

Morvern DMP – ADDENDUM

Subsequent to submission of the Morvern LMP to Scottish Forestry in December 2025, a Thermal Imaging Deer Drone Census was conducted for FLS by BH Wildlife Consultancy on 24th and 25th March 2026.

The survey achieve good coverage and recorded total densities of 6.69 deer/km² (Red @ 5.83/km² and Roe @ 0.86/km²). The results were used to re-run the Deer Population Model.

Population Modelling and Future Culls

FLS has now moved away from using direct density surveys and has started to use cull regression, based on work done by FLS Regional and National teams with input from Forest Research. This uses the last five years of cull data and a manipulation of the starting density to see what starting density would be required to sustain the given cull. This can then be compared with deer survey results to assess the required cull.

The models are not intended to be stand-alone cull setting tools, they are to be used in conjunction with other data such as herbivore impact assessments, site visits etc to give a more rounded impression of the population and impacts.

On this basis, the starting density has been set to give a falling density for both species - this reflect the previous high impacts and the current lower impacts. In this model, the Roe density for 2026 closely matches the observed drone density, but the Red density remains almost double the drone density – the cull figures show a continued population decline. Female: male ratios were slightly amended to reflect previous planned culling efforts to balance the sex ratio.

Red deer:

Lochaline WMU

Yr 1 EUD km2 @ 1st April	9.1
Start Yr Population	534.352
Area (ha)	5872

Sex Ratio	Female	Male	
	51%	49%	100%

Year	Cull Yr	Population at 1st April	Population at 1st April	Total Population	No per 100ha 1st April	Adult female/ju venils ratio
1	2026	270	262	532	9.1	31.7
2	2027	219	213	431	7.3	31.7
3	2028	177	172	350	6.0	31.7
4	2029	143	139	283	4.8	31.7
5	2030	116	113	229	3.9	31.7
6	2031	93	91	185	3.1	31.7
7	2032	76	74	150	2.6	31.7
8	2033	61	60	122	2.1	31.7
9	2034	50	49	99	1.7	31.7
10	2035	40	40	80	1.4	31.7

Recruitment Female	Recruitment Male	Total Recruitment	Female pop 31st Aug	Male pop 31st Aug	Population 31st Aug	No per 100ha 31st Aug
43	43	86	313	305	617	10.5
35	35	69	253	247	501	8.5
28	28	56	205	200	406	6.9
23	23	45	166	162	328	5.6
18	18	37	134	131	266	4.5
15	15	30	108	106	215	3.7
12	12	24	88	86	174	3.0
10	10	19	71	70	141	2.4
8	8	16	58	57	115	2.0
6	6	13	47	46	93	1.6

Set % Cull	Female Cull	Male Cull	Total Cull	% Cull Achieved	Female Pop at 31st March	Male Pop at 31st March	Total Pop 31st March
0.0	94	92	186	30.1	219	213	431
0.0	76	75	151	30.2	177	172	350
0.0	62	61	123	30.3	143	139	283
0.0	50	49	99	30.2	116	113	229
0.0	41	40	81	30.5	93	91	185
30.0	32	32	64	30.0	76	74	150
30.0	26	26	52	30.0	61	60	122
30.0	21	21	42	30.0	50	49	99
30.0	17	17	34	30.0	40	40	80
30.0	14	14	28	30.0	33	32	65

Roe deer:

Lochaline WMU

Yr 1 EUD km2 @ 1st April	1
Start Yr Population	58.72
Area (ha)	5872

Sex Ratio	Female	Male
	54%	46%

100%

Year	Cull Yr	Population at 1st April	Population at 1st April	Total Population	No per 100ha 1st April	Adult female/ju venils ratio
1	2026	32	27	59	1.0	44
2	2027	23	20	43	0.7	44
3	2028	16	14	30	0.5	44
4	2029	10	9	20	0.3	44
5	2030	6	6	12	0.2	44
6	2031	3	3	6	0.1	44
7	2032	2	2	4	0.1	44
8	2033	1	2	3	0.1	44
9	2034	1	1	2	0.0	44
10	2035	1	1	2	0.0	44

Recruitment Female	Recruitment Male	Total Recruitment	Female pop 31st Aug	Male pop 31st Aug	Population 31st Aug	No per 100ha 31st Aug
7	7	14	39	34	73	1.2
5	5	10	28	25	53	0.9
3	3	7	19	17	37	0.6
2	2	4	12	12	24	0.4
1	1	3	8	7	15	0.3
1	1	1	3	4	7	0.1
0	0	1	2	3	5	0.1
0	0	1	2	2	4	0.1
0	0	0	1	1	3	0.0
0	0	0	1	1	2	0.0

Set % Cull	Female Cull	Male Cull	Total Cull	% Cull Achieved	Female Pop at 31st March	Male Pop at 31st March	Total Pop 31st March
0.0	16	14	30	41.3	23	20	43
0.0	12	11	23	43.7	16	14	30
0.0	9	8	17	46.5	10	9	20
0.0	6	6	12	50.0	6	6	12
0.0	5	4	9	60.8	3	3	6
40.0	1	1	3	40.0	2	2	4
40.0	1	1	2	40.0	1	2	3
40.0	1	1	1	40.0	1	1	2
40.0	1	1	1	40.0	1	1	2
40.0	0	0	1	40.0	1	1	1

Total Summary:

All species

Lochaline WMU

Yr 1 EUD km2 @ 1st April	10.1
Start Yr Population 1st April	593.072
Area (ha)	5872

Cull Target

Cull Target			Total
Yr	Female	Male	
1	110	106	216
2	88	86	174
3	71	69	140
4	56	55	111
5	46	44	90
6	34	33	67
7	27	27	54
8	22	22	44
9	18	18	36
10	14	14	29

WMU Population

Cull Yr	Population 1st March	Population 1st March	Total Population	No per 100ha 1st April
1	241	233	474	8.1
2	193	186	379	6.5
3	153	149	302	5.1
4	122	119	241	4.1
5	96	95	191	3.2
6	78	77	154	2.6
7	63	62	125	2.1
8	51	50	101	1.7
9	41	41	82	1.4
10	33	33	66	1.1

Species Population	Red	Roe
1	431	43
2	350	30
3	283	20
4	229	12
5	185	6
6	150	4
7	122	3
8	99	2
9	80	2
10	65	1

A density (all species) of less than 5 deer / km² can be achieved by year 5 and a density of 2-3 deer / km² (preferred for native broadleaves establishment) can be achieved by year 6.

Herbivore Impacts

Wildlife management, forest management and harvesting teams have visited the Lochaline South block to look at restock sites, with the aim to understand poor restock performance. One site had failed due to a combination of weevil impacts and poor planting, so it was difficult to assess deer damage; but other sites visited were establishing very well, with virtually no browsing on Sitka spruce and marginal browsing on Norway spruce. Checks included good coverage and distance from the road and ATV tracks, confirming that this wasn't a localised occurrence. The conclusion was that deer numbers were at an appropriate level for commercial crop in this area and that using larger trees and improved supervision of contractors would help to solve the survival rates.

PAWS areas in the Barr block have sustained browsing damage previously, so culling effort will focus more in this area to help protect broadleaved tree establishment. The construction of a fenced enclosure in 2025 will also provide protection (see Map 17: Morvern fences).

The drone survey report conclusion comments that the deer seen were all away from roads, tracks and open areas, which suggested to the surveyor that they were under significant culling pressure.

The evidence suggests either that the older, higher densities and impacts were due to seasonal incursions of estate deer that have since been culled, or that the damage is not as a result of density, but is due to burst feeding habits that can be caused by high culling pressure. In the latter scenario, deer are scared to come out of cover for long periods, so leave for shorts bursts and eat as much as they can, before returning to cover to ruminate and digest. Tree shoots, even Sitka, provide relatively more nutrients than bulk feed such as grass, which also takes longer to graze on, therefore the young trees can provide the safer option for an under-pressure population.