

**Forestry Commission Scotland**  
**Technical Guidance for Woodland Improvement Grant for reducing deer impact**  
**Rural Development Contracts – Rural Priorities**

**What is this about?**

This technical guidance is for case officers, applicants, land owners, land managers and their agents. The purpose of this guidance is to clarify eligibility for reducing deer impact and to explain the specific requirements of the Deer Management Plan (DMP).

**What will this achieve?**

The purpose of this option is to improve the ecological and environmental value of woodlands by reducing the negative impact of deer. Support is aimed at reducing and maintaining deer numbers at levels that prevent damage to trees and important woodland habitats.

The primary objectives are to reduce deer grazing pressure on planted and regenerating tree species; to reduce bark stripping in existing woodlands; and to benefit other important associated woodland habitats. A priority will be given to reducing the negative impact of deer on SSSI's and Natura sites.

**What you can do?**

The applicant must propose a programme of deer control over a period of at least 5 years and submit this on the Deer Management Plan application form attached as Appendix 1 to this guidance.

**Who can apply?**

Individual property owners or lessees.

**General Requirements of the Deer Management Plan**

Within the DMP you must demonstrate that there is clear public benefit for this support.

Grant support is provided to reduce damage on vulnerable crops, sensitive habitats and other woodland areas where deer management is essential to control deer and you will need to describe the beneficial changes that will take place in the woodland and/or habitat and that the deer population will be reduced and /or maintained at acceptable levels.

In each of these woodland areas it is critical that either the vulnerable crop or the important habitat is identified. If there is no vulnerable crop or habitat the applicant will need to provide the reason(s) for including these woodlands, which should be made clear within the Management Plan text.

The minimum eligible area is 10ha. This can consist of more than one woodland block although each woodland block must meet the criteria above on vulnerable crop and/or important habitat eligibility.

The woodland area must have at least 20% tree cover distributed over the whole area.

Open ground (OG) is eligible up to a maximum of 20% of the total grant aidable area. OG must be an essential part of an individual woodland or matrix to qualify and the OG must be mapped with all areas of 1ha or over being shown. Open areas above the 20% limit must be shown separately as other land (OL) and will not contribute to the grant aidable area.

Areas of woodland under previous forestry support schemes i.e. WGS, SFGS and approved Forest Plans will be eligible for this support, providing that the deer management work activities proposed are not already a commitment for grant already paid or being funded under SFGS Stewardship Grant (S2).

This support is also intended to contribute towards the cost of deer management in areas of woodland creation where this is essential to ensure woodland establishment.

Areas in receipt of annual payments for the management of native woodlands and /or areas of LISS under the RDC option 'Sustainable management of forests and woodlands' are ineligible for this support, because this should be an integral component of the costs being supported by the annual payments. However, the guidance on the Deer Management Plan (DMP) that follows applies equally to these areas.

### **What area qualifies for payment?**

The eligible area will depend on deer species, tree species, crop age over the plan period and important non-woodland habitats. But the area should consist of a combination of vulnerable crops, sensitive habitats and other woodland areas where deer management is essential to control deer.

The case officer will consider the management plan for deer control and the anticipated control costs. *The net costs of carrying out the deer control must exceed the amount of grant payable.*

Where deer control costs are genuinely high per hectare and the public benefits are high then case officers will take these factors into account in agreeing the eligible area.

### **Mapping Requirements and defining the boundaries**

Accurate mapping is a key requirement. It is important to identify clearly each woodland area where deer management is required. Applicants should also provide an operations map showing what work will take place on site within the woodlands throughout the Plan period, eg ride management, high seat construction, carcass extraction routes, deer fencing.

## **The Deer Management Plan (DMP)**

This is divided into three sections:

(**1** Scheme Details; **2** Plan; **3** Supporting Information)

### **1 Scheme details**

We need to know who owns the woodland, who the agent is (if any) and the author of the DMP. We also need a description of the woodland and deer that are present.

In this initial section we want to know what public benefit will be achieved from proposed grant aided activity, current and proposed deer management practice and the desired future condition of the woodland and associated habitat. We also need to know what activities are planned for at least the first 5-year period and the applicant's estimated net cost of the operations.

Support will be available from the year following the commencement of work that achieves the following:

- reduction culls and ongoing management culls
- monitoring and assessment

### **2 Plan**

We need to know the applicant's reason for deer management. For example this may be "To reduce the impact of deer on existing woodland to allow regeneration to take place and recovery of associated habitat". The DMP must provide a statement about the baseline habitat condition and the desired condition that is expected to result as a consequence of the deer management. For example "To reduce the impact of deer to no more than 5 % evidence of deer browsing on appropriate natural regeneration within the identified vulnerable areas".

#### **Setting Cull Targets**

A key part of the DMP is to identify planned cull targets for the first five years. There are two identified types of culls: -

- a) Reduction Culls. This is where additional effort is required from applicants in the initial years to reduce the population levels as soon as practicable e.g to reduce the deer population numbers from xx deer per 100 hectares to x deer per 100 ha as soon as practicable within the plan period.
- b) Management Culls. This is the ongoing and sustainable culling that could be achieved on an annual basis e.g. to maintain deer population numbers at a level that achieves the desired habitat condition.

### **Suitability of deer controllers**

It is important that we are satisfied that the individual(s) identified to carry out the planned culls will be able to deliver what is planned. The applicant needs to provide evidence of the qualifications, suitability and availability of the stalker(s).

### **Record keeping**

We will agree details of which records need to be kept. DCS Best Practice will be followed with for example, date killed, species, sex, estimated age, body weight, female reproductive status.

### **Assessment of Habitat Condition**

It is important that sample plot information, browsing levels and factual evidence of deer damage, is monitored for the commencement of the plan as a baseline and then annually to ensure there is a formal record of what is taking place. The applicant must therefore identify and agree with us what method will be used. The DCS Best Practice Guide will define the most suitable options for each different woodland situation.

The annual assessment will give an opportunity to review progress to ensure things are moving in the expected direction. Any uncertainty should be discussed with your case officer. A formal review should be made at year five if you intend to seek support for any further years within the plan.

## **3 Supporting Information**

This is part of the Deer Management Plan and provides the factual information necessary to support the objectives, targets and proposals set out in the DMP.

### **Habitat information**

It is important to detail the different vulnerable crops and habitats present within the ownership. This information will enable us to identify the main benefits to be derived from the support.

### **Known information about deer populations**

In many cases there will already be useful information on deer populations, for example estate count, or helicopter count information from DCS. It is important that this information is accurate and is used to inform the basis of the DMP itself. Ideally we need to know the estimated population densities both on the open hill and within the woodlands.

### **Indicators of woodland deer densities**

In conjunction with DCS we have compiled a chart that indicates the evidence for the likely level of deer present in woodlands. This can be used to inform the DMP.

<b>Evidence</b>	<b>4-8/100 ha Low Density</b>	<b>8-15/100 ha Medium Density</b>	<b>15+/100 ha High Density</b>
Tracks	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.
(Tick)			
Dung	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
(Tick)			
Browsing of Vegetation	Natural regeneration of broad-leaved trees taking place with no or little damage to current year's 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.
(Tick)			

### **Previous Cull data**

There may already be good historic information of previous culls. This information will help to understand what has taken place before and help to predict appropriate cull levels to achieve the desired habitat condition.

### **Integrated and Adjacent Land Use**

Explaining the different types of land use and pressures within and adjacent to the application area will help us to understand what different factors and constraints apply to the management of the deer in the area. This information will help explain many of the intended operations such as high seats, the need for any deer fencing and any specific control areas being designed into the DMP.

### **Factors which Influence how wild deer use the area** (*Mainly relevant for Red Deer ranges*).

It is important to explain if there are seasonal differences, which influence how deer might use certain areas (eg for shelter during the winter months). There may also be traditional use of certain areas by hinds or stags (eg moving from one area to another). This information will help inform of likely fluctuations in populations as well as the variable need of control resources at different times of the year.

### **Compensatory Culls**

If there are plans to expand woodland areas into open hill of known red deer ranges (including the use of deer fencing) it is important that deer which rely on that area for forage and shelter are culled to compensate for the loss of this range. It is recommended that dung counts take place at regular intervals as well as visual counts, to ensure that the population of deer using the area is estimated accurately. In these situations we will not contribute towards the cost of compiling this information, unless a DMP is already in place and approved.

### **Evidence of historical and existing deer damage to woodlands and habitats**

It is useful to quantify and describe, past and current deer damage within the woodlands and associated habitats.

### **Deer Management Group (DMG) Participation**

We strongly encourage applicants to take an active part in these groups to ensure there is good exchange of information about deer and sharing of resources and intelligence. It is hoped that these groups will enable good partnership working to ensure that the shared common goal of effective deer management is achieved. Where appropriate, comment on the plan will be sought from the local DMG.

### **Best Practice Guides**

In collaboration with many other organisations DCS have produced a comprehensive suite of "Best Practice Guides" related to deer management. These are key Guides to identify the methods and practice and are expected to be applied in carrying out the DMP. The DCS web site will have the up to date list.

### **Deer Fencing**

The Forestry Commission Scotland's Guidance Note 11 "Deer and Fencing" (revised March 2001) should be referred to for full details. Also relevant is the "Joint Agency Statement and Guidance on Deer Fencing June 2004". It is policy to support the use of deer fencing only when no reasonable alternative is appropriate. Where fencing is proposed it is important to ensure that any potential high adverse impact is minimised by planning careful siting, design, marking and removal. In sensitive locations if bird strikes are a possibility a "Risk Assessment" needs to be carried out. Details of how to do this are available from your Case Officer or the local FCS Conservancy Office.

Grants for deer fencing will not be paid under this option. Grant payment for deer fencing is available under the options for woodland creation and woodland improvement grants for improving priority habitats and species.

### **Eligible Operations**

Work that will be eligible for funding includes:

- Reduction culls and ongoing management culls – costs which are directly associated with culling deer includes wages, running costs of vehicles, high seat construction, deer glade creation, formation of extraction routes and contractors costs.
- Monitoring and assessment - this includes assessment of tree crops and important habitats and regular monitoring for deer incursions. Keeping records of deer shot, collection of data.

(See example in Appendix 2, together with associated grant calculation.)

### **Review of DMP progress**

If you wish to seek support for work in the Deer Management Plan beyond the first 5 years, you should have the plan reviewed before the end of Year 5. This should be done with the Case Officer and in some occasions jointly with the local Deer Commission for Scotland staff.

Points which will need to be considered at that time will be:

- Baseline Habitat Condition
- Natural tree regeneration evidence, year 1 to year 5
- Damage assessment information, year 1 to year 5, site inspection to verify results
- Deer Population Levels year 1 to year 5.
- Actual Cull records (compared to predicted)
- Progress of agreed work within DMP.
- Changes required to either desired condition at the plan end or to the management to achieve this.

For a second five year period of support it will be important to consider the following:

- A need to change the cull targets,
- Any change in intensity / location of monitoring information.
- A change in the method and type of information provided to reflect changes in woodland management or adjacent land use and deer habits,
- Revision of costings for future years to reflect changing circumstances, rentals, wage levels, venison prices, new legislation etc.

## **Appendix 1**

Application Number

### **Part 1 Scheme Details**

#### **A) Scheme details**

Location:

Owner(s)

Agent

Deer Management Plan Author

Type of woodland:

Deer Species

Application area of deer management unit (hectares)

**B) Please tell us the proposed work (see table D below to quantify by year)**

*(Include description of current deer control methods, clarify what sensitive areas and habitats are vulnerable and briefly describe what needs to be carried out during the ten year duration of the Plan. Please be specific so that FC Scotland will be able to assess to what extent these plans have been achieved.)*

**C) Please tell us any relevant information to support the area applied for.**

Mapping: Please attach map(s) which clearly delineate the application area to be included as eligible woodland and appropriate relevant open ground. Identify adjacent land uses which may impact on the DMP, any internal different ownership boundaries, location of vulnerable crops, intended monitoring areas and any relevant "operations" maps.

**D) Costs**

**(Specifically related to deer management costs only)**

- Reduction and management culls
- Monitoring and assessment

**Anticipated Items by individual years (at least 5)**

	<u>Year</u> <u>1</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>2</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>3</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>4</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>5</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>6</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>7</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>8</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>9</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>10</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>										
<b>Revenue</b> <u>(venison only)</u>										
<b>Net Costs</b>										

## **Part 2** **Deer Management Plan**

### **A) Management Plan Objectives**

(Include Statement of intended outcomes)

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### **B) Cull Targets (i) Reduction Culls**

Year	Male				Female				Juveniles				Total S
	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	

Year	Male				Female				Juveniles				Total S
	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	Red	Roe	Sika	Fallow	

### **Comments / Additional Information**

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**C) Cull Targets (Cont) (ii) Management Culls**

<b><u>Comments / Additional Information</u></b>

**D) Nominated Controller/s**

(Notify FCS if any changes occur)

	Nominated controller	Owner	Estate ⊕ Employee	Contract Stalker	Shooting Tenant	Place of Residence	Firearms Certificate No
<b>1</b>							
<b>2</b>							
<b>3</b>							

⊕ Section 26(i) of the deer act clarifies definition of "employee".

	<b>Controller's Relevant Experience and Calibre of Rifles Authorised</b>
1	
2	
3	

**E) Record Keeping. (As Per DCS Best Practice Guide).**

(To be provided to DCS)

Must include: -Date killed, species, sex, estimated age, body weight, female reproductive status.
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**F) Method(s) used to annually assess damage to woodlands.**

(Annual returns must be compiled by applicant. These will be reviewed at year 5 or as requested).

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**G) Applicant's brief description of methods used to evaluate and review progress of Deer Management Plan** (include baseline assessment detail)

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**Part 3 Supporting Information**

**A) Information Relating to Known Deer Densities (counts etc)**

	Present	Density in Woodland Per 100ha	Density On open hill Per 100Ha	Source of Count		Dung Count Info	Year Of Count
				DCS	Estate		
Red							
Roe							
Sika							
Fallow							

<b><u>Comment /Additional; Information</u></b>
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**B) Woodland Deer Density Indicators**

Evidence	4-8 Low Density	8-15 Medium Density	15+ High Density
<b>Tracks</b>	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.
(Tick)			
<b>Dung</b>	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 favored feed areas.
(Tick)			
<b>Browsing of Vegetation</b>	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.

**C) Previous Cull Data**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Stags/Bucks</u>	<u>Hinds/Does</u>	<u>Calves/Kids</u>	<u>Totals</u>

**Comments / Additional Information****D) Habitat Information**

<u>Habitat</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Vulnerable to deer pressure</u>	<u>Comment</u>
SAC/SPA			
SSSI (Geology, Flora, Fauna)			
Vulnerable Crop			
Open Hill Ground			
Internal Open Ground			
Native Woodland			
Broadleaves			
Conifers			
Other			

**E) Integrated or Adjacent Land Use**

	<u>Comment</u>
Existing Woodland	
Mixture of Woodland / Arable Land	
Unimproved Pasture / Open Hill	

<u>Other (Specify)</u>	
<u>Public Access / Recreation Facilities</u>	
<u>Deer Road Traffic Issues</u>	
<u>Public Safety issues</u>	

**F) Factors which might influence deer use**

Is the site part of a Red deer wintering area?	
Immigration / Emigration Knowledge.	

**G) Evidence of historical / existing damage**

(i) Damage to woodlands and habitats

(State any method of assessment eg; transects, fixed plots, fixed point photography)

(ii) Damage to natural heritage interests

(State any method of assessment)-

**H Deer Fencing (See FC Guidance Note 11 and "Joint Agency Statement and Guidance on Deer Fencing – June 2004")**

**Deer Fencing:** If deer fencing is proposed explain what measures will be taken if required to compensate for the loss of deer range to ensure its effectiveness. Also highlight whether a risk assessment has been carried out to mitigate against bird strikes.

**Example Costs  
Anticipated Net Costs Itemised by individual years**

**Appendix 2**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
<b><u>Expenditure</u></b>										
<b><u>Keeper Wages + costs (30%)</u></b>	<u>£300</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£300</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£300</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£330</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£3400</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£3500</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£355</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£360</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£370</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£380</u> <u>0</u>
<b><u>Quad Bike (Access)</u></b>		<u>£200</u> <u>0</u>				<u>£1000</u>				
<b><u>High Seats</u></b>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£200</u>					
<b><u>Ride Management</u></b>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>
<b><u>Monitoring plan</u></b>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£100</u>
<b><u>Fence inspect and repair</u></b>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>	<u>£100</u>	<u>£200</u>
<b><u>Revenue</u></b>										
<b><u>Venison</u></b>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>	<u>£500</u>
<b><u>Net Costs</u></b>	<u>£300</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£510</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£300</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£340</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£340</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£3400</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£335</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£350</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£350</u> <u>0</u>	<u>£370</u> <u>0</u>

**Total net cost over first 5 year period (as anticipated at year 1) = £17,900**

**Grant Calculation (example)**

Total Woodland Area = 350 hectares (includes eligible open ground)

Expenditure anticipated for years 1 to 5 = £17,900

Grant support provided for years 1 to 5 = £30 x 350ha = £10,500

If the Plan is reviewed and further support is agreed, then additional grant of £10,500 for years 6-10 will be provided.