



DEER ALLIANCE

HUNTER COMPETENCE ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

SUBMISSIONS ON DEER MANAGEMENT POLICY VISION

1: BACKGROUND TO DEER ALLIANCE HCAP

1.1: Deer Alliance HCAP was formed in 2001 arising from a requirement on the part of Coillte Teoranta for a process of certification of all persons hunting wild deer on Coillte's forest property portfolio throughout Ireland. Discussions in that year saw the identification of relevant stakeholders, the coming together of a range of interests and the development of a programme for the assessment and certification of hunter competence designed to meet Coillte's immediate needs, based on best-practice models studied across Europe, and outside Europe.

1.2: The Hunter Competence Assessment Programme (HCAP) was launched in April 2005 following four years of careful development which included the production of a Stalker Training Manual.

1.3: Since HCAP's introduction in 2005, some 1200 licensed deer hunters have undertaken the Programme on a voluntary basis and at the time of writing approximately 1000 candidates have been HCAP-Certified.

1.4: At the time of writing, a revised Training Syllabus is under consideration by the Deer Alliance Assessment Committee, with a view to introduction early in 2012. The revised Training Syllabus will comprise a set number of hours training and preparation, to include a new Food Safety Module under development in conjunction with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

2: DEER ALLIANCE POLICY ON ASSESSMENT, CERTIFICATION AND THE ISSUE OF DEER HUNTING LICENCES.

2.1: It is the policy of Deer Alliance HCAP that HCAP certification (or equivalent) should be a prerequisite for all holders of or applicants for any licence to hunt wild deer in Ireland.

2.2: Deer Alliance HCAP has actively promoted this policy to the National Parks & Wildlife Service and to successive Ministers since inception in 2005 and is committed to achieving

this objective within the lifetime of the current Government. Deer Alliance HCAP is optimistic that this objective will finally be achieved within this stated time frame.

3: DEER ALLIANCE HCAP PARTICIPATION IN FORMULATION OF DEER MANAGEMENT POLICY

3.1: It follows from Point 2.1 and 2.2 above that as and when a requirement for mandatory certification is adopted by NPWS, the framework within which a majority of deer hunters operate will change radically. At the time of writing, approximately one in four licensed deer hunters are HCAP-Certified, and have undergone some level of training and a measurable level of assessment as to competency. A further substantial number of licensed hunters, totalling 3000 or more, will need to become HCAP-Certified over a lead-in period expected to take three to five years e.g. all new licence applicants to be certified before grant of licence, and all existing licence holders to become HCAP-Certified with a three to five year period (to be decided).

3.2: Clearly, the adoption of mandatory assessment and certification has profound implications for practical management of wild deer. It is the licensed deer hunter who will in the final analysis be responsible for practical implementation of policy, which to be successful in terms of implementation must include the humane and efficient culling of deer in order to achieve policy objectives as identified in the Draft Deer Management Policy Vision document.

3.3: Deer Alliance HCAP therefore formally proposes that mandatory assessment and certification based on the HCAP model be included as an essential part of any final policy for the management of wild deer.

3.4: Deer Alliance HCAP confirms its wish and intention to remain fully involved in and committed to the development of a national policy on the management of wild deer, including but not limited to the adoption and inclusion of mandatory assessment and certification as an essential element in wild deer management.

Submitted on behalf of Deer Alliance HCAP, 23 November 2011.

For further information on the Deer Alliance Hunter Competence Assessment Programme, see www.deeralliance.ie and www.deeralliance.blogspot.com.