



# Details of the changes to the Code of Welfare: Deer



The Code of Welfare: Deer has been updated. The changes come into effect on 8 September and anyone who is responsible for farmed deer – including trophy animals and those on game estates and parks – should familiarise themselves with the updates to the code.

As with all codes of animal welfare, the updated code provides requirements and guidance for farmers and other deer owners about the standards of welfare they must meet.

It includes 60 new minimum standards and changes to 4 existing minimum standards outlined below. The changes are not significant but may require some adjustments to practice, so people responsible for deer should familiarise themselves with the updates to the code. There are also some additional minor changes not outlined here that won't impact on farmer practice.

## New minimum standards (MS)

2 – Stockpersonship and Animal Handling		
2.2 Animal Handling	2 (a)	Deer must be handled in such a way as to minimise the risk of pain, injury or distress to them.
	2 (b)	Handling must not unnecessarily isolate animals.
	2 (c)	Only the minimum force required must be used when moving deer.
	2 (d)	Tails must not be handled in a manner that causes pain or injury.
2.3 Mustering and Moving	3 (a)	Care must be taken at all times to minimise injury or distress to the deer being moved.
	3 (b)	Deer being moved on foot must not be forced to proceed at a pace that will cause exhaustion or heat stress.
	3 (c)	Prompt remedial action must be taken for deer that become injured or distressed when being moved.
2.4 Restraint	4 (c)	Animals that are restrained must be kept under close supervision at all times.
	4 (e)	Electroimmobilisation devices must not be used for any purpose on deer.
3 – Behaviour		
3.1 Deer Behaviour	5 (b)	Deer must have the opportunity to express and satisfy a range of other normal behaviours that are appropriate to their species, sex and season. These include foraging, ruminating, rutting, socialising and seeking shelter or protection during fawning.
	Deer must have sufficient space to enable:	
	5 (c)	i) all animals in a mob to lie down and rest comfortably at the same time. ii) individuals to withdraw from aggressive encounters.
3.2 Mixing of Deer	6 (b)	Sufficient space must be provided to newly mixed deer to allow escape from aggressive encounters.
	6 (c)	Deer that do not adapt following mixing must be provided with alternative management.
	6 (d)	If any deer are subjected to persistent bullying, they must be checked for illness and injury, and remedial action taken if necessary.

4 – Feed and Water		
4.1 Feed	7 (b)	Feed must be provided in a way that minimises competition.
4.2 Water	8 (b)	Water must be provided in such a way as to minimise competition.
5 – Physical Environment		
5.2 Farm Facilities Equipment and Technologies	10 (d)	Deer that do not adapt to new technologies must be provided with alternative management.
5.3 Off-Paddock Facilities	11 (a)	Deer kept in off-paddock facilities must be observed at least twice a day, and prompt preventative or remedial action taken to address any problems identified.
	11 (d)	When the facility is in use, automated systems, including those used for feeding, water provision and cleaning, must be checked daily and any problems promptly rectified.
	11 (e)	For deer that are kept in housing facilities, the following provisions must also be met: i) Non-slip flooring and lying surfaces must allow for effective effluent drainage or removal ii) Standing areas must be covered with material that minimises lameness. iii) Lying areas have a compressible soft surface or bedding. iv) Waste feed and contaminated bedding material do not accumulate to a point that threatens the health or welfare of the deer. v) Deer must be familiarised with the facility before being confined to it, and provided with alternative management if they do not adjust.
	11 (f)	There must be provision to remove deer that need attention or to quarantine sick individuals.
6 – Husbandry Practices		
6.1 Identification	12 (a)	All identification procedures must be applied by a competent operator.
	12 (b)	If ear marking (or notching) is performed, the ear tissue removed must not exceed the minimum amount necessary to identify deer.
6.2 Selection and Breeding	13 (a)	Selection and breeding decisions must consider animal welfare outcomes.
	13 (b)	Animals not suitable for breeding are identified and removed from the breeding herd.
6.3 Mating, Semen Collection and Reproductive Technologies	14 (a)	Hinds must be of suitable size, health and condition to experience pregnancy and fawning.
	14 (b)	Pregnancy diagnosis must be undertaken by a competent person.
	14 (c)	Stags must be fit and healthy for mating and semen collection.
	14 (d)	Electroejaculation for semen collection must be carried out by a veterinarian, or a competent operator.
	14 (e)	Equipment used for electroejaculation must be manufactured for this purpose and must be maintained in good working order.
	14 (f)	Electroejaculation must be stopped where stags fail to ejaculate after two sequences of electrical stimulation, or the animal becomes distressed, or is at risk of injury.
	14 (g)	Facilities for semen collection must provide safe restraint to minimise the risk of injury to animals.
6.4.1 Lactating Hinds and Milking Systems	15 (a)	Hinds must be milked or suckle fawns frequently enough during lactation to minimise discomfort and maintain udder health.
	15 (b)	Hinds must be milked in a manner that minimises discomfort or injury and maintains udder health, including appropriate hygiene practices.
	15 (c)	Milked hinds must be inspected for general health and udder health at every milking by a competent stockperson and remedial action taken where required.
	15 (d)	Milking equipment must be suitable for deer and well maintained to minimise the risk of damage and infection of the teats and udder.
	15 (e)	Hinds must be familiarised with the milking facility prior to the milking season.
	15 (f)	Where oxytocin is injected to stimulate milk let-down: i) Injection sites must be varied daily; and ii) Needle size must be as small as practicable whilst reducing the risk that the needle will break.

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<b>6.4.2 Drying-off Milking Hinds</b>	<b>16 (a)</b>	The drying-off process must be done in a manner that minimises discomfort, hunger and the risk of mastitis.
<b>6.5.1 Fawning</b>	<b>17 (a)</b>	Hinds must be provided with a suitable environment for the fawning period, including adequate feed, water and environmental cover.
	<b>17 (b)</b>	Manual assistance of fawning must only be used if a competent stockperson has diagnosed that the fawn is in a suitable position for delivery and the birth canal is unrestricted.
	<b>17 (c)</b>	If any hind is having difficulty with fawning and the stockperson is unable to resolve the problem, veterinary advice must be sought as soon as possible, or the animal humanely killed.
	<b>17 (d)</b>	Premature fawns that are unlikely to survive, and fawns that have debilitating congenital defects, must be humanely killed immediately.
<b>6.5.2 Hand Rearing Fawns</b>	<b>18 (c)</b>	Stockpeople feeding fawns by tube must be trained and competent in the procedure.
	<b>18 (d)</b>	Equipment for handling, storing and feeding liquid feeds must be kept clean to prevent contamination.
	<b>18 (e)</b>	Fawns must be checked at least twice daily for signs of ill health and provided with treatment as necessary.
	<b>18 (f)</b>	Fawns must be provided with fresh palatable water from birth.
	<b>18 (g)</b>	Fawns must have daily access to appropriate solid feed from 2 weeks of age to support rumen development.
<b>6.6 Weaning</b>	<b>19 (a)</b>	Fawns must not be weaned until the rumen has developed sufficiently to allow it to utilise solids as the sole feed source, and must not be weaned at less than 6 weeks of age.
<b>6.7.1 Velvet Antler and Pedicles</b>	<b>20 (a)</b>	When velvetting, stags must be managed in such a way that blood loss is minimised.
	<b>20 (b)</b>	Animals must be checked for signs of post-operative complications, including pain and distress, and appropriate remedial action taken as required.
	<b>20 (c)</b>	Damaged pedicles must only be removed by a veterinarian.
<b>6.10 End-of-Life Management</b>	<b>23 (a)</b>	Animals to be culled must be identified in a timely manner so they can be selected and appropriately prepared for transport.
<b>7 – Disease and Injury Control</b>		
<b>7.1 Disease and Injury Control</b>	<b>24 (d)</b>	Deer that are unlikely to survive must be humanely killed at the earliest opportunity to prevent unnecessary or unreasonable pain or distress.
<b>8 – On-Farm Humane Killing</b>		
<b>8.1 On-Farm Humane Killing</b>	<b>25 (a)</b>	Prior to death, deer must be handled, restrained and killed in such a manner as to minimise unreasonable or unnecessary pain and distress.
	<b>25 (b)</b>	Persons undertaking humane killing must be knowledgeable and competent in the handling and killing of deer.
	<b>25 (c)</b>	Deer must be immediately rendered insensible and remain in that state, until death.
	<b>25 (d)</b>	Deer rendered insensible but not killed must receive a secondary procedure to ensure death occurs before recovery from stunning.
	<b>25 (e)</b>	Deer must be monitored until death is confirmed.
	<b>25 (f)</b>	The spinal cord must not be severed or broken until after an animal is dead.

## Changes to existing minimum standards

4 – Feed and Water				
Section	Previous number	Previous wording	New	New wording
4.1 Feed	2 (b)	If any deer shows signs of emaciation, or if the Body Condition Score (BCS) of any individual deer, other than fawns or weaners, falls below 2, immediate remedial action through veterinary attention, improved nutrition or husbandry practice must be taken to both remedy and prevent further deterioration and any risk to animal health or welfare.	7 (c)	If the Body Condition Score (BCS) of any individual adult deer falls to 2 or below (on a scale of 1-5), remedial action must be taken to remedy and prevent further deterioration, and any risk to animal health or welfare.
5 – Physical Environment				
Section	Previous number	Previous wording	New	New wording
5.3 Off-Paddock Facilities	6 (e)	Where deer do not have access to natural daylight, a minimum of 8 hours and a maximum of 16 hours of continual artificial daylight (minimum 50 lux) must be provided.	11 (b)	Where deer do not have access to natural daylight, artificial lighting levels must be at least 50 lux during the light phase, for a minimum of nine continuous hours and a maximum of 18 hours each day.
	6 (d)	If ammonia levels of 25 ppm or more are detected within the holding facility, immediate and appropriate action must be taken to reduce the ammonia levels.	11 (c)	If ammonia levels of 15 ppm or more are detected at deer resting height, remedial action must be taken to reduce those levels.
6 – Husbandry Practices				
Section	Previous number	Previous wording	New	New wording
6.9 Pre-transport Selection and Management	3 (d)	Any deer retained in yards or within holding facilities for longer than 12 hours must have access to drinking water.	22 (c)	Deer must have access to water until yarding prior to transport.