

Saboteurs and Shooting

Practical advice for shoot managers

Arrangements prior to the day:

Provide shoot details to local police

Consider passing details of your shoot, such as grid references, boundaries and access points, to your local police and rural crime officers so that they can respond quickly if they are needed.

Liaise with your local hunt

Having borne the brunt of saboteur activity for many decades, local hunts may well have useful information that will be of use to you on your day.

Know your ground

Know exactly where public footpaths, bridleways, and other access points are on the land, and make sure you are aware of the legislation surrounding public land use. For example, a public footpath can be used for passage only.

Shoot cancellation insurance

Those taking shooting are advised to take out cancellation insurance to cover the cost of their day's shooting in the event of cancellation through organised disruption by saboteurs.

"Aggravated trespass is a criminal offence under Section 68 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. Trespass is aggravated if a person trespasses on land with the intention of either intimidating, obstructing or disrupting any lawful activity in which people are, or are about to be, engaging on that or adjoining land"

If saboteurs turn up on the day:

End the drive

The main priority for those sabotaging a shoot is to generate a newsworthy event. It is therefore essential that all shooting is stopped, guns are sleeved, and everyone moves away from the saboteurs to a pre-arranged meeting point.

Contact the police

Shoots targeted by saboteurs should inform the police or local rural crime officers as soon as they are aware of a possible problem.

Police involvement

Acts of civil trespass are a matter for landowners, but if a criminal offence is being committed the police should be informed so they can take the necessary action. Remember, it is the saboteurs that are breaking the law, not you.

Removal of face coverings

The Policing and Crime Bill allows a senior police officer to give oral authorisation for a constable to order saboteurs to remove face-coverings in order to prevent or control them from carrying out a criminal offence.

Taking legal action

If saboteurs are interrupting a legal activity on private property, they are committing the criminal offence of aggravated trespass. In the event, a shoot can bring trespass action and apply for injunctions against identifiable individuals, and possibly groups, and such an action would include damages and costs.

Photographic evidence

Any criminal allegation will need to be corroborated with film footage if it is to meet the threshold for a criminal prosecution. Criminal offences being carried out by saboteurs should therefore be filmed / photographed, so they and their vehicles can be identified. It is therefore important that saboteurs are ordered by the police to remove face coverings.