

# Balquhiddier Deer Management Group

Balquhiddier Hall, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019, 7:30pm

## 1. Welcome & Apologies

Juan Arkotxa, Ali Brook, Alan Cory-Wright, Will Diamond, Eddy Dixon, David Lowes, Malcolm McNaughton, Malcolm Walker

## 2. Matters rising and minutes of the last meeting

Proposed Falcon Frost and Seconded by Emma Paterson.

## 3. Election of Office Bearers

As per the constitution (office bearers term is to be biennial), AAM and QL are to remain as Chair and Vice Chair for one more year.

## 4. Accounts for 2018-19

No comments were made on the accounts or budget.

## 5. DMG Deer Management Plan - Actions

### *5.1. Spring Count - Results and data from count*

On the whole, the membership were happy with what was counted and as long as it is understood that a count is a snap shot of the population and that deer were moved around on the day, which resulted in some properties holding more deer than they normally would.

Properties that have carried out HIAs now have the evidence to show that although they are holding high deer numbers at particular times of the year, the impacts are not having a negative impact on the habitat and therefore a sustainable.

The table below shows the overall number of deer counted – showing that the Stag to Hind ratio is in the region of 1:2.

Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total
984	2,051	608	3,643

It is understood that some properties are wishing to have higher deer numbers to ensure a sustainable yield of sporting stags but the high number of hinds was discussed and felt that there was an opportunity to reduce the hind numbers whilst continuing with the current level of stag cull. It was suggested that we must at least cull at the same level as recruitment. It was reiterated that the number of stags counted never correlated with the number culled in the BqDMG area. It was also noted that there were fewer of the younger age classes being seen on the hill which will be a result of the hard winter in 2018 and a low recruitment rate.

## 5.2. Culls

### 5.2.1. Review of 2018-19 Season

75-80% of open range properties did not make their culls. This was due to: personnel changes; not having mature stags, until the last two weeks of the rut; guests struggling to shoot 2-3 hinds at the one time; and not seeing the hinds on the hill during the open season.

In order to combat this members said they would try to balance guest stalking/ let days with making the hind cull, put in authorisation to start hind cull in early October (ensuring that calves are culled with mothers). AS told the Group that the average calving date is coming about a week earlier due to climate change and it is therefore better to shoot earlier rather than extend season.

WTS Glen Finglas have applied for an Out Of Season authorisation on open hill so that they can keep the deer moving about to ensure the impacts are not concentrated in one area.

### 5.2.2. Proposed 2019/20 deer culls

Below are the proposed culls for the Open Range split between the North and the South

<b>Property (North)</b>	<b>Total Male</b>	<b>Total Female</b>	<b>Total Calves</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Auchleskine	2	3	1	6
Benmore Farm	0	0	0	0
Craigrue	5	10	4	19
Edinchip	15	30	12	57
Glenogle & Leskine	5	5	2	12
Monachyle Beag	8	8	4	20
Monachyle Mhor	11	10	4	25
Suie	15	12	5	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>171</b>

<b>Property (South)</b>	<b>Total Male</b>	<b>Total Female</b>	<b>Total Calves</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Ballimore	30	40	16	86
Blaircreich	20	30	8	58
FCS North Katrine	100	225	80	405
Glen Finglas	50	50	20	120
Glenfalloch (East)	15	40	15	70
Immeroin	0	0	0	0
Inverlochlarig	25	5	2	32
Muirlaggan	15	3	1	19
RSPB Inversnaid	10	20	8	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>828</b>

The cull figures proposed for the 2019-20 season are either the same as last year or less and therefore we will not be reducing the population. The current hind proposed cull for the North does not meet the recruitment rate and therefore members have been asked to review their cull figures once they see what numbers are on their ground over the winter.

The Woodland properties within the DMG have not set cull targets, but numbers will be based on damage prevention. Discussions were had around the different carrying capacities of different woodlands (mature productive conifer vs newly planted native woodland) and therefore the different culling efforts that were needed in different situations. It was understood that even though a mature conifer plantation could carry a higher population of deer, it was important to keep a cap on the population so that when the area was re-stocked the cull effort would need to be high.

Members were informed that a Sika hind was shot in FLS Ewich and a Sika stag at Crianlarich at roundabout. The Non-native policy is to shoot on sight, if it safe to do so and within season.

ML also asked whether properties in the north of the Group would not shoot red deer with White socks/ White faces/ badger faces but to leave them alone unless there is a welfare issue or an asset needs to be protected.

### ***5.2.1. Feedback from South Group Meeting***

The minutes from the South Group meeting were shared with all BqDMG members. It was re-iterated that all members need to be mindful of their neighbours land management objectives.

The Great Trossachs Forest (RSPB, FLS and WTS) had a meeting to review their Deer Management Plan (2012-17) in light of the 2019 count figures. Their objectives are clear in that they wish to get deer numbers down to a level where regen can get away. So by working collaboratively the 3 organisations are looking to reduce densities and the only way they can do that is to achieve cull and get levels down to a sustainable level, which will be below 7 deer/km<sup>2</sup> which equates to around 400 deer. Currently the population for the 3 properties was counted at just over 1000. Therefore, instead of increasing cull figures, WTS and RSPB are going to ensure they meet the cull commitments.

**Action:** Members were asked to provide the secretary with monthly cull numbers so that effort can be altered if we are either above or below cull targets.

## **6. SNH Assessment and actions arising**

Jl updated members on the SNH assessment of DMGs which was about the delivery of DMPs. Jl, AMM, QL, TT and NFC sat through assessment and the Group is progressing and performing reasonably well but that it needs to keep up momentum.

Jl highlighted a couple of things for the Group to focus on: native woodland, both creation and condition of existing woodland; increasing Foot count coverage; and all members to become more involved and help office bearers.

Population models were discussed and it was suggested that we run a population model for the north, to get more of a feeling for the population and what will happen as the proposed cull is low and will need reviewing October

**Action:** NFC to pull together Population Model for the North

We have also asked Edinburgh and Napier University, to see if a student would like to look at population modelling as part of a thesis. It may also be an opportunity to carry out this research in partnership with I&TDMG as they have similar difficulties with population models.

**Action:** speak to Linzi Seivright as she is involved with Universities.

**Action:** FF & TT to bring it up with ADMG exec meeting

## **7. ADMG report**

TT provided a summary of the various updates from ADMG including:

- Deer Working Panel
- SNH Assessments- DMGs have shown good progress and they hoped the ADMG health check helped. The report will come out in the Autumn (2019).
- Lowland Deer Panel – has reported [7 recommendations](#)
- Communications – ADMG need to report to members about the work that they do, so they will now also publish an Annual review at time of the AGM, as well as the 2 printed Scopes each year, and E-Scope which is received by email.
- Record cull in 2017-18 – 75,000 red deer in Scotland with high natural mortality
- Survey of sporting rents – the charge for stags varies greatly and TT thinks the industry under values stag stalking – opportunity to increase. ADMG Report to be finalised shortly – within a month – reports on what other people are charging
- HIAs should be taking place now or in the next month.
- Venison Health Survey– E.coli – present in 3 samples – 2 red 1 sika. AS told the members present that the prevalence of E. Coli in cattle and sheep is greater than 25%.
- ADMG are urging people to register SQWV – this gives a level of confidence of food going into food chain.
- FF is now working with ADMG.

## **8. SNH report**

Jl updated members of the General license for bird control. The Scottish general license has not changed, but the review which was due to happen next year has been brought forward to autumn 2019. He urged people to provide feedback into review of general license.

**Action:** NFC to share link when it comes out

## **9. Any other Business**

RE provide members an update on the Stags shot on North Katrine since the sub group met. 17 shot have been culled. 3 were not weighed as they went straight to the Eagle Project. But the rest ranged from 32.3kg to 66kgs, with an average of 47.6kg.

NFC told the Group that one of the farms on Suie has come back in hand and they wish to start a Deer Farm on Ledcharrie. Over the winter of 2019-20, they intend to feed in hinds from the open hill. Suie therefore put forward a figure of 40 deer – this will be made up of either cull or live capture.

**10. Date of next meeting**

30<sup>th</sup> October 2019