

Part 2: Operation of the Deer Management Group

Jura Deer Management Group



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2.1 DMG Objectives and Targets

The purpose of the Jura Deer Management Group (JDMG) is to manage deer collaboratively and sustainably at a landscape scale in a manner that promotes and safeguards (respects) the cultural and historical significance of the deer herd, and in accordance with Scottish Government strategy (**Scotland's Wild Deer: A National Approach, 2008**), the **Code of Practice on Deer Management (2012)**, **Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance**. The Group recognises the importance of integrating management practices, and in doing so, that compromise may be required to secure collective, wider public benefits.

The main objectives, targets and actions for the DMG's deer management during the period of this Plan are set out in Part 1 of the plan and summarised in Part 3: The Working Plan.

2.2 Area & Boundaries & Membership

Jura Deer Management Group covers an area of 36,692 ha and is made up of 7 main land-owning members. Additional stakeholder members include Scottish Natural Heritage, Police Scotland, Crofting & Community interests. For the purposes of the Plan, although each property is treated as a separate reporting unit, the population will be considered as a whole with all estates contributing to cull targets as agreed. Deer movements are discussed in more detail in Part 1 of the plan.

The group operates under its **own constitution**.

2.3 Meetings

JDMG has historically had a strong level of collaboration and participation from all members of the group with a good attendance at meetings and all properties being represented by owners and or stalkers/managers. The DMG holds two principal meeting each year in Spring and Autumn to collate information, agree actions and set culls.

The main business of the **main full DMG meetings** is to keep deer matters across the DMG area under review at a landscape level. A detailed review of the previous season is undertaken in order to:

- Review progress against delivering on the actions in the Working Plan and adjust targets where agreed;
- Review deer numbers (based on latest counts) and plan future counts;
- Report on culls achieved against cull targets set;
- Agree cull targets for the next year, based upon current evidence/information provided by members;
- Assess the current welfare status of the population based on agreed key indicators such as availability of shelter, environmental condition, body condition, reproductive health, recruitment and winter mortality figures;
- Identify issues arising in the Group area. If necessary, issues will be prioritised and a plan of action agreed upon.

The **Agenda and Minutes** of the main meetings will be **published** on the DMG Website.

2.4 DMG Constitution

The Jura Deer Management Group (JDMG) is constituted as a stand-alone Deer Management Group (DMG), this being adopted in **2019**. The Group operates a Membership system, where properties are formal Members and others are encouraged to join/observe. Anybody involved with the management of wild deer within the Group area, will be encouraged to participate in the execution of this Deer Management Plan (DMP).

2.5 Deer Management Plan: Update and Review

This Plan provides an agreed framework for a coordinated and co-operative approach to deer management in the area. The actual implementation of the Plan will be decided on an ongoing basis at the Group's Spring and Autumn meetings, with scope for the Membership to adjust and adapt the main Plan to meet changing circumstances. Should Parts 1 or 2 of the plan require updating, a revised, agreed copy will be circulated to all and updated on the DMG's website. A complete review of the Plan will be conducted in 2024.

Members will provide information as requested which will enable progress towards targets to be monitored and where necessary, changes in management actions will be discussed and agreed. As a result, **The Working Plan** will be continually reviewed and actions agreed and implemented by DMG members on an annual basis.

2.6 WDNA, Code of Practice on Deer Management & Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance

The management of red deer at a landscape population level as set out in the [Code of Practice on Deer Management](#) (The Deer Code) requires a collaborative approach. Deer are regarded as a natural resource and as such all those who manage them have a 'responsibility' to:

- manage deer as a resource sustainably;
- minimise negative deer impacts on public interest;
- safeguard deer welfare.

Group members support and fully endorse:

- The long term vision for deer populations and their management as laid out in "[Scotland's Wild Deer - A National Approach](#)".
- [Code of Practice on Deer Management](#)
- [Wild deer Best Practice Guidance](#)

2.7 ADMG Principles of Collaboration

As member of this DMG, we:-

- Acknowledge what we have in common – namely a shared commitment to a sustainable and economically viable Scottish countryside;
- Make a commitment to work together to achieve that;
- Accept that we have a diversity of management objectives and that we respect each other's objectives;
- Undertake to communicate openly with all relevant parties;
- Commit to negotiate and where necessary compromise in order to accommodate the reasonable land management requirements of our neighbours;
- Undertake that where there are areas of disagreement, we will work to resolve these.

Collaborative management decisions are generally achieved by consensus however when necessary dispute resolution within the Jura DMG is covered under the Group Constitution. All Group members are encouraged to deal with disputes in the first instance with those parties concerned, be they other Group members, external parties or Government Agencies. Failing that, the Chairman of the Group will seek to facilitate an agreement. This may involve the opportunity to air relevant issues at a meeting of the Group. A request to do this should be made in writing at least two weeks prior to any such meeting. Should it prove impossible to resolve issues, representatives from ADMG are available to assist.

2.8 Culling Operations

To maintain or reduce the deer population collaboratively means that individual culling decisions and the accurate reporting of culls become proportionately more important. Open discussion of culls will be required at all meetings. All JDMG members agree to make sufficient resources available to carry out the culls. Population levels will determine suggested culls on an annual basis and Group members will adjust cull targets throughout the season based on additional information gathered.. Members will consider the use of collaborate culling measures where there is a risk to the overall target cull not being achieved. This may involve the provision of extra help from other members or a collaborative approach to managing deer across shared boundaries.

2.9 Data & Evidence Gathering: Deer Count Protocols

It has been agreed that where possible, the DMG will continue to carry out a coordinated foot count of deer (and other herbivores where agreed) annually each Spring. The SNH helicopter count across the group area held on 28th and 29th March 2016 forms the baseline for this Plan and a repeat helicopter count is nominally planned for 2021 for the whole DMG area (subject to resources being available within SNH).

An indication of winter mortality will also be provided for each management unit along with the cull returns and agreed larder information for the Spring meeting of the Group.

In woodland habitats, dung counting may be useful for estimating woodland populations of deer however, this technique is not required for this DMG.

2.10 Data & Evidence Gathering: Cull and Larder Information

Members will complete an annual return, which will include cull data and agreed larder data (including information relating to body condition) for the purposes of monitoring stag age structure and general deer welfare.

2.11 Data & Evidence Gathering: Habitat Monitoring Protocols

2.11.1 Habitat Objectives for the DMG

Within the DMG area, there are three main environmental objectives:

- To deliver favourable or recovering condition on designated sites;
- To manage existing and new native woodland and to improve woodland condition where this is being impacted by deer;
- To understand and manage impacts in the wider non-designated area such as peatland which along with woodland contributes to Scotland's ability to store carbon. In particular the DMG will focus monitoring on dwarf shrub heath and blanket bog habitats.

DMG members have agreed in principle to undertake habitat impact assessments, particularly in those areas where there are designated sites. This will be conducted so as to:

- Collect and interpret habitat data on a regular basis to inform deer management;
- Set up a baseline to allow changes in impacts to be measured over time;
- Understand the methods used by government agencies.

A further aim will be to map habitat types across estates, particularly with a view to establishing areas of high carbon-sensitive habitats across the DMG range. All estates should establish areas within their boundaries where there is scope for habitat improvement particularly in relation to peatland improvement work.

2.11.2 Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance & Monitoring data sheets

The Wild Deer Best Practice Guides (<http://www.bestpracticeguides.org.uk/guides/impacts-intro>) describe the methods used by SNH to monitor deer impacts. These methods are also a key part of how other agencies monitor deer impacts. The proposed method would involve using Best Practice Guidance Habitat Impact Assessment for Dwarf Shrub Heath (DSH) and Blanket Bog (BB). These methods are also a key part of how other agencies monitor deer impacts and follow methodology set out in [A Guide to Upland Habitats: Surveying Land Management Impacts](#).

Each property/management unit would be required to do a minimum of 30 plots for each habitat type (or a proportion of DSH/BB plots relative to the proportion of habitat present). This would be repeated every 3 years. For those with native woodland, the SNH methodology for the Monitoring of Native Woodland on Designated Sites will be used. The numbers of plots per landholding would likely be a minimum of 30 (depending on the size of area of woodland). This would also be repeated every three years. Following on from this, Members could then seek to apply for Forestry Grant Scheme options available. Subject to availability of funding through Forestry Grant Schemes it may be possible to carry out a DMG wide strategic review of woodland to identify opportunities for further woodland expansion or native woodland restoration.

2.11.3 Plot Locations

There are two possible options for the location of plots on a property:

- 1) For those already conducting HIA on their own property, then continuation of use of those plots would be advised.
- 2) For those wishing to start monitoring and create a baseline, a series of random plots has been generated by SNH for each property within the DMG to enable individual properties to set up and undertake monitoring which will be representative of significant habitats within the Group area.

2.11.4 Timescales

The schedule is detailed in the Working Plan (Part 3). Each property will then be responsible for reporting on the condition of their habitats.

2.12 DMG Policies and Principles

2.12.1 Culling Policy

It is not possible to draw up a single policy for all deer management units. Culling policy currently varies from property to property, and there are different factors which govern this.

2.12.2 Competence & Training Policy

Competence & Training Policy

Members of the Deer Management Group recognise the need for deer to be managed by trained personnel. A Trained Person is an individual who can produce evidence of training to cover the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 852/2004, and Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 as they apply to wild game. Approved qualifications such as the Deer Stalking Certificate Level 1 & Level 2, and the Certificate in Wild Game Meat Hygiene (large game), is the most robust way in which stalkers can show that they have the appropriate knowledge.

The Group recognises that the requirement for deer to be culled by competent and qualified personnel is in the public interest. The DMG will promote and encourage competence in undertaking deer management activities through the following actions:

- *All those involved in the culling of deer, will be suitably experienced or will have attained a formal qualification to meet the minimum standard.*
- *Members will be encouraged to highlight changes in competency qualifications in the annual return.*
- *The DMG will assist where possible in the provision/facilitation of training for anyone lacking necessary qualifications or for individuals who wish to enhance their skills.*

2.12.3 Communications Policy

Communications Policy

Members of the Deer Management Group will promote and encourage effective communication on deer management issues both within the DMG and throughout the wider community in order to promote better awareness and education of deer and deer management through the following actions:

- Deer management planning will be open, inclusive and seek local consultation;
- DMG web-site will be regularly updated to include the Deer Management Plan, Minutes and Agendas for meetings as well as any other relevant information which seeks to promote openness and transparency;
- The DMG will ensure that contact details are available for anyone seeking information or wishing to raise concerns;
- DMG will actively seek opportunities to promote deer management through training, educational or awareness raising events.

2.12.4. Non-Native Policy

Non Native Species Policy

Sika: Jura have been designated by SNH as Refugia Islands in order to preserve and maintain the genetic integrity of the Red Deer living there. The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 makes it an offence to release an animal to a place outwith its native range or to allow an animal to escape from captivity to a place outwith its native range. The Group will endeavour to ensure that Sika populations do not become established in the DMG area will manage suspected Sika in accordance with the [Non-Natives Species Code of Practice](#) (made by the Scottish Ministers under Section 14c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act).

Muntjac: Muntjac are not native to Scotland and as such possible threats to their introduction or establishment must be managed. As such, Muntjac will be managed in accordance with the [Non-Natives Species Code of Practice](#) (made by the Scottish Ministers under Section 14c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act).

Feral Pigs: Feral Pigs are not present on Jura. Should they become established, they will be managed according to SNH Policy Guidance (currently in development). In the meantime, sightings of feral pigs will be reported to the DMG and members will manage them to prevent their establishment (taking into consideration welfare of dependent young).

Feral Goats: Feral goats are non-native to Jura. The right to control feral goats is held with the land owner and they will be managed according to individual management objectives. In the absence of a feral goat best practice guide, management will use the wild deer best practice guidance as its reference point in standards and decision making in feral goat management. It is currently legal to control goats at any time of the year as unlike many other species there are no set "seasons". However any culling policy should take into account animal welfare and minimize the risk of dependent goats losing adult females.

2.12.5 Welfare Policy

Welfare Policy

Members of the Deer Management Group will promote and encourage the safeguarding of deer welfare both at the scale of the individual animal and at a population scale through the following actions:

- *Carrying out all deer management activity to Wild Deer Best Practice Guidance industry standards;*
- *Promoting the undertaking of deer management training, continual professional development and industry recognised qualifications (e.g. Deer Stalking Certificate Levels 1 & 2);*
- *Discouraging/reporting illegal stalking activity;*
- *Ensuring that the natural habitat supports good welfare through the provision of adequate habitat and shelter;*
- *Ensuring that any land management operations take into consideration possible effects on deer movements or the availability of shelter; and*
- *Ensuring that the necessary precautions and checks are undertaken to prevent the spread of diseases.*

2.12.6 Policy for Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a highly contagious and fatal transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) disease that affects deer. It has had devastating effects on many populations of wild and farmed deer in the USA and Canada and has recently been reported in Norway. It is not known to affect humans. There is no evidence of TSEs in deer in the UK but if it were to become established in the wild deer population it would have major consequences for the UK deer industry. Chronic wasting disease is a notifiable disease. This means that if you suspect it you must tell your nearest [Animal and Plant Health Office \(APHA\) office](#) immediately. Failure to do is an offence. For information on how to spot CWD see <https://www.gov.uk/chronic-wasting-disease>.

Chronic Wasting Disease Policy

Members of the Deer Management Group will see to prevent the establishment of CWD through implementing the following:

- *Ensuring that all visitors from the USA and Canada are aware of the risks and undertake the appropriate Bio-Security protocols prior to their visit.*
- *Raising awareness within the DMG and across the wider community about the risks and the symptoms of CWD.*

Data Protection Policy

As a membership organisation Jura DMG, in order to pursue its business, requires to hold certain information about its members on file and to manage/process this data. The new General Data Protection Regulation that came into force on 25 May 2018 regulates the use of "personal data". "Personal data" covers any data that can be used to identify a living individual including their name and address, telephone number or e-mail address.

The personal data that Jura Deer Management Group (JDMG) holds about its members will be used for the following purposes:

- Membership business, contact and updates*
- Notification of DMG meetings, events, consultations, other items of interest in relation to the deer sector.*

Data held

The data that JDMG holds may consist of the following:

- Name*
- Business/home address*
- Post code*
- Telephone number(s)*
- E mail address*
- Evidence of training or competency in relevant disciplines*

Consent

By giving JDMG your consent you are giving the DMG permission to hold and process your personal data for the purposes identified above. JDMG will always tell you why and how personal data will be retained and used. Consent may be withdrawn at any time by contacting the JDMG secretary

Disclosure

JDMG will not pass on, share or trade personal data with any person or organisation without first receiving consent unless for the purpose of DMG business (ie to other members of the Group, to agencies such as SNH, FSS etc) or contractors engaged in work with the DMG; or in the general furtherance of the business of deer management within the area of the DMG). Under no circumstances will JDMG sell information to third parties or advertisers.

2.13 Venison Production and Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV)

Venison is an important and valuable resource to DMG members and the DMG area and the Group will continue to explore and identify further opportunities to maximise the direct and indirect benefits that could be derived from it.

Five DMG members currently have an arrangement with Ardfin to utilise a shared chill/collection point for the Game Dealer with each property making their own arrangements to bring the carcasses to the chill.

SQWV Ltd (Scottish Quality Wild Venison Ltd) is an independent company which exists to maintain, develop and promote Quality Assurance Standards throughout the whole Venison industry. As a result of the assessments and checks made throughout the food chain on members of the SQWV Assurance schemes consumers know more about the venison they purchase and consume. SQWV is not currently beneficial for many members. Individual properties will decide if the scheme is appropriate for them in future. one of the properties are currently in the scheme (<http://www.sqwv.co.uk>).

2.14 References

Derek W. Bailey, Gross, J., Laca, E., Larry R. Rittenhouse, Coughenour, M., Swift, D., & Sims, P. (1996). Mechanisms That Result in Large Herbivore Grazing Distribution Patterns. *Journal of Range Management*, 49(5), 386-400.