

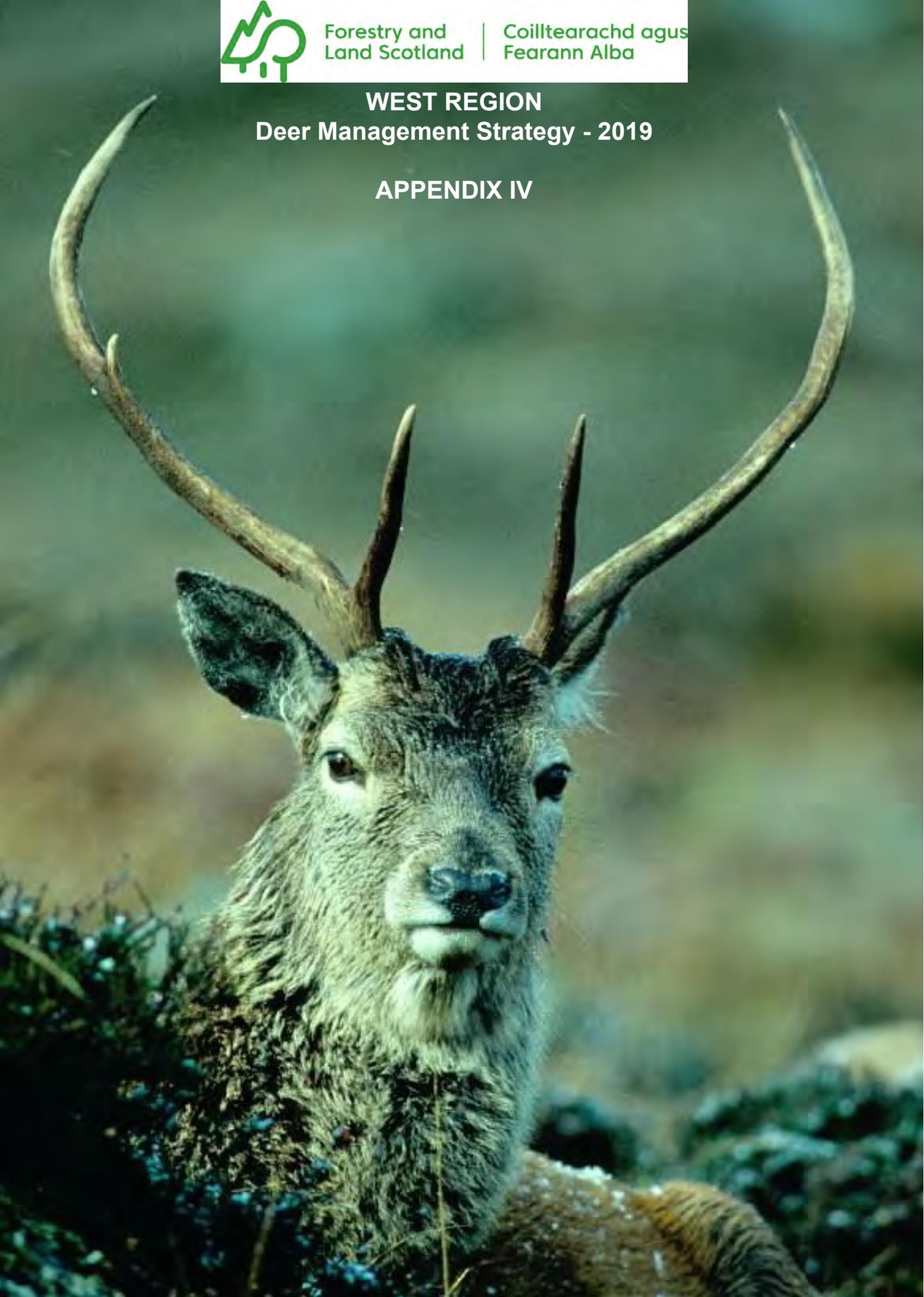


Forestry and  
Land Scotland

Coilltearachd agus  
Fearann Alba

**WEST REGION**  
**Deer Management Strategy - 2019**

**APPENDIX IV**



## **Deer Management Strategy**

**This document should be read as an addition to the FES Deer Management Strategy On The National Forest Estate 2014-2017.**

### **Overall Policy**

The main objective of deer management within West Region is to regulate deer populations at a level that is compatible with their environment and our other management objectives. This means that we aim to prevent unacceptable damage to commercial tree crops and in key areas to maintain or enhance biodiversity. This will be done in a professional and humane way, ensuring the physical well being of the remaining deer populations within the forest boundaries. Venison income will be optimised and opportunities to create revenue from permit stalking and leasing will be taken, but without compromising the over-riding issue of damage prevention. This strategy should be read in conjunction with OGB 5.

### **Deer Species**

The four species of deer present in West Region are Red, Roe, Sika and Fallow on Mull.

### **Deer Impact**

All species are capable of causing significant damage to productive forests and woodlands as well as reducing species diversity in the ground flora, resulting in the prevention of natural regeneration by native tree species. This is increasingly recognised as a major barrier to maintaining and increasing biodiversity in British woodlands. At very high densities deer are prone to increased levels of parasitism and disease (rare in UK conditions),

poor breeding success and early mortality. In impoverished upland habitats they can also suffer from starvation.

### **Principal Management Techniques**

The potential problems described above may be addressed by either population management through culling or exclusion of deer by perimeter fencing, either between neighbours or internally, or by a combination of the three.

### **Deer Management Groups**

Liaison with neighbours is essential to the cost-effective implementation of Forestry Commission deer management objectives. West Region will be an active participant in local deer management groups. Such groups provide a forum for explaining and gaining acceptance of Forestry Commission policy and for agreeing forms of mutually beneficial co-operation with regard to deer management matters. An open, honest approach will be taken with attempts made to promote a good understanding of the professional approach to deer management in our forests

#### **Deer Management Groups in West Region:**

There are currently 11 DMGs active within the Regions boundaries – as listed in the table :

DMG	WMU'S COVERED
Inveraray/Tyndrum	50116 to 50119
Mull	50129 and 50130
Blackmount	50123,50124,50125,50126, 50128, 51935, 51936, 51939.
Morven	51937
East Loch Shiel	51922, 51923, 51924, 51925, 51928, 51929, 51930.
Moidart	51921
West Lochaber	51910, 51912.
Mid West	51901, 51902, 51903, 51904, 51938.
Ardnamurchan	51926, 51927.
Monadhliath	51906, 51907, 51919.
Knoydart	51913, 51914, 51915, 51918, 51920, 51921, 51934.

## Damage Assessment

The method currently being used in West Region is via visual assessment and recorded in OBB4 stocking density assessment forms and filed in both coupe records and OGB4 file. Nearest Neighbour assessments are also made. As one of our key objectives in deer management is the prevention of damage. Damage assessment is therefore given a high priority in terms of determining appropriate cull levels.

## Population Assessment

West Region has 61 Deer Management Units. The populations within these Deer Management Units will be assessed using dung counts, supported by cull analysis. This will be carried out in partnership with an independent company (currently Strath Caulaidh Ltd). FES Head office, West Region, and Strath Caulaidh Ltd have agreed an ongoing assessment programme. Additional sampling will take place in vulnerable deer units where immigration is a problem. Population assessment using dung counting will be continued indefinitely and is viewed as an essential part of deer management in West Argyll. The Survey team have been trained to assist Wildlife Rangers in thorough and accurate assessments.

## Fencing

The Region's policy on deer fencing will be as per OGB5 and as stated in Deer Management On the National Forest Estate policy document. Boundary fences bordering deer range will be maintained where necessary. Neighbours will be expected to meet their legal obligations.

Internal fences may be used to protect sizeable areas of vulnerable species and where opportunities to shoot are limited by high public usage.

## Deer Control Leases

Four sporting leases are in operation in West Region. Continued good co-operation from the tenants will be actively encouraged through regular liaison. Cull targets will be provided annually and monthly progress monitored. Shoot management plans will be issued on the commencement of each lease and amended as necessary. The Region will investigate the possibility of part season leases/culling leases where appropriate.

## Cull Achievements

It is FCS policy to consider various options for deer control. The choice of method used will be made after considering a number of factors: Cost effectiveness, social needs, levels of public access, deer population size, objectives and terrain.

Deer control will be undertaken by trained Wildlife Rangers, lease holders and competent contractors (a moratorium has been placed on the use of Ranger Helpers until our legal obligations have been fully examined). The minimum requirement for all personnel carrying out unsupervised deer control will be DMQ levels 1 and 2.

## Out of Season Shooting

Out of season shooting is an essential tool in the protection of vulnerable tree crops and natural habitats. This is granted by FES Head Office on enclosed land and on application to SNH for un-enclosed land. Decisions to shoot out of season will be made on an individual DMU basis, where it is believed that serious damage would occur if this step were not taken. While male deer of all species can be shot year round if permission granted, the shooting of females out of season will at present be limited to the periods 1<sup>st</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> October and from the 16<sup>th</sup> February to the 31<sup>st</sup> March. When early out of season shooting of females is carried out any dependant young will be shot first.

## Night shooting

This is permitted by the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996, under authorisation from SNH. Applications for night shooting will only be made where damage would occur or public safety is at risk, where the use of all other legal means of control, including out of season shooting have failed. In normal circumstances night shooting will only be used after 1 January in any season. All operations will conform to SNH Best Practice Guidance and a copy of this will be held at the district office and issued to Wildlife Rangers as necessary.

## Ranger Training

The Region seeks to maintain a highly skilled Wildlife Ranger force. All Wildlife Rangers are qualified to Deer Stalking Certificate Levels 1 & 2. Annual Firearms Skills Testing and the Wildlife Ranger Self Checklist and WRM 1, 2, 3, & 4 are carried out at the required intervals and are part of the Region's resumption system. Additional training requirements are identified through the PMS and ILP systems.

## Scottish Natural Heritage

Regular close liaison with SNH Deer Officer will be a high priority with assistance being sought where problems exist. It will be vital that the SNH Wildlife Operations Unit supports action on any contentious issues.

## **West Region Deer Management Unit plans.**

West Region is divided into 42 Deer Management Units (DMUs), with each unit having its own deer management plan. DMU's will be classified as High or Medium priority dependant on their size, population density and the extent of vulnerable woodland.

A map showing DMUs for West Region can be found in Appendix 1.

### **Main Objectives**

The key objective of each deer unit is to allow efficient and effective forest management, complying with UK Forestry Standard and UKWAS Requirements

- To manage healthy deer populations at a level compatible with other management objectives.
- To ensure that adequate deer control is provided to protect vulnerable crops at restocking or establishment phase.

### **Population Monitoring.**

Population monitoring forms the basis for cull setting. The resources and level of input for population assessment will depend on the priority classification of the DMU. High priority DMUs will be assessed using dung clearance plots, usually conducted by an external contractor. Historic records (cull analysis) and local expertise and knowledge will be used to inform cull setting in Medium priority DMUs and will back up the dung counts in the High priority DMUs.

Detailed cull data will be collected and entered into the Wildlife Management System. WRMs

will perform quality control checks at regular intervals to ensure the accuracy of all data.

### **Cull Targets.**

Cull targets are set on the basis of estimated population density, population models, and future forest management objectives. 5-10 year population models will be run for the High priority DMUs. Where impacts are at an acceptable level, a maintenance cull will be set, this is generally around 25% of the estimated population. Higher culls are justified where it is necessary to reduce the population, or where there is immigration of deer from neighbouring ground. Culls for each DMU are retained in the Deer Management System and progress against target is monitored regularly. Culls can be found in the WMS.

All venison resulting from culling operations will be marketed and will be certified to the Scottish Wild Venison Quality Assurance Standard and inspected to comply with the EC Wild Game Meat Regulations.

### **Actions.**

- Monitor deer density in conjunction with SDA and Damage Assessment results.
- Liaise with Operational Staff over budgets and planning.
- Liaise with Operational staff throughout the crop rotation
- To improve ATV access throughout the forest area to allow for efficient deer management.

## Access

The strategic development of a track network, within woodlands will be considered for site level management after clear-felling. These tracks will be designed to open up areas of difficult access on restock coupes and other woodland areas. The tracks will be constructed to forest and water guideline standards.

Wildlife Rangers will take place on all restocking site plans and design plans to ensure there is adequate provision of open space and well designed woodland edges.

## Development of Open Space

As deer numbers are reduced through the implementation of this policy the effort required shooting further animals increases. Open space is critical for maximising shooting opportunities. Consultation with the WRMs and

## Equipment

Good quality equipment, compatible with fulltime professional use, is essential for effective deer control. It is district policy to ensure that all opportunities to stalk and shoot deer are not hindered by poor quality equipment and that the time expended on the extraction of carcasses is minimised. Health and safety of all Rangers/contractors and tenants is of the utmost importance.

**This strategy document and the DMU plans will be reviewed on a regular basis.**

**The development of Land Management Plans and a Deer Statement within those will be likely to eventually replace Deer Management Unit Plans, whilst the Deer Management on the National Forest Estate document will provide the over-arching future direction.**

**DMU Culls are contained in the Wildlife management System**

**DMU Plans are to be found here: [Deer Management Unit Plans 2015.doc](#)**

**Deer EDU and NN reports can be found here: [V:\DEER AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT\Strath Caulaidh Reports](#)**