Relevant Regulations and SIs under the Wildlife Act
- Relevant Sections of Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations
- Coillte licence requirements regulations
- Firearms legislation 1925 – 2000
- Control of Dogs Act (1986)
- Occupiers Liability Act 1995
- Sporting rights etc.

Firearms Safety and other Health & Safety

- Safe storage and transportation of firearms and ammunition including legal requirements
- Background to shot
- Loading & unloading

- Negotiating obstacles
- Barrel obstructions & misfires
- Shooting positions
- Non Firearms risks, knives, dragging carcasses, terrain issues, weather

Firearms, Ballistics and Zeroing

- Choice of rifle and ammunition
- Ballistics (internal, external & terminal)
- Rifle Care, cleaning and maintenance
- Scope mounts, slings, bipods etc.
- Zeroing your rifle