

# **BEST PRACTICES OF ESTONIAN HUNTING**

*Adopted at the meeting of the EJS Commissioners on 16.04.2014*

*Point 1 of good practices was amended at the meeting of the EJS Commissioners on the 25th of May 2017*

## **I. Be respectful towards game, property, and nature!**

1. Remember that as a hunter you are not the only one who uses and walks in nature.
2. Keep nature clean.
3. Learn about the population of the game in your hunting grounds.
4. Always hunt sparingly, taking into account the sustainability of the game population. A hunter must never unleash their passion for killing animals.
5. Respect the rights of the game to life. While hunting, give them a chance for a lucky escape. Never hunt or track game that is in a helpless state.
6. Hunt in a manner that does not damage the property of the landowner.
7. Support the landowner in hunting-related questions; cooperation is beneficial to both parties.

## **II As a hunter, be correct!**

1. Your hunting gear should be appropriate and clean, your weapon in good condition and checked.
2. If a hunting horn is to be sounded, the hunt will begin with a signal "Jahi aligus!" (Begin the hunt!) and the hunt will end with the signal "Jahi lõpp!" (End the hunt!).
3. Before shooting, identify the game, in cases of the large game also identify their age and sex.
4. A game with strong and vital characteristics to the population must only be hunted when they have fulfilled their function to the population. Spare female game animals during hunting who have good qualities and are productive, and only hunt male game animals in their best trophy age and at the end of the hunting season.
5. The leaving of young game animals in a helpless state by hunting motherly female game animals is not a valid act.
6. A hunter must have acquired sufficiently good firing skills.
7. The torture of an animal by poor shooting skills is unacceptable.
8. A true hunter will never shoot at a game animal from further than they can guarantee a secure shot.
9. Never shoot aimlessly at a flock of flying birds. Several birds can fly away with intruded shots which means they will suffer a painful death.
10. Do not hunt more birds or other small game animals than you or your (hunting) friends need.
11. Do not shoot at a sleeping game animal or floating water bird, except if the animal is wounded.

## **III The wounded game shall not be left in the forest!**

1. A fired shot is never a miss unless it has been proven otherwise.
2. The hunter must conscientiously search (with a dog, if possible) for the shot animal.
3. A hunter shall inform the user of a neighboring hunting ground if the wounded

game moves there.

4. A wounded large game is killed by a mercy shot to the upper neck or behind the ear.
5. A wounded small game is killed by a repeat shot or a blow to the back of the head.
6. Wounded birds are killed by repeat shots or by a pierce to the back of the head.
7. As a rule, uninvolved persons are not to be present at the moment of killing.

#### **IV Treat the caught prey with respect!**

1. All game - regardless of species, gender or age - are to be treated equally.
2. Caught big game is adorned with the placing of a branch on their right side (spruce, juniper, oak or, in the absence thereof, herbage). For the male game, a branch is placed on them with the stem facing towards the head and for the female game the top facing the head.
3. Game's meat body will be, if possible, removed from the forest without skinning and cutting. If necessary, the viscera are removed from the woods.
4. Roe deer and smaller game are not to be dragged, but if possible, carried out of the forest.
5. The viscera of game smaller than roe deer are removed without rolling up one's sleeves.
6. It is expedient to remove the viscera and bladder of rabbits on the shooting site.
7. Birds are carried by the neck by hanging them on a bird belt or in a hunting net.
8. If the captured animals at the end of the joint hunt are displayed as a "parade," then it is strictly forbidden to step over the prey! Animals must not be nudged by a foot!
9. Medal-worthy hunting trophies are not to be cut into souvenirs or used otherwise for the manufacturing of consumer goods.

#### **V Handle your hunting weapon with care!**

1. Handle your hunting gun always as if it were loaded.
2. Never turn the gun towards a person.
3. Ensure that the flight path of the bullet or the trajectory of pellets is safe for other people before shooting.
4. If the situation during hunting becomes uncertain, ethics require that you have mastered the heavy art of letting go of a shot.
5. When you unlock, raise, load, hold the gun or release its cartridge, point the gun to the ground so that nobody is at risk.
6. The weapon must be unloaded, with an open trigger or the break-action open during breaks or while traveling from one place to the other with companions.

#### **VI Be a great hunting companion!**

1. Respect other hunters' right to hunt.
2. Do not be disdainful or envious of their hunting luck.
3. An animal in an adjacent firing sector shall not be shot.
4. A successful hunter is adorned with a green branch attached to their headgear, which is torn from the branch placed on the captured game. During joint hunts, the hunter is adorned by the hunt lead.
5. The prey is divided according to conditions announced before the hunt. One option is to do so via lottery. Also, the dogs' owners who have done well, have earned an additional helping.

6. If a hunt king is to be chosen for a joint hunt, then the hunter who caught the most valuable prey is crowned. Other positive behaviors could also be highlighted (helping others, not firing in a difficult situation, etc.).
7. When shooting with a bullet (both rifle and smoothbore barrel), the game is considered to be killed by the hunter who first hit the animal in the chest cavity (lungs, heart).
8. In case of scattershot, the game is considered to be shot by the hunter who last hit the animal (a mercy shot to ease the pain of the animal does not count).
9. The hunting trophy belongs to the hunter who hit the big game first with a kill-shot. If a big game is simultaneously hit by multiple hunters and the first hit cannot be determined, then the hunt lead will assign the trophy, or the trophy will be left on the walls of the hunting lodge of the organization that organized the hunt.

### **VIII A hunting dog is a friend and companion of the hunter.**

1. Dogs are brought and taken away from the hunt on a leash.
2. The dog on the hunt must be trained and obey the orders of their master.
3. The owners of untrained dogs accompanying the hunt must ensure that dogs do not interfere with the hunt.
4. In a foreign hunting area, use your dog only if the owner of the hunting area so wishes or permits.
5. The game is not to be shot in front of a strange dog. Strange dogs are considered to not belong to the hunting party, regardless of who are the masters of said dogs in a group.
6. A hunter shall not take a raccoon or some other small game caught by the dog of a hunting companion.
7. During small game hunting, the shot small game shall not be picked up before the dog that tracked it has been able to sniff it.
8. Do not leave your dog in the car to freeze during winter or when the dog has become wet. Do not forget your dog in the car during hot weather.
9. If the dog is injured during the hunt, then it has the right (if necessary) for immediate medical aid.
10. After hunting, the dog is entitled to peace, warmth, good food and clean water.

**The possibility for future generations to hunt is important, but the importance of leaving animals the possibility to grow their future generations is very important.**