

Output: A report on the limitations and costs of current methods to assess competence

Author: Mike Daniels / Jessica Findlay

1 Background:

The Deer Commission for Scotland is looking to explore practical systems which recognise, monitor and regulate competence to shoot deer in order to enable the public to have confidence in practitioners' handling of issues of public safety, deer welfare and food safety. This is for two reasons:

- Currently there is no clear demonstration of, or monitoring of 'competence'
- The existing assessment of competence only applies to some and not all those shooting deer

This is set in the context of developing an overall responsibility of care with regard to deer welfare. The competence of those shooting deer is one of the key ways in which any such responsibility will be exercised.

This report focuses firstly on the costs and coverage provided by existing systems and secondly on any limitations in existing systems.

2 Method:

A review of current competence assessment systems in operation is provided in Annex 1 in relation to their provision of the broad elements of safety (operator, public and food) and welfare (deer) and their practical application (e.g. Scottish Quality Wild Venison Assurance Scheme (SQWV)). Annex 2 illustrates the approximate costs of current systems.

2.1 CURRENT METHODS/PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF METHODS

There is a distinction to be made between the **method of assessment** e.g. Deer Stalking Certificates (DSC), Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) - formal processes by which the individual's 'competence' is assessed and the **practical application** of these methods of assessment which use the assessment as a means of demonstrating competence, e.g. SWVQ which uses the DSC levels 1 and 2 as a method of demonstrating competence of the 'hunter' supplying the venison. The DCS Fit and Competent Register (see below) is both a system for assessing (through the referee route) and a practical application (the DSC2 route).

Current Methods for Assessing Competence

a) Deer Stalking Certificate Levels 1 & 2

DSC levels 1 & 2 are provided by the Deer Management Qualifications company (DMQ). DMQ is a not for profit company, limited by guarantee, which maintains the standard, quality assures the assessment process, and administers the DSC awards which it attempts to link to the recognised current National Occupational Standards (see below). It does not offer training, nor does it carry out assessments. Training may be provided by any relevant provider. Assessment may only be offered by DMQ accredited Assessment Centres.

As illustrated in Annex 1 the emphasis of the DSC1 & 2 is on both assessment of knowledge and demonstration of ability.

b) SVQ/NVQ – Game and Wildlife Management (Deer) Levels 2 & 3

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are work-related, competence based qualifications. The SVQ and NVQ in Game and Wildlife Management are based on the National Occupational standards (NOS). The main

awarding bodies are the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) for the SVQ and City and Guilds for the NVQ. The SQA is a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Scottish Executive Education Department. SVQs/NVQs currently have no direct practical application other than on an individual's CV/application form applying for a job etc.

As illustrated in Annex 1 the emphasis of the SVQ/NVQ is on both assessment of knowledge and demonstration of ability.

c) Food Standards Agency H2 Trained Hunter Status

'The EU food hygiene (H2) regulations require that 'hunters' involved in shooting wild game, to be supplied to an approved game handling establishment (AGHE), have "sufficient knowledge" to be able to confirm that the game is safe to eat and can be sold for human consumption¹. This training is now part of DSC1 (as of May 1st 2006). For those who obtained their certificate prior to 1st May 2006 DMQ provide a way for certificate holders to acquire the necessary training.

As illustrated in Annex 1 the emphasis of the Trained Hunter Status is on assessment of knowledge rather than testing ability.

Current Methods and Practical Applications

a) DCS Fit & Competent Register

DCS is required to ensure that anyone authorised to take or kill deer, at night or during the close season, is a 'fit and competent person' (Section 37(1), Deer (Scotland) Act 1996). The individual(s) authorised to take or kill are referred to as the "nominated controller(s)" and DCS requires them to be on its 'Fit & Competent register'. Controllers culling deer in the 'open' season and under Section 26 (2a, b & c) of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 (the occupier, owner, owner's employees and any other person normally resident on enclosed land or woodland shooting deer in close season during daylight) are excluded from the requirement to be on the register.

Controllers enter the register by either submitting a copy of a Deer Stalking Certificate level 2 (see above) which has been obtained within the last five years or by providing two references. Referees are asked to provide:

- Details of their own relevant qualifications and/or experience
- Clarification of their relationship with the applicant
- Confirmation that they themselves are familiar with, and follow, relevant Best Practice associated with the culling of deer
- Confirmation that the applicant is familiar with, and follows, relevant Best Practice associated with the culling of deer.

As illustrated in Annex 1 the emphasis of the Fit & Competent register, when using the referee route, is on assessment of knowledge as opposed to testing ability. Approximately three man hours were spent per controller in going onto the register.

Practical Applications

a) The Scottish Quality Wild Venison Assurance Scheme

The SQWV is a scheme which provides assurance that wild venison has been independently assessed and inspected to ensure it is of a suitable quality and recognized standard. 'This provides full traceability from larder to plate.'² Membership to the scheme is

¹ <http://www.lantra.co.uk/Game/H2Trainedhunter.asp>

² <http://www.sfqc.co.uk/farm/sqwv.asp>

on a voluntary basis but once a producer or processors of wild venison become a member they must comply with the scheme standard and criteria. One of the criteria is that all venison supplied 'must be culled by persons deemed 'competent' by the Food Standards Agency according to requirements of current food hygiene legislation'³. 'Competence' in this context is assessed by the individual holding a (DMQ) Deer Stalker Certificate (DSC) Level 1 and 2.

2.2 GAPS/LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT METHODS:

The limitations of the current methods for assessing competence include:

- There is no formal training or assessment of 'night shooting' skills. These skills are currently only assessed through referees and through following Best Practice.
- The current systems do not test/demonstrate competence in the open season and for those circumstances and individuals who are exempt from having to apply for an Authorisation or to be entered onto the F&C register i.e. Section 26(1) etc.
- There is also currently no formal training/method of demonstrating any of the specialist skills as outlined in the Best Practice Guides (including: use of dogs, pony extraction, collaborative culling etc.)
- Inconsistencies between existing methods of assessment

2.3 NEEDS IN TERMS OF TESTING COMPETENCE FOR WELFARE AND SAFETY:

These limitations reveal the need for a system which:

- Addresses these limitations/gaps and any other gaps which may appear in the future due to changes in needs of industry/legislation etc.
- Demonstrates competence for all those who shot deer for 365 days a year
- Is consistent - at present there are a number of different routes to be assessed for competence, some which have a recognised practical application and some which don't. Having an industry agreed system for assessment would help counter any inconsistencies created by having multiple systems in place.

3. Implications and Options

The main implication from the above analysis is that whilst there are a number of methods which currently assess competence, there are gaps in what these methods assess and who they assess. There are a range of approaches that could be explored to address this including legislative and voluntary options.

³ <http://www.sfqc.co.uk/farm/sqwv.asp>