

Deer Management in Scotland:

Six Key Attributes of a Better System

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The current system of regulation of wild deer is not fit for purpose. We recommend the following six attributes as the acid test of a better system:

1. Deer Management Areas

Identification by SNH of DMAs covering all of Scotland and based on ecological criteria (eg. deer range, NHZs), and relating to requirements of Deer Code; two types: a) upland b) lowland.

Review by SNH of current DMG areas to ensure fit with public and private needs, and notably integration with emerging Land Use Strategy.

2. Target population level

Validation by SNH of a "Local Deer Management Standard (LDMS)" (=the range of "acceptable" population levels/densities of deer) for each DM area, through a process which is;

Linked to; habitat condition of designated sites and other notable features of public interest such as peatlands/carbon management, native woodland and other semi-natural habitat management and expansion, RBMP/water quality, public safety, deer welfare etc.

And noting that: all land use interests, including sport shooting and other recreational activities, and livestock densities, would also help shape the target population.

Open and objective: clear statement of public and private interests involved, plus consideration of the extent to which these are affected by higher/lower deer numbers, and the significance of these impacts.

Neutral: independently chaired process. Perhaps as part of a Land Use Strategy Local Framework.

Accountable: endorsed and validated by SNH as the competent authority.

Adaptive: periodically reviewed in the light of new evidence and public requirements.

3. Competent Deer Management Plan

Preparation and implementation of a DMP (ideally prepared by relevant owners in each DMP with support from SNH) to deliver the LDMS collaboratively. Two models required a) lowland b) upland.

Approved: as effective plan by SNH before implementation.

Specific: identifying the quota of the annual cull to be taken by each land owner.

4. Mandatory reporting

Obligation on relevant landowners to report on cull and population data to SNH, fundamental for population modelling and meeting public objectives (note also funding below). Frequency of reporting to be agreed depending on the issue (eg. population counts for red deer every 5 years)

Cull numbers: fulfilment of their quota of the cull.

Other data: Population estimates (subdivided by species, sex, age, habitat condition (SNH for designated sites) and other information as required.

Compliance: evidence that practitioners involved are trained and qualified in accordance with the Deer Code; public safety; food hygiene standards; firearms certificate; DSC Level II (deer welfare requirements); impacts on natural heritage etc.

5. Credible Enforcement

A credible system of oversight/powers of compulsion/remedy.

Mobilisation/replacement for Section 8 or Nature Conservation Orders: Section 8 to be used by SNH and if not workable replaced by more effective power of intervention in the public interest. To be used not only on designated sites but also in defined circumstances in the wider countryside in line with agreed DMP; as well as failure to produce an up to date DMP. The use of incentives under SRDP (or equivalent) may also apply.

Powers for SNH to intervene and recover costs in the event of any of the above not being delivered.

6. Cost recovery

This scheme should be properly resourced by Scottish Government through grant in aid to SNH, green taxation or other appropriate levy. Possibility of exempting those landowners who meet required standards to act as an incentive to sustainable deer management.