

BALQUHIDDER DEER MANAGEMENT GROUP

Part 3: Group Operation 2016 - 2021

Updated May 2019

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1. DMG Objectives and Targets

The purpose of the Balquhiddier Deer Management Group (BqDMG) is to manage deer on a collective basis, in accordance with Scottish Government strategy (Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach, 2008), the Code of Practice on Deer Management (2012), and in a manner that integrates different land-use objectives, recognising that compromises over objectives may be required where conflict occurs. The main objectives, targets and actions for the DMG's deer management during the period of this Plan are set out in Part 2 of the plan and summarised in Part 1: The Working Plan.

2. Area & Boundaries & Membership

Balquhiddier DMG boundary covers an area of over 45,950 ha. There are 17 subscribing properties/organisations plus several other interested members that sit within the DMG boundary.

The Group is a subscriber to the Association of Deer Management Groups with fees calculated on an annual basis.

3. Planning Process, Meetings & Reporting

The Group holds two meetings each year in spring and autumn. The Group has a strong level of participation from members of the Group with a good attendance at the biannual meetings and has worked hard to improve relations with properties within the Group area who have not participated thus far. In addition, representatives from Scottish Natural Heritage, The Forestry Commission, Police Scotland and the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority attended these meetings.

Agendas are circulated in advance for these meetings and minutes produced soon afterwards, with the minutes circulated to all Members and attendees. Minutes and Agendas are publicly available on the DMG's website.

A key element of the spring and autumn meetings is to agree cull targets amongst the membership, taking into account the results of any recent information that might be relevant. The spring and autumn meetings also review:

- Culls achieved against cull targets set at the previous meetings;

- Deer numbers, based on latest counts and such indirect monitoring as might be carried out by members as well as updates on planned counts for the year;
- Any changes in deer management required based upon evidence gathered from monitoring procedures as set out in the Working Plan;
- Any current issues in the Group area. If necessary, issues will be prioritised and a plan of action agreed upon.

The Deer Management Plan will be delivered through the **actions** set out in **Part 1: The Working Plan**.

- Prior to meetings, Members will complete and send to the Secretary an annual return. The return will enable key information to be collated prior to the meeting.
- The Working Plan, with any maps and spreadsheets will be circulated along with the Agenda to all Group Members prior to meetings.
- The Working Plan will be discussed at the meeting, and progress against targets noted. The Working Plan will be continually reviewed and actions agreed and implemented by DMG members on an annual basis.

4. DMG Constitution

Balquhiddier DMG is constituted as a stand-alone Deer Management Group (DMG), this being formally adopted in 1992 and updated in 2016 and can be found in the [Appendix - Constitution](#). The Group operates a Membership system, where properties are members and others are encouraged to join. Anybody involved with the management of wild deer within the DMG area, will be encouraged to participate in the execution of the relevant Deer Management Plan.

5. Deer Management Plan: Update and Review

The Deer Management Plan provides an agreed framework for a coordinated and co-operative approach to deer management in the local area. The actual implementation of the Plan will be agreed on an ongoing basis at the Group's spring and autumn meetings, with scope for the Membership to adjust and adapt the Working Plan to meet changing circumstances. A review of the entire Deer Management Plan will be conducted in 2021.

6. WDNA, Code of Practice on Deer Management & Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance

Members support and fully endorse:

- The long term vision for deer populations and their management as laid out in "Scotland's Wild Deer - A National Approach".
- Code of Practice on Deer Management
- Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance

7. Dispute Resolution

- A request to do this should be made in writing at least two weeks prior to any meeting.
- All Group members are encouraged to deal with disputes in the first instance with those parties concerned, be they other Group members, external parties or Government Agencies.
- Failing that, the Chairman of the Group will seek to facilitate an agreement. This may involve the opportunity to air relevant issues at a meeting of the Group.
- Representatives from the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG) are available to assist with disputes, should it prove impossible to resolve issues within the Group. Should this arise, the Group accepts that the findings of ADMG will be implemented.

8. Culling Operations

To maintain or reduce the deer population means that individual culling decisions become proportionately more important, including the accurate reporting of culls. Open discussion of culls will be required at all meetings.

- All DMG members agree to make sufficient resources available to carry out the culls outlined in this plan, and to make arrangements with immediate neighbours to assist

in a culling programme where time or weather have precluded the target cull in being achieved.

- If extra resources are required for any reason, then further resources should be sought from other DMG members.

9. Data & Evidence Gathering

9.1. Deer Count Protocols

It has been agreed that where possible, the DMG will continue to count deer by foot on an annual basis following Best Practice Guidance. This will provide consistent deer count data across the Group area. An indication of winter mortality and recruitment will be provided for each management unit along with cull returns for the spring meeting of the Group. This information will all be taken into account when setting the cull targets for the following year.

9.2. Cull Protocols

Each management unit within the Group is treated as a separate reporting unit and it is not possible to draw up a single policy for all properties. Culling policy currently varies from property to property, and there are different factors which govern this.

Members will complete an annual return, which will be sent to the Secretary in a timely manner.

For the purposes of population modelling (which is difficult within the BqDMG area due to a large percentage of woodland cover), the deer count represents a snap-shot in time and the population will largely be treated as a whole. The annual culls will therefore be agreed by Group members to reflect where deer are during the season and according to any specific targets Members may have.

Despite other commercial pressures, properties are encouraged to work with their neighbouring properties in aiming to establish an overall population target ratio of approximately 1: 1 stags to hinds.

Estates are also encouraged to shoot dependents first on welfare grounds.

9.3. Habitat Monitoring Protocols

A key element of a demonstrably effective and environmentally responsible management plan is that it should highlight habitats relevant to deer management, set out clear objectives for those habitats, carry out monitoring and detail the actions and reporting to be implemented to achieve the targets set. The environmental objectives will be linked to Scottish Government policy but the DMG will be expected to manage localised deer impacts to deliver and sustain good condition of a range of designated and non-designated habitats.

Within the DMG area, there are three main environmental objectives:

- To deliver favourable or recovering condition on designated sites;
- To manage existing and new native woodland and to improve woodland condition where this is being impacted by deer;
- To manage impacts in the wider non-designated area such as peatland which along with woodland contributes to Scotland's ability to store carbon, and habitats which support a range of species, many of which are unique to the area. In particular the DMG will focus monitoring on dwarf shrub heath and blanket bog/peatland habitats

Members have agreed in principle that monitoring the habitats is a useful tool on which to base management decisions and those that are able will undertake habitat impact assessments on their land.

Habitat Impact Assessment will be conducted so as to:

- Collect and interpret habitat data on a regular basis to inform deer management;
- Set up a baseline to allow changes in impacts to be measured over time;
- Understand the methods used by government agencies.

The proposed method would involve using Best Practice Guidance Habitat Impact Assessment for Dwarf Shrub Heath and Blanket Bog. These guides describe the methods used by SNH to monitor deer impacts. These methods are also a key part of how other agencies monitor deer impacts.

Each property/management unit would be required to do a minimum of 30 plots (with the proportion of DSH/BB plots relative to the proportion of habitat present). This would be repeated every 2 years.

For those with native woodland, the SNH methodology “Woodland Grazing Toolbox” will be used. The numbers of plots per property would likely be a minimum of 30 (depending on the size of area of woodland). This would also be repeated every 3 years.

SNH has assessed areas to be monitored for each DMG. A series of random plots has been generated for each property within the DMG to enable individual properties to set up and undertake monitoring which will be representative of significant habitats within the Group area.

Under the initial guidance of SNH, suitable sites will be selected and a monitoring schedule for each habitat agreed for the DMG. Each property will then be responsible for reporting on the condition of their particular habitat using the correct procedure.

10. DMG Policies and Principles

10.1. Principles of Collaboration

As member of this DMG, we:-

- Acknowledge what we have in common – namely a shared commitment to a sustainable and economically viable Scottish countryside;
- Make a commitment to work together to achieve that;
- Accept that we have a diversity of management objectives and that we respect each other’s objectives;
- Undertake to communicate openly with all relevant parties;
- Commit to negotiate and where necessary compromise in order to accommodate the reasonable land management requirements of our neighbours;
- Undertake that where there are areas of disagreement, we will work to resolve these.

10.2. Competence & Training Policy

Members of the DMG recognise the need for deer to be managed by trained personnel. A Trained Person is an individual who can produce evidence of training to cover the hygiene of food stuffs requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, and Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 as they apply to wild game. An approved qualification such as the updated Deer Stalking

Certificate Level 1 (DMQ1) or the Certificate in Wild Game Meat Hygiene (large game), is the most robust way in which stalkers can show that they have the appropriate knowledge.

The Group recognises that the requirement for deer to be culled by competent and qualified personnel is in the public interest. The DMG will promote and encourage competence in undertaking deer management activities through the following actions:

- As a minimum, each reporting unit, and any other individual involved in the culling of deer, will have or will have access to an individual with the above qualifications.
- Members will be encouraged to highlight changes in competency qualifications in the annual return.
- The DMG will assist where possible in the provision/facilitation of training for anyone lacking necessary qualifications or for individuals who wish to enhance their skills.
- Following Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance to safeguard public safety, food safety and deer welfare.
- Providing opportunities for Continual Professional Development in all aspects of deer management.

10.3. Communications Policy

BqDMG aims to be an open and transparent DMG and will promote and encourage effective communication on deer management issues, both within the DMG and throughout the wider community, in order to promote better awareness and education of deer and deer management through the following actions:

- Deer management planning will be open, inclusive and seek local consultation;
- DMG web-site will be regularly updated to include the Deer Management Plan, Minutes and Agendas for meetings as well as any other relevant information, such as authorisations which seeks to promote openness and transparency;
- The DMG will ensure that contact details are available for anyone seeking information or wishing to raise concerns or express constructive opinions;
- DMG members will actively promote deer management to raise awareness and provide opportunities to question deer management decision to aid understanding;

- DMG will seek opportunities to promote deer management through training, educational or awareness raising events.

10.4. Non-Native Policy

Sika

The policy of the Group is to shoot Sika deer on sight (as per Best Practice Guidance) as there is a risk of cross breeding with native Red deer. Any evidence or believed sightings will be dealt with in a collaborative manner.

Muntjac

Muntjac are not native to Scotland and as such possible threats to their introduction or establishment must be managed. As such, Muntjac will be managed in accordance with the Non-Natives Species Code of Practice.

Feral Pigs

All members are encouraged to report feral pig sightings to local FE/ SNH area staff and be aware and follow current Scottish Government policy. This is currently to ensure no feral pigs/ wild boar are released into the wild whilst aiming to minimise the range of current populations.

10.5. Welfare Policy

Members of the DMG will promote and encourage the safeguarding of deer welfare both at the scale of the individual animal and at a population scale through the following actions:

- Carrying out all deer management activity to Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance standards;
- Promoting the undertaking of deer management training, continual professional development and industry recognised qualifications (e.g. Deer Stalking Certificate Levels 1 & 2);
- Discouraging unregulated stalking activity;
- Ensuring that the natural habitat supports good welfare through the provision of adequate habitat and shelter;

- Ensuring that any land management operations take into consideration possible effects on deer movements or the availability of shelter; and
- Ensuring that the necessary precautions and checks are undertaken to prevent the spread of diseases.

10.6. Privacy Policy

For the furtherance of our business as a Deer Management Group we need to hold and 'process' certain personal data of our Group members.

Use of personal data

The personal data that Balquhiddier DMG holds about its members will be used for the following purposes:

Membership business, contact and updates

Notification of DMG meetings, events, consultations, other items of interest in relation to the deer sector.

We may publish a list of the members of the DMG on our website or in documents relating to the DMG (i.e. our deer management plan) but will only include any information, beyond the name of your estate, land holding or business as relevant, with your consent.

Data held

The data that Balquhiddier DMG holds may consist of the following:

Name

Business/home address

Post code

Telephone number(s)

E mail address

Consent basis

By giving Balquhiddier DMG your consent you are giving us permission to hold and process your personal data for the purposes identified above. Balquhiddier DMG will always tell you why your personal data will be retained and used.

You may withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the Balquhiddier DMG secretary at the address given.

Legitimate interest or contractual basis

Alternatively, Balquhiddier DMG may hold your data on a 'legitimate interest' or 'contractual' basis.

Disclosure

Balquhiddier DMG will not pass on, share or trade your personal data with any person or organisation without first receiving your consent unless for the purpose of DMG business (i.e. to other members of the Group, to agencies such as SNH, FES etc.) or contractors engaged in work with the DMG; or in the general furtherance of the business of deer management within the area of the DMG). Under no circumstances will Balquhiddier DMG sell your information to third parties or advertisers.

10.7. Notifiable Disease & Biosecurity Policy

The aim of this policy is to outline the Notifiable Diseases for which there is a legal responsibility to act and it outlines what steps need to be taken if such a disease is suspected. It also details out the biosecurity measures deer managers should adopt to ensure disease transmission is minimised within and out-with the UK. However, normal biosecurity measures should always be adhered to and this includes ensuring that kit is cleaned on site before travelling to another location or estate.

The 4 main diseases are:

- Bovine Tuberculosis
- Foot and Mouth Disease
- Bluetongue & Epizootic Haemorrhagic Disease (EHD)
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

More information can be found on the first three on the Best Practice Guides website (www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk), however given the current threat of CWD more detailed information on this disease has been given here.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic Wasting Disease, (CWD), also known as Cervid Wasting Disease, is a highly infectious, fatal disease which has devastated some populations of wild and farmed deer in North America. It is not known to affect humans. There is no evidence of TSEs in deer in the UK but if it were to become established in the wild deer population it would have major consequences for the UK deer industry.

CWD has very recently been diagnosed in Scandinavia in a reindeer and also in moose. The risk of CWD entering the UK is therefore likely to have increased now the disease is present in Europe.

CWD is caused by a prion, a mutant folded protein, and belongs to the same group of diseases as scrapie, which affects sheep and goats, and “mad cow disease”, (bovine spongiform encephalopathy or “BSE”). This group of diseases are known collectively as “transmissible spongiform encephalopathies” or “TSE’s”, CWD is the most infectious of these, the name suggests a body sickness but it is actually degeneration of the brain and central nervous system which is the main symptom.

There is no evidence to suggest that it causes disease in people, or other species of animal.

CWD Key facts:

- CWD is fatal in any infected deer
- CWD is highly infectious and persists in the environment
- There are currently no treatments or vaccines available to control the disease
- All efforts to control the spread of CWD in the USA/Canada have so far failed and it is probably now beyond control.
- Preventing CWD from entering the UK is currently the only effective control measure

The prion is transmitted in deer body fluids and body parts including urine, faeces, saliva and several tissues in infected carcasses. The prion can remain infectious in the environment for up to twenty years as it binds to the surface of soil particles and for several years on stainless steel. It defies normal farm disinfection and even some standard autoclave disinfection processes. Animals may take 18-24 months to exhibit clinical signs and they become increasingly infectious to others over time.

CWD is a Notifiable Disease and suspicion of the disease in any animal must be immediately reported to your local APHA Animal Health Office which can be found by using the Post Code search facility in the website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency/about/access-and-opening>

For information on how to spot CWD see <https://www.gov.uk/chronic-wasting-disease>

If CWD were to become established in the UK stopping its spread is likely to be impossible, it could have major consequences:

- Loss of large numbers of the wild deer population
- Land contamination with CWD prions
- Deer welfare will be challenged in contaminated areas
- Deer farming may become impossible in contaminated areas
- Restrictions on sales of venison and live deer
- Restrictions on stalking activities

A possible route of transmission into the UK could be through countryside users bringing in prions on contaminated clothing, footwear and equipment. A specific high-risk group would be hunters or stalkers who have hunted in countries where CWD is present.

Countryside users travelling abroad must be aware of biosecurity risks; especially the risks of transporting CWD when visiting USA / Canada / Scandinavia.

Meticulous cleaning of clothing, equipment and footwear to remove all debris should reduce, (although not eliminate), the risk of introducing disease into this country.

Consider whether you need to bring back used clothing or equipment, especially footwear.

Remember that clothing, footwear and equipment taken out, bought or borrowed, used and then left abroad poses no disease risk at home.

As a hunter, especially if hunting deer and becoming contaminated in an infected country the risks are much greater.

It is more likely that your clothing, footwear and equipment will come into contact with deer body parts or fluids. Make arrangements to return them to the lender if borrowed or dispose of them by local guidelines. **Do not remove them from that country / region / State.**

Trophies or body parts. **Do not remove them from that country / region / State.**

As a host/sporting agent

Don't assume that guests will be aware of the risk of CWD transmission.

Send information to all guests so they are aware the risks and of their responsibilities.

Advise them in the documentation that their kit will be checked for cleanliness.

Undertake a kit check upon arrival, if suspicious of contamination, bag up all suspicious articles for return to their home and provide alternatives for the duration of the visit.

As a hunter considering using deer urine lures; do not trade in or use natural deer urine lures. It may contain infected urine which can transmit CWD. If you do wish to use a lure ensure that it is a synthetic version, which many US hunters believe are equally effective.

Further information, including details of clinical signs of CWD and the action to be taken if disease is suspected, is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/chronic-wasting-disease>

<http://www.bds.org.uk/index.php/research/chronic-wasting-disease-cwd>

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/Diseases/disease/wasting>

10.8. Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is caused by Borrelia bacteria which is spread to humans (and other mammals and birds) through the bite of infected ticks.

The bite from a tick tends to cause a lump on the skin with a small scab and the earliest and most common sign of Lyme disease is the "bull's eye" rash spreading from the site of the tick bite, which appears 3-30 days after the bite. Some studies have demonstrated that less than 50% of Lyme disease patients present the "bull's eye" rash. Other symptoms include "flu like" symptoms such as joint and muscle aches, stiff neck, fever, headaches, swollen glands and tiredness.

If any members experience the symptoms above following a tick bite or exposure to a tick environment, then they should seek medical advice.

Please refer to the Best Practice Guides (www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk), for more information.

11. Venison Production

The DMG currently has no collective approach to carcass collection with each property making their own arrangements with a variety of Game Dealers. Larder provision within the Group is generally good, but local co-operation ensures appropriate capacity takes places at a number of locations within the area.

Eight of the Group's members are part of the Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV).

Appendix

Constitution

(Adopted 1992 – updated 2016)

- 1) The Group shall be called the Balquhiddier Deer Management Group (BqDMG).
- 2) Functions & Objectives
 - a) To manage the wild deer herd within the Group's area;
 - b) In effecting a)
 - i. To liaise with adjoin DMGs and other interests as appropriate;
 - ii. To monitor the deer herd by regularly counting, maintaining records of such counts and relating annual culls to them;
 - iii. To require members to keep such records as the Group may demand and to make them available to the Group to be used as the Group may decide; and
 - iv. To take such action as may be necessary to achieve 2 a) above
- 3) Composition
 - a) Membership shall consist of one voting representative from each property in the Group's area. Such representative shall be nominated by the Owner. An alternate may be nominated to attend and vote at any meeting.
 - b) A representative of the Scottish Natural Heritage & Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority shall be invited to attend but shall not have a vote.
- 4) Meetings
 - a) The Group shall hold 2 meetings per year, one of which will be an AGM at which Accounts for the previous year and the Budget for the forthcoming year shall be presented and approved. Sub Committees may be appointed.
 - b) The Group will hold open meetings, to which all concerned in the local deer management (e.g. stalkers, land managers, community councils etc.) shall be invited. At such meetings, all matters pertaining to the Functions and Objectives may be discussed and proposals made, but all decisions shall be taken by the Group as defined in 3 a) above.
 - c) Timeous notice of all meetings shall be given by the Secretary. Such notice shall state the time and place of the meeting and list the business to be discussed.
 - d) Such notice must require members to make returns
- 5) Administration

- a) The Office Bearers shall consist of Chairman and Vice-Chairman, who shall be members of the Group as defined in 3 a) above, and a Secretary/ Treasurer, and shall be appointed biennially.
- b) The Secretary/ Treasurer shall be empowered to operate a Bank Account on behalf of the Group. All withdrawals shall be countersigned by the Chairman.
- c) Each Member of the Group as defined in 3 a) above shall have one vote. In the Event of an equality of votes, the Chairman of the meeting shall have a casting vote in addition to his own vote. All decisions shall be by majority of those present and voting shall be binding on all members of the Group.
- d) In the event that Chairman is absent from any meeting, the Vice-Chairman shall take the Chair, whom failing such member of the Group as those present may elect for that meeting only.
- e) The Group may co-opt representatives of other interests, or invite representatives of other interests to attend meetings. Such representatives shall not have a vote.

6) Alterations to the Constitution

Alterations to this Constitution shall be made only at the Annual General Meeting. The notice calling such a meeting shall be given timeously and shall state the alterations proposed. Such alterations shall only come into effect by a majority of two-thirds of those members present and voting.