

# Gardai using sophisticated DNA analysis in war against poachers shooting and selling wild deer



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Gardai and wildlife rangers are now using sophisticated DNA analysis in the war against poachers shooting and selling wild deer.

A Carlow man has been banned from holding a gun licence for five years and fined €300 after being convicted of hunting on land without permission after a lengthy and vigorously contested case before Judge David Kennedy in court this week.

Gardai and rangers painstakingly put together the case against Donal Smith snr (44), of Woodgrove Avenue in Rathvilly, after locals living near the Luggala Estate in Co Wicklow spotted deer hunting activity in the National Park area on a dark evening in November 2017.

The detailed joint agency investigation between gardai and Regional Manager of Wicklow National Park & Wildlife Inspector Wesley Atkinson, with the assistance of the public, helped identify the location of the suspected kill.

Evidence was heard in Wicklow District Court on Tuesday that locals rang gardai and told them the suspect had been approached and fled in his car.

He was followed to the town of Laragh where gardai intercepted him and found the carcass in his possession.

The animal was a male Red Sika deer weighing 60kg, and worth in the region of €120.

The Red Sika deer is a protected animal under the Wildlife Act.

Garda Darragh McEvoy seized the carcass and then consulted with the members of the community who had reported the matter to try and establish where the poaching had occurred.

When hunting deer it is important that the animal is gutted quickly or the meat can be tainted.

The digestive tract and organs of the animal, known as a grollach, are quickly removed from the animal before the deer carcass is prepared for butchering.

Gardai then found the grollach in the spot where the locals had said Smith had been hunting, but in order to match it with the deer carcass they set about using DNA analysis which confirmed a match.

Smith was then charged with illegal hunting.

It was the DPP's case that Smith had shot the deer on national park land without licence and permission.

He claimed he shot the deer in Blessington but the Red Sika is not found in that region and gardai successfully prosecuted him after linking the carcass in his possession to the gutted remains found on the national park lands.

"This is a prime example of the joint operations between An Garda Síochána & the Wildlife Inspectors and the collaborative investigation techniques to support a prosecution against poaching which is a lucrative illegal industry," said a source.

"Such joint agency operations will continue in cohort to tackle this criminal activity," they added.

"The National Parks and Wildlife Service and An Garda Síochána would like to remind hunters that all deer species found in Ireland are protected under the Wildlife Acts," a spokesperson said.

"They are prepared to fully investigate cases in conjunction with other authorities where it is suspected laws may have been broken and any protected animals are killed illegally," they added.

Hunters are currently able to use licenced processors to butcher and sell their carcasses, or drop them off at various collection points where they are then taken away by the processor.

They tag their carcasses, and hunters are only allowed a limited number of animals which they can hunt on designated lands, or private land with the landowner's permission, using a licence and a proper hunting gun and ammunition.

Hunting on national parklands, or without the proper licence or gun is prohibited.

Hunting is also restricted to certain seasons and hours of the day.

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/gardai-using-sophisticated-dna-analysis-in-war-against-poachers-shooting-and-selling-wild-deer-38327265.html>