

End 'Game' Bird Shooting

From [League Against Cruel Sports](#)

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Pheasant

What is 'game' bird shooting?

Game bird shooting appears to many as a classic British countryside sport, where wild birds are skilfully shot by marksmen and eaten as part of a delicious home cooked meal.

The reality however, is that investigations, undercover filming, scientific research and economic analysis have all revealed that the perceptions of commercial 'game' bird shooting in the UK are deceptive. The financial benefit to the economy is exaggerated, whilst animal welfare laws are exploited, and our environment and landscape are put at risk.

In terms of the numbers of animals persecuted and killed, no other cruel sport in the UK has such a devastating impact on animals as commercial 'game' bird shooting.

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**5,300 red
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**38,300 red-
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**Around 62
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Up to 146,000 pheasants, 5,300 red grouse and 38,300 red-legged partridges are shot every day in the UK, during their respective hunting seasons. However, despite the increasing scale of the shooting industry as

represented by greater economic inputs and the increasing density of birds reared and released for shoots, the proportion of birds that are shot is decreasing each year.

What is wrong with 'game' bird shooting?

Farmer pheasants and partridges are fed and 'protected' from predators before being released onto shooting estates, where they are driven towards paying shooters by employees called beaters.

Wounding in 'game' shooting is common. According to a 2015 shooting industry survey, 76% of shooters were unable to accurately gauge distance, with 10% thinking the target was twice as far away. This inability to judge distances results in up to 40% of birds being wounded, rather than killed outright, according to a former training officer at the British Association for Shooting and Conservation. Many are left to die slowly when they are not retrieved by people or dogs.

Factory farming and cage breeding

In the UK, minimum standards exist for the protection of animals bred or kept for farming. However, it does not apply to "animals intended for use in competitions, shows, cultural or sporting events or activities", meaning birds farmed for the 'game' shooting industry, aren't afforded even the basic welfare protection given to birds farmed for food.



Factory farming and cage breeding...

Many of the 57 million birds released on to UK shooting estates are bought from intensive farming systems in European countries. More than five million pheasants and over 2.1 million [partridges were imported live into the UK](#) between 1st May 2018 and 30th April 2019. Furthermore, 54,000 hatching pheasant eggs and 5,250 live birds were imported from the USA during the same period of time.

These young birds can spend 20 hours or more crammed inside a crate stacked in the back of a lorry travelling from farm to shoot.

Trapping and snaring

To minimise predation of ‘game’ birds by native predators and to maximise profit, gamekeepers will set [snares](#) and traps to target animals such as [foxes](#), stoats and crows. However, due to the indiscriminate nature of these devices, many non-target protected and endangered species such as badgers and hares, as well as domestic cats, get caught in these traps.

Gamekeepers on grouse shooting moors cull mountain hares due to unwarranted fears that they carry a tick borne virus which kills grouse chicks and are therefore seen as a threat to the grouse shooting industry.

Wildlife crime

Wildlife crime is also associated with the management practices of ‘game’ bird shooting estates. Birds of prey are illegally persecuted on grouse shooting moors and in pheasant shooting woods. Studies suggest that because offenders do not distinguish between different raptor species, they can have considerable impacts on already vulnerable species.

According to the [RSPB’s most recent report](#), the illegal persecution of hen harriers - associated with the management of moorland for grouse shooting - is both the leading cause of the hen harrier’s decline and is the most significant obstacle preventing their recovery.

Other bird of prey affected by this practice, include: owls, buzzards, golden eagles and peregrine falcons.

For more information, here are [four signs that a 'game' bird shooting may be happening near you](#).

Environmental destruction

Pheasants and red-legged partridges are not native to the UK and yet it is estimated that up to [57 million pheasants and 4,600,000 red-legged partridges](#) are released into the British countryside each year.

There is concern amongst conservationists that the annual mass release of these birds - with a total biomass greater than that of all our native birds combined - has an adverse impact on native wildlife.

A study on trends in the [‘game’ bird shooting industry](#) demonstrates that with the increasing size and intensification of shooting estates comes greater risk to the environment. As a greater proportion of hunters come from urban rather than rural areas, there is a decreasing connection between these shooters and the habitats of their prey.

It is believed that the intensification of the ‘game’ bird shooting industry paired with the large-scale release of captive-reared birds and decreasing interest in sustainable management techniques, is likely to have negative implications for the local biodiversity around shooting estates.

Furthermore, studies and recent reports link grouse moor management with environmental degradation, river pollution, contributing to climate change and the potential link between grouse shooting moors and urban flooding.

Overstated economics

Our report, *Shooting Animals for Sport: Worth Less* analyses the findings of economic experts who were asked to review two shooting industry reports on the economics of sport shooting (PACEC 2006, 2014). The study concluded that both reports are based on 'biased opinion' instead of scientific fact.

As a result of such studies, we believe, as the [UK's leading animal charity](#) working to make cruel sports a thing of the past, that 'game' bird shooting is a hobby that is detrimental to the welfare of both game birds and wild animals.

Simulated pheasant shooting, partridge shooting and grouse shooting – which uses clay discs as an alternative to live birds – can provide substantial investment for rural communities and employment for loaders, technicians, catering staff, garage owners, publicans and landowners. Unlike its live-quarry-counterpart, simulated shooting allows the countryside to be conserved by benefiting all wildlife beyond the red grouse and pheasant whilst still providing economic benefits, without compromising animal welfare or being associated with wildlife crime and environmental damage.