

Balquhiddier Deer Management Group

Balquhiddier Hall, 7:30pm, 6th November 2019

Minutes

1) Present

Fraser Lamont, Juan Arkotxa, David Thow, Alan Cory-Wright, Ian Dingwall, Jimmy Irvine, Doug McDade, Malcolm Walker, Paul Bekier, Falcon Frost, David Lowes, Richard Eadington, Davie Luti, Mike Luti, Hamish Thompson, David Sutherland, Quintin Lyle, Alcuin Arkotxa-MacKenzie, Malcolm McNaughton, Ally Brooks

2) Apologies

Apologies: John Sinclair, Tom Turnbull, Alan Sneddon, Grant Jolly, Rolfe Thornquist, Estelle Gill, Alex Bowers, Emma Paterson

3) Matters arising and minutes of the last meeting

Were taken as a fair representation of the meeting – proposed by Falcon and seconded by Alan.

4) 2019 Stag Cull

In general, the rut was good with stags in good condition. There was a mix of properties with a good number of stags and others not seeing many.

The Northern part of the group has exceeded their stag cull on the open range.

The Southern part of the group has not met their stag cull on the open range; however FCS North Katrine will continue to cull out of season.

5) North Katrine Land Slides

PB gave a summary of landslips in the Katrine area; there were 30 major events, 10 landslips, and many burn wash outs.

Some of the major landslips took out deer fences and 7 of the woodland creation schemes are now open to the deer.

FLS are currently awaiting geo-technical surveys to make sure hill is safe for workers, before they can produce a report to assess whether they can re-instate the fences or to increase the cull; in some cases this will not be possible due to topography and extent and FLS intend to cull break-ins to protect the woodland creation asset.

AAM asked PB whether the internal report can be shared amongst the DMG. The Report will cover aspects such as what fences are to be repaired, what roads will be re-built, and what ATV tracks will be re-instated.

Action: PB to check if report can be shared.

Other members voiced concerns that whilst the report and surveys are being produced, deer that have entered the woodlands (and will be causing damage to the trees) will be culled and that the population will be reduced in that area. PB stated that FLS want to address deer management by culling rather fencing and that the cull carried out on FLS managed land has never had an impact on the overall population.

Action: Monthly cull returns to be provided by FLS which will be forwarded on by the secretary so that others can re-assess their cull targets.

Inverlochlarig had the same meterage of fence (800m) damaged as FLS and have completed their repairs. Glenfalloch are in the process of fixing theirs.

6) DMG Deer Management Plan – Actions

Set up Exec Group to help to coordinate activity

Falcon Frost, Fraser Lamont and Mike Luti volunteered to be on the Exec Committee to help existing Office Bearers.

Woodland Monitoring

There are only a few members looking at monitoring their woodlands, Glenfalloch are in the process of setting them up. Other members still struggle with the Woodland Toolbox Methodology¹ and would find more training useful.

The Native Woodland Survey of Scotland was discussed and members were asked to look at the results online either on the [BqDMG webpage](#) or on the Scottish Forestry Map Viewer². If you have woodlands that are marked with high or very high herbivore impacts and the management since 2007-2014 has changed, then it was suggested that the data should be contested and updated where appropriate.

Upland HIA data

Glenfalloch have carried out Upland HIAs in 2019 (and do annually) and have provided the data to the secretary, Muirlaggan needs to transcribe the data and Monachyle Beag and Suie will carry out Upland HIAs next year (2020).

Action: Secretary to share an excel sheet for data entry to allow easy mapping.

Do we need more Upland or Woodland HIA training?

Glen Finglas & Edinchip asked for Upland HIA training and a refresher for the Woodland Toolbox would be appreciated.

Action: Secretary to organise a training day for both of woodland and upland with the help of SNH staff.

¹ <https://forestry.gov.scot/woodland-grazing-toolbox>

²

<https://scottishforestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d6125cfe892439ab0e5d0b74d9acc18>

Authorisations

Dochart Woods, Blaircreich, FLS, Glen Finglas all have authorisations in place.

Action: Members applying for authorisations to notify the Group of details of authorisations (woodland/ open range) and to send out to all members not just to secretary.

7) Population Model

Jl explained the population model that he had worked on for the Northern properties, which showed that unless the hind cull was increased to meet or surpass the recruitment rate then the overall population would increase. Jl also reminded members present that to provide the sporting requirement of 78 stags annually, a hind population of 400 was required. Therefore the current population of 880 (2019 helicopter count) was surplus to requirements and a suitable hind cull that will bring the population down rather than let it grow is required. Jl suggested that 200 hinds need to be culled in north half of group annually for the next few years to control the population.

Concerns were raised about increasing the open range population cull, when FLS are culling a large number of hinds in woodlands as the fences are not being repaired and therefore the population model does not take this into account.

8) Hind Cull Targets

Properties in the northern part of the group were unwilling to raise their cull targets to meet the 200-hind target suggested by JI, as they are not seeing that many hinds during the open season as compared to those counted by the helicopter and stated that HIAs were showing that the grazing pressure was medium to low. JI reminded members that it was a balance between HIAs and sporting requirements. If members do not need to hold 1000 hinds to provide them with more stags as a sporting resource, then the ground does not need to hold such a high hind population.

NC reminded members present that there is a deer farm being planned on the Ledcharrie Farm on Suie and therefore any red deer captured as part of this new enterprise will be counted as culled/removed from the wild population.

9) Foot count

It was agreed that there should be a foot count in the spring week beginning 2nd March 2020. Falcon and Ian agreed to be the Count Coordinators.

10) ADMG report

FF gave a summary of ADMG's current business, including:

- Awaiting the Deer Working Group – might be delayed to the New Year. ADMG believe progress has been made but will await recommendations from Working Group
- E-Scope – Richard Cooke has expressed his beliefs that we have made progress
- AGM in Aviemore, and regional meeting in Alladale
- Scone and Moy game fair
- Article in E-Scope about Breadalbane's experience with the assessment process
- Article in E-Scope by Helen MacIntyre about the cost of stag stalking
- Moredum Health Survey – E.Coli – would shut down venison trade if E.Coli was found
- SG funding marketing survey on venison (£20K)
- Sporting rates – most appeals have been dealt with informally
- Meeting in Kingsmill Inverness and AGM in February

11) SNH report

a) SNH Assessment

This year's Deer Review, which includes the 2019 assessment, is currently sitting with the minister but with the election the publication may be delayed. However, JI assured members that the message from SNH is that the deer sector has moved forward, DMGs have stepped up, the process has improved and DMGs are delivering private and public benefits.

Lowland Deer Project report is also with SG and focussed on the area between Stirling and Glasgow and looked at the different models for deer culling in the lowland setting.

The Independent Deer Working Group was asked to review the current set up for deer management in Scotland but this is also delayed to the New Year. The report will no doubt come up with recommendations.

Jl reminded members that we are no in a Climate Emergency, which has put a focus on the land management sector. DMGs will be looked at to deliver more in the future, such as native woodlands and peatland projects.

b) Thermal and Night Vision

The Authorisations Review has stated that a trial of Thermal Image and Night Vision equipment for the use of culling deer at night is carried out. It is currently illegal to use 'image intensifying' scopes under the Deer (Firearms) Scotland order 1985. It is recognised that technology has moved on since the 1980s and legislation may need amended. The trial will focus on deer welfare aspects of using of TI/ NV and should be completed by the end of March 2020.

ML stated that he is getting increasingly uncomfortable about the way deer are being treated and deer managers are moving away from shooting in the daylight and in season. He stated that in SQWV it says that stalkers must observe the behaviour of deer before culling. ML also stated that there should be an open consultation on any proposed changes based on any evidence from this trial.

The technology of thermal and night vision has moved on dramatically in recent years and there are many different stages at which a deer manager can assess if an animal should enter into the human food chain. Each holding has their own objectives and will use the tools available to them to complete the task efficiently and effectively.

12) National Park report

a) Peatland update & Carbon Credits

NC gave an update on the Peatland Action projects within the DMG area. Both Edinchip and Glen Finglas were awarded grant funding from SNH's Peatland ACTION, however due to annualised budgets and contractor availability neither project was able to go ahead this year. Plans are in place to ensure project delivery in 2020.

b) Feral Goat update

At the beginning of October, a meeting was held with environmental NGOs, FLS and NPA staff. ADMG was also present. The management of deer and feral goats was discussed and that a collaborative approach is required. Senior Management from the eNGOs were made aware of the efforts currently being made at a local level throughout the DMG.

Feral Goat control was discussed at length in the Pollochro area and RPSB have committed to working in collaboration with Glenfalloch and FLS to be part of a partnership control programme.

13) Any other Business

The secretary reminded everyone to pay their **Subs** asap.

PB told members present that a **Sika** hind and calf shot in Ewich and that there should be zero tolerance on Sika. JI reminded members that you would still need an out of season licence, unless they are within enclosures.

JI have an update on **Flanders** – there have been 500 red deer shot April to March within a 4mile by 8 mile area. The 2019 count showed similar numbers to the 2018 count, so the same effort will be used again and then reviewed.

14) Date of next meeting: 27th May 2020 7pm