

Deer Management Plan for

DRYNACHAN

Location: Lochaber Forest District

Owner(s): Managed on behalf of the Scottish Ministers by Forestry Commission Scotland

Draft Deer Management Plan Written By: John Jackson

Deer Species: Red, Roe and Sika

Area of deer management unit : 853 ha

Deer management Group: Drynachan is not within any DMG area.

(a) Past/current deer management .

Main land use is productive forest with areas of native woodland and several ancient woodland sites. Deer are managed to attempt to achieve a balance with their habitat. This requires a low density population of 5/100ha or less.
Perimeter deer fences are important to separate the woodland from the higher deer populations densities maintained on neighbouring sporting estates.
Internal fencing may be used where particularly vulnerable sites and species require extra protection.
Feral Pigs have been seen in Drynachan.

(b) Previous Cull Records

Year	Red	Roe	Sika
11/12	17	1	2
12/13	19	6	1
13/14	10	2	0
14/15	30	5	3

Cull Records: Comment /Additional Information

Culls are taken both in and out of season and night shooting is employed as necessary. Male deer of all species are shot throughout the year, while females are not shot from 1st April to 30th September.

(c) Adjacent Land Use

	Comment
Existing Woodland	Aberchalder
Mixture of Woodland / Arable Land	Aberchalder.
Unimproved Pasture /Open Hill	Aberchalder
Public Access / Recreation Facilities	All FCS woodlands are open to public access at all times.
Deer Vehicle Collisions (DVCs)	
Public Safety issues	
Other	

B. Description of the Resources (Deer and Habitat)

1. Deer

(a) Information relating to demographics of the deer population

Deer Resource: Comment /Additional Information

The method currently being used to measure crop damage in Lochaber Forest District is via visual assessment and recorded in OGB4 stocking density assessment forms. Nearest Neighbour assessments are also conducted annually on all P1 restocks. As one of our key objectives in deer management is the prevention of damage. Damage assessment is therefore given a high priority in terms of determining appropriate cull levels.

(b) Information relating to any significant woodland deer population

Woodland Deer Density Indicators

<u>Evidence</u>	4-8/100 Ha Low Density	8-15/100Ha Medium Density	15+/100Ha High Density
<u>Tracks</u>	Difficult to find deer slot marks or defined paths.	Defined paths slot marks easy to find in areas of soft ground.	Many well defined tracks and paths often black with constant use.
<u>(Tick)</u>			
<u>Dung</u>	Difficult to find with just the odd isolated pellet group.	Pellet groups relatively easy to find, particularly on woodland edges and good feeding areas.	Pellet groups very easy to find. Highly concentrated on favoured feed areas.
<u>(Tick)</u>			
<u>Browsing of Vegetation</u>	Natural regeneration of broad-leaved trees taking place with no or little damage to current years incremental growth.	Broad-leaved saplings present but showing significant damage.	No seedlings growing above dominant vegetation height. Often well defined browse lines on established shrubs and plants.
<u>(Tick)</u>			

(c) Information Relating to Known Deer Densities (counts etc)

2. Habitat

(a) Information Relating to Habitat and Condition

Habitat Type	<u>Area (Ha)</u> 750	<u>Vulnerable to deer pressure</u>	<u>Comment</u>
SSSI / SAC / SPA / NSA		n/a	None within Drynahan.
Open Hill Ground		n/a	No open hill ground
Internal Open Ground		Yes	
Native Woodland		Yes	
Broadleaves		Yes	
Commercial Conifers		Yes	
Other:			

(b) Evidence of historical / existing damage

(i) Impacts to woodlands, agricultural interests and habitats

Annual nearest neighbour assessments on all P1 restocking. FCS target is for less than 10% leader browsing. Currently browsing is above this across the area.

(ii) Impacts on natural heritage interests

SSSI
NSA
SPA

Part 2 **Deer Management Plan**

(a) Management Plan Objectives

The main objective of deer management within the FCS Woodlands is to regulate deer populations at a level that is compatible with their environment and our other management objectives. This means that we aim to will be to prevent unacceptable damage to commercial tree crops and in key areas to maintain or enhance biodiversity. This will be done in a professional and humane way, ensuring the physical well being of the remaining deer populations within the forest boundaries. Venison income will be optimised and opportunities to create revenue from permit stalking and leasing will be taken, but without compromising the over-riding issue of damage prevention. This strategy should be read in conjunction with FC Operational Guidance Booklet 5.

All species are capable of causing significant damage to productive forests and woodlands as well as reducing species diversity in the ground flora, resulting in the prevention of natural regeneration by native tree species. This is increasingly recognised as a major barrier to maintaining and increasing biodiversity in British woodlands. At very high densities deer are prone to increased levels of parasitism and disease (rare in UK conditions), poor breeding success and early mortality. In impoverished upland habitats they can also suffer from starvation.

(b) Method(s) used to assess if objectives are being met

Objective or issue	Method of assessment	Monitoring period and frequency	Who is responsible	Use of information
Deer numbers/ Density	EDU Clearance Dung Counts	5 yearly	FCS	Set cull levels
SSSI / SAC etc Impacts	Site Condition Monitoring		SNH	Set cull levels
	Grazing Toolbox		FCS	

Cull figures	Dung Counts, NN assessments, Site Condition Monitoring, Local Knowledge and Experience	Constant and ongoing	FCS	Set cull levels
Browsing, Bark Stripping, Fraying	NN Assessments	Annual		Set cull levels
Annual Recruitment	Cull data	Annual	FCS	Set cull levels

Monitoring: Comment /Additional Information

The monitoring on the National Forest Estate is via visual assessment and recorded in OGB4 stocking density assessment forms. Nearest Neighbour assessments are also conducted annually on all P1 restocks. As one of our key objectives in deer management is the prevention of damage. Damage assessment is therefore given a high priority in terms of determining appropriate cull levels.

(c) Record Keeping. (As Per Wild Deer Best Practice Guide).

All deer shot are recorded in the Wildlife Management System. Data captured include: Species, sex, age class, weight, location (grid ref and DMU), in/out of season, night shot, embryos, lactation, etc.

(d) Engagement with neighbours, DMG and Local Community

Comment /Additional Information

Liaison with neighbours is essential to the cost-effective implementation of Forestry Commission deer management objectives. Lochaber Forest District is an active participant in local deer management groups. Such groups provide a forum for explaining and gaining acceptance of Forestry Commission policy and for agreeing forms of mutually beneficial co-operation with regard to deer management matters. An open, honest approach will be taken with attempts made to promote a good understanding of the professional approach to deer management in our forests.