



Deer Management – Forestry and Land Scotland Protocol for Managing Emergency Situations on Scotland’s National Forests and Land

CONTEXT

In order to encourage and strengthen collaborative deer management in Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) communicates regularly with Deer Management Groups and neighbours regarding the management of deer on Scotland’s National Forests and Land (SNFaL). This includes sharing information on proposed culls, out of season and night shooting authorisations, deer management plans and fenceline/gate management.

Recognising however that, from time to time, emergency situations occur, FLS has agreed with the Executive Committee of the Association of Deer Management Groups that the wider interests of deer management in Scotland would be further strengthened if FLS developed a protocol for managing these situations.

In the event, for instance, that FLS identifies an exceptional and significant deer incursion on FLS Land, FLS staff will implement the following protocol:-

Situation Identified

Major deer incursion identified by FLS staff, neighbour or other interested party. FLS notified and ‘protocol’ initiated with immediate effect.

- FLS would encourage neighbours to share information on developing situations which they are aware of and not known to FLS.

Situation Assessed

FLS Wildlife Ranger team carry out a rapid and accurate assessment of the overall situation to:-

- Ascertain the key facts (eg. deer numbers/species, location, condition of deer, probable source, route into FLS land, likely impact on crops, habitat and wider designated areas, potential impact on public safety).
- Take immediate advice from local veterinary service if animal welfare is thought to be a key or urgent factor.

Situation Communicated

- FLS will contact the relevant neighbouring land owner/manager within 24 hrs to inform them of the facts and discuss possible options for resolving the situation.
- FLS will inform the Chair & Secretary of the Local DMG within 48 hrs. Initial notification plus updates ie proposed management actions and resolution.

Options Discussed

- FLS will discuss options for managing the situation with the relevant neighbouring landowner(s). Options will take into account factors such as weather, ground conditions and the number and condition of deer.
- Discussions will take into account the fact that FLS may have a need to remove deer from FLS land within a short period of time in order to safeguard the forest environment, vulnerable tree crops or animal welfare.
- If deemed a realistic option, FLS will provide opportunity and assistance to move deer from FLS land. If, however, this is attempted and found to fail, and there is imminent threat to animal welfare, the forest environment or forest management objectives, FLS will then consider instigating necessary culling operations in order to safeguard FLS land.

Situation Resolution

- FLS will work towards achieving an outcome acceptable to key parties, whilst necessarily reserving the right to action in situations where agreement cannot be reached.
- The chosen management actions will be communicated to the neighbouring land owner/manager and to the local DMG.
- FLS staff will carry out their deer management duties to the highest level of professionalism, following industry best practice and guidance (eg 'Scotland's Wild Deer a National Approach' and 'The Joint Agency Statement on Deer Fencing').

Situation Reviewed

Once the situation is resolved, FLS will review and summarise events, with appropriate recommendations, based on lessons learned. To be shared and discussed with the local Deer Management Group.

