



# COUNTRY SPORTS IN SCOTLAND: A FRAMEWORK FOR APPROPRIATE COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS



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# Foreword

Covid-19 is arguably the biggest challenge our country has faced in recent years. The implications have been both indiscriminate and wide-ranging. Many have lost loved ones, while business sectors across Scotland are feeling the effects of a slowing economy. This is particularly true of rural Scotland where the economy is particularly fragile.

The Scottish Government's Covid-19 strategy is designed to prevent the spread of Covid-19, support the NHS and save lives. The country sports community will play its part in this extraordinary endeavour. The country sports tourism sector makes an outstanding contribution to rural Scotland - particularly in the quieter Autumn and Winter months - and it is our view that shooting and fishing should be able to take place while the Scottish Government tackles this pandemic. The Scottish Government's Covid-19 route map can be accessed [here](#).

Livelihoods, habitats and some of Scotland's most iconic and threatened species depend on the crucial work of country sports workers. Rural economies depend on the income from Scotland's unique and diverse range of country sports. However, in the short-term at least, there will be some necessary changes to the way in which the sector operates. It is for this reason that the representative bodies have come together to produce this framework.

This framework provides a set of basic principles for country sports employers, employees, and practitioners. These principles build upon current advice for those working in the [rural sector](#). This guidance can also be used to protect workers carrying out other outdoor work such as wildlife management.

Sector guidance for tourism and hospitality is also available [here](#).

The principles in this framework will help to ensure the safe operation of country sports and minimize the transmission of Covid-19. The framework will be updated as advice emerges.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Title Page .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Foreword .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose of the Framework .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Guidance for Game Shooting.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Guidance for Deer Stalking.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Guidance for Wildfowling.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Guidance for Gamekeeping and Pest Control .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Guidance for Fishing.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Guidance for Landowners and Sporting Tenants.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Guidance for Transport .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>12</b>

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# The Purpose of the Framework

The aim of this document is to provide a framework of basic principles for country sports employers, employees and practitioners to plan ahead and help ensure the safe operation of country sports while the country tackles the Covid-19 pandemic.

It is important to emphasise that this framework document is in support of, and in no way replaces, current Scottish Government Covid-19 [guidance](#). It is the sole responsibility of employers, employees and practitioners to ensure that their operations comply with this guidance and any relevant legislation. It is also the responsibility of employers and line managers to comply with any related health and safety legislation and best practice, including risk assessments and method statements where appropriate, whether Covid-19 related or otherwise.

It is essential that all tourism and hospitality businesses, and other rural businesses, complete and implement an appropriate full risk assessment (as required [here](#)) in consultation with employees where there are staff (to be written down where 5 or more employees). Please contact your membership organisation if you need advice on preparing a risk assessment.

We have drawn on the views of experienced practitioners to produce this framework, and we have tailored the framework to cater for popular country sports activities, operations and key stakeholders. As well as a potential basis for future sector-specific guidance, we may also use this framework to signpost new or amended Scottish Government guidance and legislation.

It is recommended that the basic principles outlined are followed by practitioners and stakeholders until physical distancing and other transmission mitigation measures are formally relaxed. If in doubt, it is advised that individuals seek professional advice in relation to specific health and safety matters relevant to their circumstances, particularly as business operations may vary.

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# Guidance for Game Shooting



## Introduction:

Game shooting is as much a social activity as it is a sport, and this poses a unique set of challenges with respect to maintaining two metres between staff, participants and helpers. On both driven and walked-up shoots, there is almost always sufficient spacing between pegs and walking guns to ensure physical distancing is maintained. However, consideration should be given to any face to face/physical contact services which cannot easily maintain appropriate physical distancing while physical and multi-household restrictions remain in place e.g. the use of personal loaders not from the same household as the shooter. The transportation of guns and beaters between drives may pose a challenge in respect of maintaining physical distancing (See 4.1 in Forestry Guidance [here](#)), as do the traditional social elements of the day. With these matters in mind, where possible consideration should be given to the following guidelines.

## Guidelines:

1. **Briefings:** Health and safety is paramount when game shooting. A health and safety briefing should be delivered in the usual way, with the inclusion of key Covid-19 guidelines as appropriate. The risk assessment will help guide this briefing.
2. **Socialising:** All socialising should ideally take place outside, avoiding the congregation of a large number of people in a small space (such as a shooting hut or bothy). Where large, well-ventilated buildings are available (such as a barn), these could be configured to support social elements of the day. Where socialising is taking place, individuals should maintain physical distancing and comply with the current Scottish Government restrictions for meeting people outside (available [here](#)).
3. **Refreshments:** The sharing of refreshments should be avoided. Individuals are advised to bring their own refreshments to avoid cross contamination. Refreshments should be consumed outside, or in a large-well ventilated building if available. Refreshments could be supplied by a local caterer provided it is delivered in individually sealed containers and is collected while maintaining two metres separation.
4. **Hygiene:** Individuals are advised to bring hand sanitiser with them on shoot days. Consideration should be given to wearing gloves to prevent contamination of gates, pegs and vehicles. Individuals are advised not to touch dogs belonging to others with bare hands. Individuals are advised to avoid touching their face where there is a risk of hand / glove contamination. Face masks are encouraged, especially when individuals are congregating to receive verbal briefs or travelling between drives.
5. **Accommodation:** Those seeking overnight accommodation should make themselves aware of the current restrictions with respect to staying in different types of commercial accommodation businesses. The VisitScotland website (see [here](#)) contains useful guidance pertaining to various types of accommodation, and contains advice on how many households are permitted to stay where.

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# Guidance for Deer Stalking



## Introduction:

For many, deer stalking is a solitary activity and can be undertaken without coming into contact with other persons. Solo stalking away from your immediate local area is now permitted. Accompanied deer stalking, in which a client is joined by a guide (usually a professional stalker or ghillie), poses a different set of challenges for the maintenance of physical distancing measures. However, it is our view that accompanied stalking can continue to take place provided the following guidelines are adhered to.

## Guidelines:

1. **High Seats:** As physical distancing cannot be maintained, double high seats should currently not be used, unless by two members of the same household or until relevant restrictions ease.
2. **The Stalk:** Whether walking or crawling, the client and guide should maintain an appropriate distance, ideally in file one behind the other. It is possible to do this while maintaining two metres separation between client and guide.
3. **The Gralloch:** The gralloch should be undertaken by one person only to ensure two metres separation is maintained. Gloves would normally be worn. Where assistance is required, individuals should consider wearing face coverings.
4. **The Recovery:** If more than one person is required to drag and / or load the beast into a vehicle, or onto a pony, individuals should consider wearing gloves and facemasks to reduce the risk of transmission. Where possible, the guide should drive the vehicle containing the beast and equipment while the client walks alongside.
5. **Photographs:** If photographs of the client are to be taken, disposable gloves could be used when handling the client's phone or camera. Alternatively, mini tripods or 'selfie sticks' could be used.
6. **Hygiene:** Both client and guide are encouraged to wear gloves and face coverings during the stalk and should avoid touching their face. Hand sanitiser should be used once gloves are removed on completion of both the gralloch and the stalk.
7. **Accommodation:** Those seeking overnight accommodation should make themselves aware of the current restrictions with respect to staying in different types of commercial accommodation businesses. The VisitScotland website (see [here](#)) contains useful guidance pertaining to various types of accommodation, and contains advice on how many households are permitted to stay where.

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# Guidance for Wildfowling



## Introduction:

Like deer stalking, wildfowling is usually an activity undertaken on one's own. Wildfowling is usually carried out at dawn and dusk at relatively remote locations, so contact with other members of the public is unlikely. Solitary wildfowling should be able to continue as normal when the season begins. However, wildfowling is occasionally undertaken in small groups and can involve individual wildfowlers being in close proximity to one another. This poses a challenge for the maintenance of physical distancing measures, and as such the following guidelines should be considered.

## Guidelines:

1. **Access:** The route to the foreshore should be planned to avoid contact with other members of the public, while at the same time ensuring individual safety.
2. **Use of hides:** Each wildfowler should have their own hide. The sharing of hides should be avoided when feasible.
3. **Use of boats:** If a boat is being used, wildfowlers should always try to maintain two metre separation. The use of a face covering is encouraged.
4. **Refreshments:** The sharing of refreshments should be avoided. Individuals are advised to bring their own refreshments to avoid cross contamination.
5. **Hygiene:** Wildfowlers are encouraged to wear gloves and face coverings during the outing in the usual way. Hand sanitiser should be used as and when appropriate to do so. Individuals are advised not to touch dogs belonging to others with bare hands and to avoid touching their face.
6. **Accommodation:** Those seeking overnight accommodation should make themselves aware of the current restrictions with respect to staying in different types of commercial accommodation businesses. The VisitScotland website (see here) contains useful guidance pertaining to various types of accommodation, and contains advice on how many households are permitted to stay where.

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# Guidance for Gamekeeping & Pest Control



## Introduction:

Many gamekeepers and pest controllers live close to the land they manage, and work is usually undertaken alone. As such, some gamekeepers have continued to work throughout lockdown. However, the game shooting season presents new challenges. Transport and beaters must be arranged, guests must be greeted, and briefings must be organised – all whilst maintaining physical distancing. The following guidelines provide gamekeepers and pest controllers with a framework to operate safely in the busy months ahead.

## Guidelines:

1. **Pest Control:** Pest control which requires more than one person should only be undertaken by individuals from the same household or where physical distancing can be maintained. The wearing of face coverings and gloves is encouraged.
2. **Gamebird Rearing, Releasing and Feeding:** If more than one person is required for any aspect of gamebird management then physical distancing should be observed at all times. The use of face coverings and gloves could be considered.
3. **Shoot Briefing:** The shoot briefing should be used to outline provisions in place to maintain physical distancing. It should also refer to arrangements for catering, collection of shot game and hand washing. The risk assessment will help guide this briefing.
4. **Distribution of Shot Game:** Game supplied to guests at the end of the shoot should be transported to one central collection point, where physical distancing can be observed. Those handling shot game are encouraged to wear gloves and face coverings.
5. **Used Cartridges:** Cartridge shells should be picked up by the guns and placed in a disposable bag. The bag should be safely disposed of.
6. **Hygiene:** Gloves and face coverings should be worn where possible. Hand sanitiser should be used prior to and on completion of a specific activity or following inadvertent contact with another person. Dogs belonging to others should not be touched with bare hands.
7. **Sheds and shared work building:** Where possible, buildings should be configured so that so that physical distancing can be observed.



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# Guidance for Fishing



## Introduction:

Fishing is traditionally a solitary pursuit and does not pose significant challenges with respect to maintaining physical distancing measures. That said, fishing is a popular activity in Scotland, and it is not unusual for multiple anglers to share the same body or section of water. It is important that anglers are mindful of this when planning and embarking on fishing trips. In addition, clients are sometimes accompanied by a ghillie and fisheries must ensure they take all reasonable steps to ensure angler safety. Where possible, the following guidelines should be adhered to.

## Guidance:

1. **Equipment:** Anglers should use their own equipment. Equipment should not be shared unless by the same family group.
2. **Bank/Shore Fishing:** When fishing from the bank, two metres separation should be maintained between anglers.
3. **Boat Fishing (Inland):** Two metres separation should be maintained in boats. Boats should only contain a maximum of one angler and one ghillie. If boats are required to transfer people, the ghillie should make multiple trips and transfer one person at a time.
4. **Boat Fishing (Marine):** Numbers of fishermen and crew on boats should be restricted to allowed physical distancing. Surfaces may need to be sanitised prior and post trip.
5. **Public Areas:** Public areas, such as huts, should only be opened if physical distancing measures can be maintained. Guidance on tourism and hospitality ([here](#)) should be referred to. Proposing limits on the number of persons in the public area at any one time should be considered.
6. **Refreshments:** The sharing of refreshments should be avoided. Individuals are advised to bring their own refreshments to avoid cross contamination. Refreshments should be consumed outside.
7. **Hygiene:** Hand sanitiser should be used where appropriate such as before eating and following inadvertent contact with another person.
8. **Payment:** Fisheries should ensure contactless payment is enabled.
9. **Accommodation:** Those seeking overnight accommodation should make themselves aware of the current restrictions with respect to staying in different types of commercial accommodation businesses. The VisitScotland website (see [here](#)) contains useful guidance pertaining to various types of accommodation, and contains advice on how many households are permitted to stay where.

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# Guidance for Landowners & Sporting Tenants



## Introduction:

The landowner or sporting tenant should help to ensure that country sports can be conducted in accordance with physical distancing measures. It is incumbent on the landowner or sporting tenant to ensure that relevant records are kept up to date and accurate. Guests should be informed that they should only participate if they are fit, well and not experiencing any Covid-19 symptoms. Similarly, guests should not participate if anyone from their household is symptomatic or self-isolating. Advice on the “test, trace, isolate, support strategy” led by NHS in Scotland is [here](#). This will play a key role in ensuring people are well-informed and, should symptoms start following an event, contact tracing should help minimise the transmission potential.

There is a specific section (Annex 1) in the Forestry Guidance [here](#) that gives additional advice for landowners and the Sector guidance for tourism and hospitality [here](#) is also applicable.

## Guidance:

1. **Pre-Brief:** Participants should be issued a pre-brief by email which will contain specific Covid-19 guidelines for the relevant activity. This will be guided by the risk assessment. Participants should be reminded in this briefing that they should not participate if: i) they are experiencing symptoms; ii) they have been in contact with someone experiencing symptoms; or iii) they have come from a household where an individual is self-isolating.
2. **Beater Training:** Beaters should be guided on maintaining appropriate physical distancing measures.
3. **Drive Order:** Where possible, drives should be ordered to facilitate the movement between drives on foot.
4. **Refreshments:** Refreshments should be consumed outside.
5. **Equipment:** Estate rifles and shotguns can be used by clients in the usual way provided they are wiped down with a suitable sanitising agent, such as certain disposable wipes, before and after use.
6. **Hygiene:** Hand washing facilities and hand sanitisers should be provided for all participants and consideration should be given to increasing frequency of appropriate cleaning procedures.
7. **Risk Assessment and Insurance:** Risk assessments must be carried out and appropriate public liability insurance obtained.

# Guidance for Transport



## Introduction:

For most participants in sporting activities, travel to and from a country sports venue is necessary and, more often than not, undertaken by private motor vehicle. As a cultural norm, for group activities, lift sharing is common in travelling to venues and more especially in travelling within the venue itself, for example shoot 'buses' or shoot vehicles.

Clearly Covid-19 presents a number of obvious transmission hazards in respect of persons sharing vehicles, both in terms of touching surfaces and simply by being in such close personal proximity. That said, recommendations can be made to apply precautionary principles and thereby minimise transmission risk, whilst allowing group sporting activities to continue.

Scottish Government advice on travel can be accessed [here](#).

There is some advice on transport in Section 4.1 of the Forestry guidance [here](#). This framework will be updated as and when new information or guidance is available. For now, and based upon currently available guidance, it is recommended that the guidance below is considered.

## Guidance:

1. **Lift sharing:** Lift sharing should be avoided unless persons are from the same household.
2. **Transportation on shoot:** Walking between drives should be the preferred option for shoot transportation. Where vehicles are required to transport guns and beaters between drives, the number of passengers per vehicle should be limited to maintain separation. Multiple vehicle journeys may be used to facilitate this. Where vehicles are being shared, face coverings should be worn and ventilation optimized. Passengers should sit side-by-side and not face-to-face where possible. Perspex screens between passengers in the vehicle should also be considered. Ideally, individuals should use their own vehicles to travel between drives and beats.
3. **Precautionary measures:** Where there is an identified risk of transmission, appropriate use should be made of face coverings, gloves and other practical measures as recommended by the Scottish Government or widely supported as responsible best practice.

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# Summary

This proposed framework is designed to help both practitioners and stakeholders ensure that the country sports tourism sector can function safely as we continue to navigate through this pandemic.

The framework will help employers, employees and practitioners to minimise the transmission of the virus while facilitating Scotland's outstanding selection of country sports. In addition, it will help to restart Scotland's rural economy and will help to facilitate the resumption of countryside management that is essential for the preservation of key habitats and species.

As representative country sports bodies, we will update this framework as the situation develops to ensure to ensure relevance and compliance with advice from the Scottish Government. The changes to normal practice are relatively light touch, particularly when compared alongside the dire implications of physical distancing on other sectors. It is incumbent on all of us to embrace these changes in full and play our part in reducing the likelihood of future viral peaks.

Thank you for taking the time to read this document. Please share widely with your Scottish country sports tourism contacts.

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This document was prepared by representatives from:

- **The Association of Deer Management Groups**
- **The British Association for Shooting and Conservation**
- **The Scottish Association for Country Sports**
- **The Scottish Countryside Alliance**
- **The Scottish Country Sports Tourism Group**
- **The Scottish Gamekeepers Association**
- **Scottish Land & Estates**