



DEER MANAGEMENT GROUPS



Aim

The aim of this guide is to summarise the working principles behind Deer Management Groups (DMGs), in particular:

- ◆ The benefits of DMGs;
- ◆ What DMGs should do.

Why have a DMG?

Deer are rarely, if ever, confined to one land holding. The collaborative management of wild deer is most appropriate where the natural range of wild deer extends across an area of multiple land ownership.

DMGs can provide the following benefits:

- ◆ Act as a forum for addressing local deer management issues;
- ◆ Promote compromise in the management of a shared resource;
- ◆ An increased understanding of, and confidence in, deer-related information and deer management activities;
- ◆ Promote an equitable sharing of management costs, revenue and responsibilities;
- ◆ Efficient achievement of common management objectives, making optimum use of available resources.

What is expected?

At its simplest a DMG should act as a forum to exchange information and promote understanding of local deer management issues.

A proactive DMG will take a collaborative approach to deer management. The following areas of work benefit from a collaborative approach:

- ◆ Deer Management Planning;
- ◆ Deer Population Assessment (including deer counts and other sampling methods);
- ◆ Habitat Assessment;
- ◆ Deer Culling;
- ◆ Analysis of Population Performance;
- ◆ Preventing Damage by Deer;
- ◆ Protecting Public Safety.

Specific collaborative actions that DMGs could implement:

- ◆ Allocate specific tasks to individuals and organisations;
- ◆ Share costs associated with labour, vehicles and equipment, including fixed equipment such as deer larders;

- ◆ Share revenue associated with sporting and venison returns (e.g. from collaborative culling operations);
- ◆ Share benefits associated with preventing damage by deer or with enhancing the natural heritage.

Boundaries and membership

In open hill red deer range, DMG boundaries should attempt to centre on individual populations of hefted deer. Drawing boundaries around large areas containing several individual populations will make the group unwieldy and therefore discrete management units should be considered.

Members who share a common land use objective will find collaboration easier. The Group should, however, include representative membership from a cross-section of land managers who are affected by having deer on their ground. DMGs should consider how best to engage with the local community.

Administration and decision-making

DMGs should consider employing professional administrative support and as a minimum ensure there is group-wide agreement on:

- ◆ Frequency of meetings;
- ◆ Recording of meetings;
- ◆ Sub-groups/Committees;
- ◆ Conflict resolution procedures;
- ◆ Procedures for setting and paying subscriptions;
- ◆ Procedures for interacting with statutory bodies, local and national interest groups and local communities;

- ◆ Procedures for data circulation and release of information;
- ◆ Procedures for dealing with concerns of, and validated damage to, agricultural crops, natural heritage and woodland, or danger to public safety.

Planning and delivery

Members should:

- ◆ Detail their individual – and agree their collective – management objectives and performance;
- ◆ Detail targets, based on habitat measures and sporting or other aspirations;
- ◆ Detail their monitoring methods for assessing habitat targets;
- ◆ Agree the desired deer density and population profile;
- ◆ Detail agreed cull targets;
- ◆ Take account of all appropriate concerns of damage and threats to public safety;
- ◆ Produce and maintain a written Deer Management Plan;
- ◆ Have representation at meetings;
- ◆ Work together to achieve culls, and monitor progress with cull during the season;
- ◆ Census deer and review targets on a regular basis.