

DRIVE SAFE



Honorary solicitor **Laura Saunbury** gives us her top tips on what to look out for when choosing a new vehicle with shooting in mind.

As a shotgun certificate holder, one of your obligations is to ensure that you take 'reasonable precautions' for the safe custody of your shotguns whenever they are in use or in transit in connection with their use, sale or repair (see condition 4(b) on your certificate). If your guns or cartridges are stolen from your vehicle it's likely that the police will start from an assumption that you failed to take reasonable precautions, and so, unless you can persuade them otherwise, the probable consequence is that you will be facing revocation of your certificate. In addition, although the police might not bother if they have revoked your certificate, they could also bring a criminal prosecution against you, since breach of your certificate conditions is a criminal offence.

For these reasons, the importance of good security when travelling with your guns should not be underestimated. It's therefore sensible to have this well in mind when choosing what vehicle to purchase, especially if shooting is a big part of your life and you will be travelling with guns in your car on a regular basis.

In terms of general guidance, the Home Office Guide to the Police on Firearms Licensing Law recommends that when transporting guns in your vehicle they should be hidden out of sight and also concealed in a slip or

other cover so that they cannot be immediately identified if someone is able to see into the boot area. Specially designed in-car gun safes are available and these may be worth considering for serious competitive shooters who travel a lot with high value guns.

These safes can be quite expensive, so for those with less of a budget consider as an alternative a cage similar to those used for transporting dogs in the rear of vehicles or otherwise security cables such as a sturdy bike lock which you can use to chain down the guns. Whichever type of security measure you opt for, there should be a means of firmly securing the safe or cable to the chassis of the vehicle. Ideally, the vehicle should have an alarm and/or immobiliser although no matter how sophisticated the vehicle's in-built security systems and any additional security you may have installed, your guns and ammunition should not be left in the vehicle overnight, unless its unavoidable.

WHAT FEATURES SHOULD YOU BE LOOKING OUT FOR WHEN SELECTING YOUR VEHICLE?

- Is there an alarm/immobiliser and does it have an inbuilt reminder or auto lock feature when you start to walk away from the vehicle without locking it and setting the alarm?

Above: Isuzu D-Max
Utah Huntsman. **Left:**
Kia Sportage.



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- Just how secure are the car's security devices? Do some research and read the reviews.
- A separate boot which cannot be accessed via the main interior of the vehicle is preferable, especially if it has, or there is scope for adding, extra security to the boot area.
 - For estates, hatchbacks and similar vehicles, is there a cover for the load carrying area which completely conceals the contents?
 - Are there sturdy metal loops in the boot/load area or other means of securing a safe or cables directly to the chassis?
 - Is the shape of the boot lid or hatchback such that parking it with the tail end up close to a wall would frustrate any attempt to open the rear of the vehicle?
- If you plan to use a car safe or cage, check its dimensions are compatible with the boot or load area.
- Tinted glass in the rear windows is a plus, making any shooting bags, magazines and other paraphernalia less obvious to anyone walking by and minimise the risk of your vehicle being targeted.
- Are there other compartments, ideally lockable, elsewhere in the vehicle which would be suitable for storing cartridges? Unlike with section 1 firearm ammunition, there is no legal requirement to store shotgun ammunition securely. Nevertheless, the police will probably take a dim view if you leave your cartridges in full view or right next to the guns, enabling the successful car thief to steal both together. The police are more likely to accept you have been responsible if you travel with your cartridges out of view and in a different part of the vehicle to the guns. Always try to be discreet and avoid doing anything which would draw attention to the fact there are often guns in the vehicle. 🍌