

Catfield Parish Council have reported to me an example of night-time deer poaching where two red deer heads were left openly on the permissive footpath in the village, which is frequented by many dog walkers, including children, and with cattle nearby. They have requested that I clarify the legal position about night-time shooting and advice about what the public can do to help enforce the law if they suspect deer poaching is occurring.

Night-time shooting of deer is only legally permitted if:

- the shooter has the written permission of the landowner, has a valid firearms certificate and the firearm used is licenced
- deer can only be shot when in season and the seasons for Red Stags are 1st August- 30th April and Hinds 1st November - 31st March (other species have slightly different open seasons – Muntjac deer can be shot all year)
- deer may not be shot in the hours of darkness unless under a Night Licence issued by Natural England. Only the named person can use the licence and then only for the documented area and must notify Police of plans to act under such licence.
- when it comes to the dumping of waste from shot animals, such as heads, gralloch, hides, feet etc. this falls under the animals biproducts legislation for fly-tipping enforced by the local council or Environment Agency. It is not unusual again with permission from landowner for professional deer stalkers to leave some of the gralloch (offal) in the field to feed the wildlife.

Unfortunately, deer poaching is now quite common and usually occurs at night. The public who suspects that it is happening, for example from shooting or unusual car movements, should not approach the suspected poachers who sometimes act in gangs but report it to the police with details of where, when and car number plates.

My contact details are PC Chris Shelley 1765 – OP Randall Rural Crime Team, operationrandall@norfolk.police.uk or via our online contact form <https://www.norfolk.police.uk/ro/report/rwc/wildlife/report-wildlife-crime/>

Always use 999 in an emergency or if crime is in progress.