



OPEN FOREST MANAGEMENT

THE OPEN FOREST - FACTS

The Open Forest, sometimes referred to as the Open Forest Waste or Unenclosed Forest, covers 17,325 ha of the New Forest. It is made up of a variety of habitats. The types and areas covered by each are shown below:

Open Forest 17,325 ha					
Dry Heath	Humid Heath	Wet Heath	Valley Mire	Associated Heath	'A&O'
706 ha	4,476 ha	1,653 ha	1,450 ha	Communities	woodland
				5,348 ha	3,692 ha

The commoners' animals graze the Open Forest by ancient and registered rights of pasture and mast. The practice of commoning has given the Forest much of its traditional character and ponies are often called the 'Architects' of the Forest. Some areas have remained the same as William I first saw them.

OPEN FOREST MANAGEMENT

Grazing by commoner's animals, supplemented by an annual cut and burn programme are the principle tools of heathland management.

Q. WHY IS THE OPEN FOREST VEGETATION MANAGED?

A. There are three reasons for management;

1. As part of the New Forest Act 1949 the Forestry Commission are obliged to keep areas of grazing clear of coarse herbage, scrub and self-sown trees.
2. Much of the vegetation actually benefits from cutting or burning by encouraging vigorous new growth.
3. Cutting or burning areas of vegetation creates effective firebreaks to protect large areas of heathland, woodland and private property.

Q. WHAT TYPES OF VEGETATION ARE TREATED?

A. Differing types of vegetation are treated as part of the annual programme, these include;

- areas of old and degenerate gorse,
- humid and wet heath sites,
- valley mires,
- areas of accumulated bracken litter,

- pine and birch encroachment.

Areas of dry heath are rarely treated, as they tend not to respond so well to controlled burning.

ANNUAL CUT AND BURN ACHIEVEMENTS

YEAR	TOTAL (acres and hectares)		YEAR	TOTAL (acres and hectares)	
1980-81	1334	540	1992-93	1672	677
1981-82	1289	522	1993-94	877	355
1982-83	847	343	1994-95	1445	585
1983-84	971	393	1995-96	1016	411
1984-85	944	382	1996-97	744	301
1985-86	1299	526	1997-98	830	336
1986-87	1000	405	1998-99	825	334
1987-88	1188	481	1999-00	693	280.5
1988-89	1146	464	*2000-01	221.5	89.5
1989-90	1104	447	2001-02	727.5	294.5
1990-91	793	321	2003-04	952.5	385.5
1991-92	1057	428			

*** FOOT AND MOUTH RESTRICTIONS STOPPED BURNING**

MEAN SIZE OF PROGRAMME = 815 acres (330ha)

1 acre = 0.4047 ha

1ha =2.471 acres.



New Forest District, Education Section, Queen's House,
Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7NH. 023 8028 3141