

Output: A draft definition of competence (e.g. in terms of welfare, public safety and food safety) including the scope, standard and measure required

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1 Background:

As outlined in the Competence project rationale (C1.1.0), DCS is exploring practical systems which can be used to recognise, monitor and regulate competence to shoot deer. The first stage in recognising 'competence' is to draft a definition of competence within the framework of deer management which can be used by the deer sector.

2 Method:

To draft a definition of 'competence' in relation to shooting deer this report will first set the context for looking at 'competence' and secondly look at its constituent parts. Specifically it will look at:

Why we need to focus on competence?

- The wider context of 'competence'
- The legislative context for focusing on 'competence'
- Why do we need to define competence?
- Why do we need to demonstrate competence?
- What are the benefits of demonstrating competence?

What is competence in practical terms?

- Competence as outputs
- How to achieve these outputs?
- What is/are the scope, standards and measures of competence?

2.1 COMPETENCE: Why do we need to focus on competence?

The wider context of 'competence'

Consideration of competence sits in the broader context of a 'Responsibility of Care'. In broad terms 'competence' focuses on how an individual shoots a deer, one of the key ways in which any responsibility of care would be exercised. A 'Responsibility of Care' would set the context in which this deer is/are shot i.e. looking at the wider management issues associated with specific deer populations/herds. Thus 'competence' is integral to developing a 'Responsibility of Care'.

Increasingly 'competence' and 'competencies' are part of the language of employers and employees. 'Competencies' describe the skills and knowledge a person needs to do a job. They can provide the criteria used in job descriptions and against which an employee's performance can be judged. This focus on 'competence' provides motivation for training, maintaining and developing skills.

'Competence' in the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996:

'Competence' appears in Section 37, Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 - to obtain an Authorisation a 'nominated controller' needs to demonstrate they are 'fit and competent'¹. The principle behind this is to ensure that adequate safety and welfare standards are maintained.

However the Deer Act only requires the assessment of competence of those who shoot at night or during the close seasons (with the exception of owner/occupiers on enclosed agricultural ground). Currently the law does not demand that anyone shooting during

¹ Current DCS interpretation of this section is that a person needs to demonstrate to DCS that they are competent by either producing evidence from two referees that they follow DCS Best Practice or by holding a Deer Stalking Certificate (DSC) Level 2 (issued within the last 5 years).

daylight and during the open season demonstrate their 'competence'. This anomaly was highlighted during the season's consultation.

Why do we need to Define 'Competence'?

'While the term 'competence' is used widely there is at present no agreement within the sector on what this means in practice.'² There is a need for clarification of the meaning and scope of 'competence'. This clarity will be revealed through looking at competence in terms of a broad 'description' rather than a narrow 'definition'.

Why do we need to demonstrate competence?

In the summary of responses to the question 'Should all those who kill deer be required to demonstrate minimum standards of competence?' asked in the Season's consultation, one of the key messages was that 'there was general agreement that competence should be demonstrated'. Describing an individual as 'competent' is stating that they have sufficient **skills** and **knowledge** to carry out their job to an acceptable standard. In terms of shooting deer the purpose of this 'competence' can include:

- Knowledge that the individual does their job 'well', the employer/other employees have confidence in their ability (competence), route for recreational stalkers to present themselves as suitable for leasing an area of ground for stalking.
- The public have confidence that stalkers are working to appropriate safety and welfare levels.

As the competencies required to shoot deer are directly related to operator and public safety and deer welfare the implications/consequences of a lack of or insufficient competence are potentially serious.

What are the benefits of demonstrating competence?

Some key benefits can include:

- Maintaining and increasing public confidence in the deer sector
- Maintaining and increasing confidence in venison as a product (by responding to consumers and retailers demand for increasing standards and traceability in terms of quality and welfare in relation to production)
- Increasing awareness of the wide skills base of those who shoot deer

2.2 COMPETENCE: What is it in practical terms?

Competence as outcomes:

Focusing on competence in practical terms needs to first look at outcomes and then at how to achieve these outcomes. In terms of shooting deer the desired outcomes revolve around three broad categories:

- Ensuring Public Safety (operator and others)
- Safeguarding Deer Welfare (shot and dependent)
- Ensuring Food Safety (minimising contamination and clear traceability for if something does go wrong)

How to achieve these outcomes?:

To achieve these outcomes an individual needs to possess the necessary:

- Theoretical **knowledge**
- Practical application of knowledge (**skills**)

Any individual will display a combination of the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical ability to differing degrees. Together they provide the foundation of competence. Experience can build on and develop this foundation. Experience is gained through time and through exposure to situations and circumstances and can play an important role in

² Responses to the Season's Consultation

maintaining and developing competence. Experience is gradually acquired and built on during an individual's life time.

Identifying what constitutes the necessary theoretical knowledge and skills means looking at the a) scope, b) standard and c) measure.

a) Scope of Competence:

Broadly speaking an individual needs to be able to do/know the following:

- when to shoot
- where to shoot
- what to shoot
- how to shoot
- how to handle carcasses

This scope of 'competence' is as much about an individual being aware of their limitations as they are of their abilities. Competence is the responsibility of the individual and is about them having sufficient knowledge and ability to make judgements prior to and after pulling the trigger which ensure public safety, deer welfare and food safety.

b) Standard of Competence

A standard is 'a level of quality'. Standards can be divided into a series of levels with the lowest acceptable standard being a realistic but legally, safety compliant level. Higher standards equate to higher levels. For example, to demonstrate competence those shooting deer would have to comply with a minimum standard but would often demonstrate a higher standard.

One source of standards of competence are the National Occupational Standards (NOS). These 'clearly define the outcomes of competent performance'³ Specifically the NOS in game and wildlife management 'define the competence required by those involved in the industry'⁴. These standards of competence are agreed by the sector through a game and wildlife working group, comprised of key stakeholders. These standards of competence are defined by outcomes focusing on how to stalk and cull deer and how to prepare deer for human consumption. Under the NOS an individual's competency sits at a specific level (1-5). These levels represent various degrees of responsibility.

As the NOS are nationally recognised and reflect the needs of industry they should be adopted as the standards of competence for the deer sector. There is however a caveat; there are gaps in these standards, as outlined in C1.1.1. However the NOS system provides a structure and mechanism through which these gaps can be addressed.

Other existing standards of competence relating to shooting deer include the St. Hubert's Club of Great Britain.

c) Measure of Competence

A measure is 'a way of judging something'. In the context of 'competence' there needs to be a way of knowing when competence is being demonstrated. This is linked to outcomes i.e. is venison fit for consumption is as a direct consequence of a person/s competence.

Competence could be measured by:

- Passing a test e.g. Deer Stalking Certificate Level 1, Deer Stalking Certificate Level 2 and SVQ Gamekeeping and Wildlife Management Levels 2 & 3
- Repeat submission of carcasses
- Random checks
- Witnessed stalks and carcass handling

³ <http://www.qca.org.uk/>

⁴ Project BP 25

- Self assessment

Potentially the most effective way to clearly and consistently measure competency would be to have one industry method of measuring competence. Currently there are several. One option therefore is to integrate or cross-map the existing measures (DSC, SVQ etc).

3 Implications, Summary and options:

Competence is the responsibility of the individual – knowing their limits as well as their abilities. Competence is an interaction of constituent elements. A competent individual uses these elements to make a judgement on what is and what is not a competent action. Competence is the culling of deer in a manner which minimises negative welfare impacts and which takes into account the safety of the public and the safety of the venison as an end product suitable for general consumption. A description of competence needs to respond to change and should be reviewed periodically to ensure it is fit for purpose - Competence should not stand still but should be about continual professional development - it is a process and not an end point.

Summary:

- Competence is about performance, it is about outcomes (it should ensure public safety, deer welfare and food safety)
- Competence is a combination of necessary skills and knowledge (standards need to be set for these)
- There are benefits to demonstrating competence

Suggested Options Could Include:

- Adopt the NOS as the standards/definition for competence
- Adopt other nationally/industry recognised standards as standards/definition for competence
- Adopt a consistent measure of and application of competence
- Establish a system to ensure that the standard/description of competence is responsive to any changes in legislation and industry needs