



Statement on COVID-19 restrictions in Wales

Rural organisations are reminding the shooting community of the importance of following the law and government guidance around Covid restrictions in Wales.

Following today's further announcement by First Minister Mark Drakeford, restrictions are expected to remain in place until the next review on 29th January.

The purpose of the new tightened restrictions in Wales is to ensure that people stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives. You must not leave home or travel unless you have a reasonable excuse.

Public guidance has been published by the Welsh Government:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-12/the-health-protection-coronavirus-restrictions-no5-wales-regulations-2020.pdf>

Travelling in a vehicle to partake in recreational shooting is illegal. Driven game shooting or other group shooting activities are not permitted during the lockdown.

Shooting-related essential work is permitted in Wales and it is reasonable to travel outside your local area to carry out that essential work. This includes essential bird and mammal pest control to protect crops or livestock such as the shooting and trapping of pest bird species under general licence; the management of rodents and rabbits; deer management as part of a plan agreed with and requested by the landowner. It is advised that you have with you a copy of your shooting permission and a written request to undertake essential work.

Game management work and gamekeeping activities such as welfare of game birds, conducting pest/predator control and undertaking habitat management are also permitted.

Outdoor shooting activities as a form of exercise are permitted as long as you can access your 'permission' by foot from your home and return by foot to your home, ensuring that your shooting activity is carried out alone or with a member of your household or support bubble.

Those shooting during the COVID-19 pandemic must consider the impact of their actions on the image and reputation of the sport. We all have a responsibility to comply with Government regulations and guidance, and failure to do so may place you at risk of a fine and jeopardise your shotgun and firearms certificates.

Advice for gamekeepers and shoot managers

With national lockdown in Wales expected to continue beyond the end of the game shooting season, a different approach to the final weeks of this season will be required.

- Shoots may decide to continue to harvest game to meet the requirements of game dealers and other outlets that need birds to supply to market (although this must not be done through driven or other forms of recreational shooting). Shoots should regularly liaise with their game dealer or other outlet to ensure supply chains are met and that their actions comply with legal requirements including relevant COVID-19 regulations
- Shoots which normally catch up in the latter part of the season may opt to catch up birds earlier. Catching up in Wales is as much 'taking' in the legal sense as shooting, and this must therefore be done in season, with Monday February 1 being the last day on which shoots can do so for pheasant and partridge. Shoots should discuss this option with their game-farmer before doing so and must comply with the requirements within the Avian Influenza Protection Zone currently in force across Wales <https://gov.wales/avian-influenza>
- Depending upon size and location, some shoots may decide to keep a higher density of pheasants unharvested into the spring, with a view to helping enhance or establish the population for the following season. This approach would require additional consideration such as increased spring feeding sites (there should always be sufficient feeding of any birds at the end of the shooting season until there is sufficient natural feed), management of birds around spring sown crops and an increased emphasis on predator control and habitat management such as cover crops for brood rearing.
- Shoots should continue to follow the requirements of the Code of Good Shooting Practice and, if members, comply with the relevant standards of the British Game Alliance.