



**BRITISH
GAME
ALLIANCE**



Assurance Scheme Standards Manual

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Part I – About the Scheme

INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHEME

- 1.1 This Manual sets out the conditions for participation in and the standards of the BGA Scheme. It also provides information on the structure of the company and how it operates.
- 1.2 It is intended as a guide for prospective new applicants and as a source of reference for existing participants.
- 1.3 The Manual contains standards for all feathered game.
- 1.4 The BGA Assurance Scheme will enable individual Scheme members who participate and are approved under the Scheme rules to showcase that they are operating to best practice and provide confidence to consumers that the game they sell is safe to eat and produced from animals that have been reared to a high standard.
- 1.5 Participation is voluntary and is open to all shoots of all sizes across the United Kingdom who demonstrate compliance with Scheme standards which will be verified by independent auditing specialist, Lloyd's Register.
- 1.6 If you have any questions on the content of the Manual, or about the Scheme in general, please contact: BGA via our contact [page](#).
- 1.7 Lloyd's Register (Acoura) is the Independent Certification Body appointed by the BGA to provide the auditing services for the Scheme. Lloyd's Register service the BGA Technical Advisory Group (TAG), which is responsible for advising on all technical matters relating to the Scheme. All Scheme participants must comply with all the requirements detailed in the Scheme Regulations available [here](#).

HOW TO JOIN THE BGA SCHEME

New Participants

- Application to participate in the scheme must be made by [registering online](#) with the BGA
- Each individual shoot must have its own membership.
- On receipt of a registration a new membership pack will be issued and arrangements shall be made for a desktop assessment of the applicants shooting operation. The purpose of this assessment is to provide a report of the applicant's capability to rear, manage and produce game meat in accordance with BGA scheme standards. The decision to approve participation will be based on the assessment report.

Approved Participants

- Ongoing approval of existing participants will be subject to ongoing compliance with Scheme standards and payment of Scheme fees to the BGA.

General

- The BGA Scheme year runs from 1 July to 30 June.
- It is the responsibility of the Scheme participant to notify BGA of any change of business circumstances.
- Supportive evidence of compliance of standards will be required by the assessor.

2.0 ARRANGEMENTS FOR ASSESSMENT AND APPROVAL

2.1 Auditing body

All audits are carried out by an independent body, Lloyd's Register which is ISO/IEC 17065 accredited auditing and certification body.

2.2 The Assessment

- The initial assessment will be by appointment with the applicant, typically up to a week prior, and will be carried out during normal seasonal operations with the applicant in attendance.
- A minimum of 25% of Scheme participants will be subject to an on-site audit each year in the preparation for and during the shooting season
- All formal credible complaints will result in an audit investigation within 48 hours of the complaint being received. Scheme participants will be obliged to ensure that a representative is available to meet the assessor and fully cooperate with their investigation.
- Prosecutions – at the time of the assessment, participants will be asked to declare any past/current/pending prosecutions relating to their business which breach the BGA scheme standards.
- Assessments shall be carried out between June and January of the Scheme year

2.3 What the Assessor will check

On initial contact from the assessor a pre-assessment check will be carried out and the assessor will talk through the assessment process and explain what is required.

The assessor will want to assess a number of areas and this will include where applicable:

- environmental management measures/habitat improvements.
- rearing facilities & release pens
- feed and medicine stores
- feed, medicine and shoot records
- game marketing plans
- game handling facilities and processes
- legal compliance

Once the assessment has been completed the assessor will agree with you any areas that do not comply with the scheme standards and require improvement.

Minor non-compliance – there has been an attempt to meet the requirements of the standard and there are no immediate risks to Animal Welfare or Food Safety.

Major non-compliance – there has been no attempt to meet the requirements of the standard and/or there are immediate risks to Animal Welfare or Food Safety.

The participant will be asked to sign the visit record summarising any agreed non-compliances, and a copy being left with the participant as a record of the assessment.

2.4 At the end of the Assessment

The Assessor will complete a visit record and if applicable they will record any non-compliances found and will detail the type of evidence required to achieve the BGA standard. The participant will then be asked to sign an undertaking of intention to carry out the action required, provide evidence that the necessary action has been taken or be subject to a re-assessment to confirm that the improvements have been completed satisfactorily. The prompt provision of a signed declaration or evidence will help to maintain Scheme approval.

2.5 Certification Decision

All non-conformances against the Standards must be rectified within an agreed timescale of 30 days for minor non-compliances.

Any non-compliance(s) that are highly detrimental to the welfare of game birds will be viewed as a major non-compliance and immediate action will be taken which could result in suspension/expulsion from the scheme at the BGA's discretion.

As a quality assurance scheme, food standards are incredibly important and the guide to good game handling must be followed, actions that compromise this could be taken as a major non-compliance.

Any laws broken in accordance with our standards will also be deemed as a possible major non-compliance.

The details of the member's removal from the scheme will be shared with BGA game processors and others to inform them that the game in question is no longer BGA Assured. This is to avoid bringing the schemes integrity into disrepute.

The Scheme member will be notified of the assessment outcome. The possible decisions are as follows:

Full ongoing approval: no non-compliances highlighted during the assessment.

Conditional ongoing approval: participant approval is maintained pending the completion of corrective action to address any non-compliance(s) within the given timescale e.g. 30 days. Participants will be required to supply evidence to the Lloyd's Register office that non-compliance(s) have been rectified and this can be in the form of photos, copies of records/invoices and declarations.

Where members (including new applicants) fail to provide suitable corrective action within the agreed timescale e.g. 30 days, they will be advised in writing that they will be withdrawn from the scheme and their approval becomes invalid. If they wish to re-join the scheme, they will need to re-register with the Scheme and pay for a new audit prior to regaining approval

In the event of a major non-compliance the participant will be publicly removed from the BGA Scheme. In the event that they wish to re-join the Scheme they will need to re-register and pay for a new audit and successfully comply with Scheme requirements prior to regaining approval

Part II - The BGA Standards

The BGA Assurance Scheme standards have been developed by the BGA in consultation with shoot operators, NGO's, game dealers, retailers and consumers. This means that input has come from representatives of the food supply sector, the shooting and game rearing industry, the veterinary world and from professionals who provide oversight for other food assurance schemes.

The [Code of Good Shooting Practice](#) sets out the framework that enables shoot managers, guns, gamekeepers and their employees to deliver sustainable shooting, paying attention to management of habitat and avoiding nuisance to others. All BGA members should abide by it and make it available to guns and all involved in their shoots.

Scheme participants are advised to read this manual in conjunction with the BGA Membership Agreement and to be aware of their obligations within Scheme regulations and related procedures such as the BGA Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure

The Scheme standards are organised into relevant sections. The Objective of each Section is clearly explained followed by the detail of each standard; guidance notes and recommendations as to how participant can demonstrate compliance with these standards; how it will be assessed and referencing any documentary or record keeping requirements. Please note that guidance notes and recommendations are not exhaustive, and failure to follow these recommendations does not necessarily represent a breach of the Standards.

Templates for a range of records that a shoot may wish to keep demonstrating compliance with the BGA scheme standards can be found on the BGA website. There is no requirement to use these templates if adequate records are already being kept.

Each standard is prefixed with a coding that represents the compliance theme e.g. EM-Environmental Management and this will be noted when any non-compliances are identified during an assessment.

Standards Contents

EM Environmental Management

AW Animal Welfare

AH Animal Health

GM Game Marketing

FS Food Safety

LC Legal Compliance

Environmental Management

Objective

To ensure participants protect and enhance wildlife habitats associated with their game meat production systems and practices

Standards	Guidance Notes	How you will be assessed	Record keeping
<p>EM1 Shoot operators must ensure that land is appropriately managed to continually benefit wildlife and its environment</p>	<p>Members must be able to demonstrate that any minor negative impact or the environment or on wildlife is being mitigated by habitat improvements elsewhere on the Shoot. This could include buffer strips in fields or adjacent to woodland, new woodland planting, active woodland management etc.</p>	<p>Members will be asked to outline habitat improvement actions they have undertaken and show evidence of these during the assessment. They will be asked what future actions are planned, what this entails and when these will be undertaken. Assessment of these plans will be verified at their next assessment</p> <p>Major negative impacts on the environment or wildlife will be raised as a non-compliance</p>	
<p>EM2 Shoots must abide by The Blanket Bog Land Management Guidance and The Heather & Grass Burning Code for England, similarly the Code for Wales and in Scotland must abide by the Muirburn Code and all the associated regulations</p>	<p>Information about these requirements and associated obligations can be accessed via the links provided in Part 111, Bibliography</p>	<p>Members will be asked to explain their awareness of the relevant Guidance and Codes and what they do to ensure compliance with these requirements</p>	

Animal Welfare

Objective

To ensure the management of animal welfare is paramount at all times

Standards	Guidance Notes	How you will be assessed	Record keeping
<p>AW1 Birds released on your shoot must have been reared to Government game rearing standards or equivalent if sourced from abroad</p>	<p>If a Member Shoot rears its own game, it must do so in compliance with the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes relevant to the Member Shoot's country.</p> <p>If the Member Shoot buys eggs, chicks or poults, it must satisfy itself that the welfare of the laying stock and the birds to be released was in line with the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes relevant to the Member Shoot's country.</p> <p>If a Member Shoot is buying eggs, chicks or poults, correspondence between the game farmer and the Member Shoot concerning the need for all birds or eggs to have been produced in line with the appropriate Code would constitute evidence of compliance with this Standard.</p>	<p>If a Member rears their own game they will be asked to explain their awareness of the Code of Practice and to demonstrate what measures they have undertaken to comply with this.</p> <p>If a Member buys in eggs, chicks or poults then they will be asked for information on where they have purchased these from.</p>	
<p>AW2 Stocking densities must not compromise animal welfare or have a negative impact on the surrounding biodiversity. Shoots should refer to the GWCT's releasing guidelines.</p>	<p>Birds must not display symptoms of over-crowding in release pens, such as excess feather pecking or frequent outbreaks of density-dependent disease. Measures must be taken to mitigate any environmental impact of releasing game such as silt runoff, pollution and damage to ground flora. Mitigation measures</p>	<p>The assessor will inspect birds within release pens (where appropriate) to assess their health and welfare, pen locations and measures taken to mitigate adverse environmental impacts</p>	

	<p>could include: siting of pens away from sensitive ground flora; the use of buffer zones between pens, watercourses and slopes prone to erosion; and ensuring the pen is light and sunny, possibly through selective felling.</p> <p>Adherence to this Standard can be assured by following the GWCT's releasing guidelines, which state that in most situations' shoots should avoid releasing more than 1,000 pheasants per hectare of pen, and more than 700 per hectare of pen in ancient semi-natural woodland.</p>		
AW3 Release pens must be checked daily ensuring adequate water, food, and habitat is available.	This Standard applies while any individual release pen is being used by a significant number of released birds.	The assessor will ask who checks release pens, when, type and quantity of feed given and observe the feeders/hoppers and water drinkers that are used	
AW4 Ducks must be released onto open water in numbers appropriate to the carrying capacity of the wetland habitat and encouraged to become wild.	Released ducks must not be causing damage to the wetland habitat onto which they are released. Ducks must not be fed in an enclosure of any sort.	The assessor will check how wetland habitat damage is avoided when ducks are released	
AW5 Birds must not be released to replenish shot stock. Birds must not be shot within four weeks of being released and must be mature and fully adapted to the wild.	Birds must be released at least four weeks before the area into which they are being released is to be shot or driven, and birds must not be released into areas in which birds had already been shot that season. Where suitable all reared game should be released before the beginning of the season.	The assessor will ask to see a copy of a plan of pheasant release pens, partridge release sites and shooting locations (or equivalent) and records of scheduled or actual release dates together with agreed scheduled shoot dates. The assessor will also view a sample of birds on the ground for age and health status	*
AW6 Adequate food and water must be provided throughout the season and thereafter until appropriate levels of natural food are available.	Feed provided to released game also increases the number of wild non-game species on an estate, which will go hungry if food is	The assessor will ask to see records of where game feed has been procured from, where it is stored, the quantity of feed used and what feeding regimes are utilised.	*

	<p>withdrawn at the end of the shooting season. As such, Member Shoots must continue to supply feed to released game throughout the shooting season, and after the shooting season until sufficient wild food is available to sustain the resident wild bird population. Local weather conditions will dictate when it is appropriate to stop supplementary feeding wild birds.</p>		
<p>AW7 Adequate picking-up must be available to ensure all birds are quickly accounted for and wounded birds are dispatched accordingly.</p>	<p>Member shoots must ensure that they organise a sufficient number of experienced pickers to comply with this standard</p>	<p>The assessor will ask for details of the number of pickers used, how they are and where they source them from.</p>	
<p>AW8 Shoots must adhere to the law on trapping and snaring and adhere to the relevant industry Codes or statutory regulations in their country.</p>	<p>Member shoots must adhere to the Code of best practice on the use of snares for fox control in England or the Welsh Code of best practice on the use of snares in fox control as appropriate. In Scotland Member Shoots must ensure that anyone operating snares is accredited and has an operator ID number and is adhering to the Scottish statutory regulations.</p>	<p>The assessor will establish whether the member uses snares and if so assess their awareness with the requirements of the Codes of Best Practice. In Scotland members using snares will need to show evidence to the assessor of their operator ID number. The assessor will ask to view a sample of traps and set snares.</p>	

Animal Health

Objective

To ensure that animal health is always safeguarded by the appropriate, strategic and legal use of medication

Standards	Guidance Notes	How you will be assessed	Record keeping
<p>AH1 Antibiotics must not be used prophylactically</p>	<p>Antibiotics must not be used routinely when game birds are released.</p>	<p>The assessor will establish policy for use of antibiotics in the shoot operation, who the</p>	

	Antibiotics must only be administered when prescribed by a veterinarian for the treatment of a specifically diagnosed condition in the relevant flock of gamebirds, and then only in strict accordance with the veterinarian's prescription.	registered veterinarian is, information how the shoot has proactively engaged with their veterinarian to agree appropriate usage and evidence of what antibiotic usage has been undertaken over the past year. The assessor may ask for a sample of birds to be made available for submission to the approved Scheme laboratory for antibiotic testing.	
AH2 Un-prescribed medications must not be used.	If a medication requires a prescription, then it must not be used without one nor is it to be used for anything other than the exact purpose and the exact birds for which it was prescribed.	The assessor will ask to see copies for medications requiring prescriptions and check usage correlates with details held in the member's medicine records	*
AH3 Stated withdrawal periods must be adhered to for all medication before game meat enters the food chain.		The assessor will ask to see the member's medicine records, assess their awareness of withdrawal periods and evidence of their documentation in the medicine records.	*

Game Marketing

Objective

To ensure that birds are reared, released and shot to provide food safe game meat for human consumption

Standards	Guidance Notes	How you will be assessed	Record keeping
GM1 All game must have an agreed market before release and before shoot days are planned, taking into account the number of birds you intend to shoot and the subsequent table weight of the fully-grown birds you released.	Game birds must not be released unless a market has been confirmed for every bird that may be shot. To demonstrate compliance with this Standard, a Member Shoot should be able to document a planning process that considers the number of shoot days planned, the number of birds to be shot on each day, the confirmation of where this shot game will be sold or taken away to be eaten and the	The assessor will ask to see a copy of the current season's game marketing plan including contact details of their game dealer/s and other outlets together with information about the quantity of game that has been sold.	*

	<p>anticipated returns percentage for the estate. These considerations should be used to calculate the number of birds to be released. If additional shoot days are planned after these calculations, then a market for the birds to be shot on these additional days must be confirmed before the day is marketed, sold or otherwise undertaken</p>		
<p>GM2 Shoots must offer and where possible facilitate guns to take home game or game products.</p>	<p>All Member Shoots must make game available to guns, either in feather, oven-ready or in processed form. All Member Shoots are encouraged to offer game as part of any meals partaken during the shoot day, and to offer as wide a variety of game products as possible to guests at the end of the day</p>	<p>The assessor will ask for the member's policy regarding the offering of game or game products to guns. This may include making frozen game available for guns to take home and viewing facilities used for this.</p>	

Food Safety

Objective

To ensure that game meat is always produced with best practice at all times to maximise food safety for human consumption

Standards	Guidance Notes	How you will be assessed	Record keeping
<p>FS1 Shoot owners must take responsibility for ensuring guns use non-lead ammunition where legally required.</p>	<p>Member Shoots can demonstrate compliance with this Standard by providing their guests with appropriate non-lead ammunition where required. All Member Shoots must inform all guns prior and during the day about the need to use of non-lead ammunition where legally required.</p>	<p>The assessor will ask the member if they supply non-lead ammunition to their guns and if so to see evidence of this in the form of invoices, packaging etc.</p> <p>If they don't supply non-lead ammunition the assessor will ask how the shoot communicates and verifies that guns comply with this requirement</p>	
<p>FS2</p>		<p>The assessor will assess the member's awareness of the</p>	

All shot game must be regarded as food and treated in accordance with the 'Guide To Good Game Handling'.		Guide and how game is treated in accordance with it	
<p>FS3 Game must be placed into an ambient temperature of 4C or below within a reasonable timeframe and where possible within 2 hours of being shot.</p>	<p>If a shoot is supplying in feather wild game directly to the final consumer, or to local retailers who supply the final consumer, or supply to a game dealer, direct to an Approved Game Handling Establishment then they and subject to the EU Food Hygiene Regulations and must have access to a personal/ shared chiller and make every effort to ensure that game enters the cold chain within the 2 hour best practice window.</p> <p>If as an individual or a group you hunt wild game solely for your own consumption or to give away to family and friends for their domestic consumption this is considered to be 'primary production for private domestic use'. In this situation the game is not subject to any of the requirements of the EU food safety legislation and access to a personal/shared chiller unit is not required, however is advised.</p> <p>In particular, in warm weather, shoots in this situation must still show that they are demonstrating due diligence by doing everything they can to ensure that the food they have produced is safe to eat. This can be primarily achieved through the use of a chiller, or by hanging the shot game in a cool, dark place with ample air circulation around the</p>	<p>The assessor will ask what measures the shoot takes to comply with this requirement and will ask to see game handling facilities and equipment used to achieve this. The assessor will also ask for evidence that chilling regimes where employed are operating to the required temperature and for records that document this.</p>	*

	birds (birds should not be stacked or put in trays).		
<p>FS4 Game that is unfit for consumption along with processed game carcasses must be disposed of by incineration, collection by a member of the National Fallen Stock Company, or via an Approved and Registered Animal By-Products Premises. Game awaiting incineration or collection must be stored securely and in a manner that protects them from vermin and other animals. Ash from incineration must be disposed of correctly..</p>	<p>Game carcasses must be disposed of before they present an infestation or health risk. While awaiting disposal, they must be stored in leak proof containers, which are either locked, or stored in a locked building. Incinerators must be registered and approved by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and serviced at least annually by the manufacturer or a competent person to ensure it continues to operate correctly. Ash must be either disposed of either via licenced premises, or, with a permit from the Environment Agency or SEPA can be mixed with manure and spread on agricultural land. Records of the use of National Fallen Stock Companies or an Approved & Registered Animal By-Products Premises must be kept for at least 2 years.</p>	<p>The assessor will ask to see storage facilities for game awaiting incineration or collection. Incinerator: The assessor will ask to see the APHA licence and copies of annual service records including a written confirmation that the incinerator continue to operate in accordance with manufacturers' standards. (These records must be available even if the incinerator is owned by another business). Records of ash disposal must be available. National Fallen Stock Company/use of an Approved & Registered Animal By-Products Premises – either invoices/collection tickets.</p>	

Legal Compliance

Objective

To ensure that members, employees or associates involved in management of the shoot always comply with Scheme related legal requirements

Standards	Guidance Notes	How you will be assessed	Record keeping
<p>LC1 Where a shoot or its employees are successfully prosecuted for wildlife crimes, the shoot will be expelled from the BGA and their membership revoked.</p>	<p>As per the BGA Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures, any Member Shoot that is either itself successfully prosecuted for a wildlife crime, or</p>	<p>The assessor will ask the member to read and sign a declaration at the closing meeting to confirm whether there have been any past, pending or current convictions for crimes associated with their</p>	

	<p>one of its employees is successfully prosecuted for a wildlife crime, shall be deemed to have committed a breach of the Standards and will be subject to expulsion from the BGA and its activities. Depending on the circumstances of the conviction, the BGA may rule that the Member Shoot may be able to apply for membership after a pre-determined amount of time if the Member Shoot is able to demonstrate that is now complying with this Standard.</p>	<p>shooting operations and/or any employees associated with it. The assessor and Scheme require full disclosure of any information that may be relevant, and needs considered.</p>	
<p>LC2 Individuals with an unspent conviction for wildlife crimes must not be employed in any capacity directly relating to the management of the shoot.</p>	<p>Unspent convictions are those records that have not yet reached a set period as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and will appear on a Basic Criminal Record Check. The length of time it takes a conviction to become "spent" depends on the sentence. This information can be provided by Disclosure Scotland or the Disclosure and Barring Service as appropriate.</p>	<p>The assessor will ask the member how they ensure they comply with this requirement.</p>	

Part III: Bibliography and useful Weblinks

Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust – [‘The Knowledge’](#)

The Code of Good Shooting Practice

[Codes of Practice for Game Birds Reared for Sporting Purposes](#)

[Wales](#)

[Scotland](#)

Fox snaring:

[England](#)

[Wales](#)

[Scotland](#)

[The Wild Game Guide - FSA](#)

[The Code of Good Shooting Practice: Guide to Good Game Handling](#)

[BASC Codes/Guidance](#)

The Blanket Bog Land Management Guidance

The Heather & Grass Burning Code for England

The Heather & Grass Burning Code for Wales

[The Muirburn Code, Scotland](#)

[The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use \(CRRU\) Rodenticide Stewardship](#)

Part IV: BGA self-assessment checklist

Ref	Standard requirement	Status	Follow-up actions
EM1	Proactive land management for wildlife and environment		
EM2	Compliance with land management regulations		
AW1	Birds reared to approved game rearing standards		

AW2	Appropriate rearing practices		
AW3	Release pen management		
AW4	Duck release practices		
AW5	Appropriate bird release plans		
AW6	Feed and water provision for released birds		
AW7	Adequate picking-up		
AW8	Compliance with trapping and snaring regulations		
AH1	Appropriate antibiotic use		
AH2	Prescribed medications		
AH3	Withdrawal period use		
GM1	Agreed game marketing plans		
GM2	Game provision to guns		

FS1	Use of non-lead ammunition		
FS2	Food safe Game Handling		
FS3	Appropriate game chilling		
FS4	Disposal of unfit game		
LC1	Legal compliance declaration		
LC2	Good employment practice		