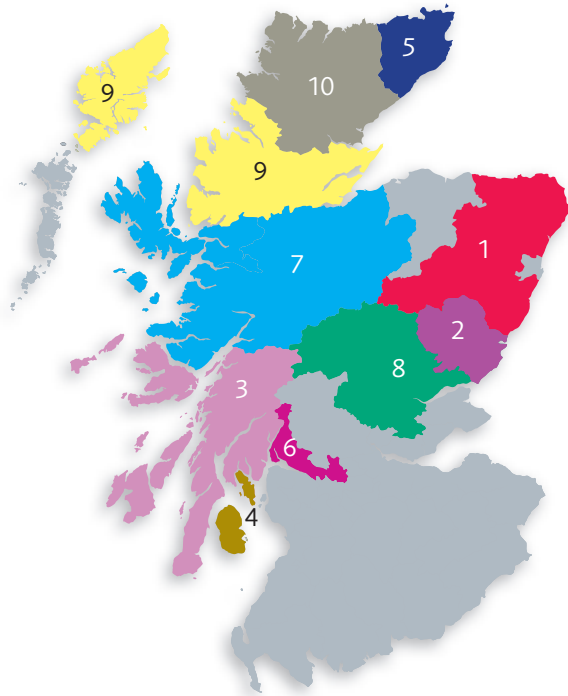


# ADMG - Knight Frank 2011 STAG SEASON REVIEW





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The Association of Deer Management Groups is the representative body for deer forest owners and deer managers in Scotland. [www.deer-management.co.uk](http://www.deer-management.co.uk)

*Front cover: The high tops of Assynt*

*Back cover: Invercauld in snow*

*All photography by Glyn Satterley [www.glynsatterley.com](http://www.glynsatterley.com) except pages 10 and 11 by Angus Forbes [www.amforbes.com](http://www.amforbes.com)*



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Knight Frank is once again delighted to be the sponsor of the Annual Stag Season Review.

While the data contained in this report falls well short of an absolute tally of the number of stags shot during the 2011 season, and there are some notable absentees, it has never been the intention to duplicate the annual cull returns to Scottish Natural Heritage. Rather, it is a vehicle for those estates and deer forests that want to contribute to the commentary on how their season has been to do so.

Tony Jackson in his article remarkably teases out the trends and the headlines as well as some of the nuggets that have been supplied in the returns.

This report comes at a time when the market for game, and for venison in particular, has never been so buoyant. Sales increases of 34 per cent between 2006 and 2009 have been reported, with growth in excess of this through supermarkets and multiples in the subsequent two years. Scottish venison is in huge demand – so much so that a third of the venison eaten in the UK each year is imported from New Zealand, Poland and elsewhere.

Venison from the red deer cull, both stags and hinds, provides the backbone to our domestic venison supply – around 55,000 carcasses. But we know that that figure is static as local reduction culls and harsh winters have taken their toll. Remarkably you will still hear it said in some quarters that Scotland has too many deer when, if we take market demand for venison as the measure, we actually have way too few.

In some areas, deer numbers are at a level where sport and the supply of venison are simply unviable. Undergrazing, whether due to a shortage of deer or to sheep coming off the hills, brings its own problems - and where there is no other clear habitat management objective, consequent dereliction can result only too easily in a biodiversity-poor landscape.

Scotland's red deer have their part to play in this rich tapestry of our countryside, and we must continue to manage this precious resource with the care that it deserves.



# 2011 RED STAG REVIEW

## Tony Jackson

Despite the season's appalling weather, most Scottish forests reported stags in good to excellent condition.

The Scottish stag season last year was notable, throughout virtually the entire country, for the appalling conditions which, in some cases, made stalking extremely difficult. Yet despite heavy, driving rain day after day, mists, high winds and southerly winds, stalkers and clients made the best of it and, in most cases, managed to fill the larder. By far the majority of forests reported stags in good to excellent condition, many carrying fat until the end of the rut.

As for the rut, this varied as usual from normal to short, from early to late, though the trend seemed to be a late start in September, often finishing by the second week of October. While stag body weights have held up, there was concern in some regions that hinds and calves suffered severely over the past two very bad winters. Quality of heads on several forests seemed to have greatly improved as a result of efforts being made to kill switches.

### Aberdeenshire

Several forests reported a long rut and at Glen Tanar stags were actively rutting on the hill from 26 September, while at both Baddoch and Glen Callater stags had left the hinds by the last week of stalking. The condition of deer was generally good to excellent, with the heaviest stag at 17st 5lb coming from Mar Lodge. The weather also varied considerably with Ballogie, Mar Estate and Mar Lodge reporting mild southerly winds and an overall dry season while Baddoch and Glen Callater suffered from gales, mist, rain and cold, with few fine days. These two forests also reported a shortage of mature stags and a lack of hinds, as well as more hillwalkers than usual. Mar Estate also reported a lack of mature shootable stags.

### Angus

The rut appears to have started earlier than in past years and Tulchan of Glenisla noted plenty of good stags, with a dozen out of 93 shot weighing over 17st. The condition of the deer was generally good. Invermark forest recorded a "good old-fashioned rut", with some of the bigger stags finished before

the end of the season. The heaviest stag at Invermark was 21st 5lb, while a 19st 11lb 33-point stag was shot at Glenisla Estate, where there was also a scarcity of hinds. This forest also recorded nothing but rain, mist and southerly winds, whereas at Invermark the weather was fairly good for most of the season.

### Argyll

While the rut varied considerably in terms of length, there was little dissension about weather conditions. "Wet, windy, horrible and testing" recorded Black Corries, and few forests

disagreed other than Laggan Estate (Islay) and Glenforsa (Mull), both describing the weather as good. Several forests described the weather as the worst in living memory. The rut varied considerably. At Blackmount stags did not break out until the first few days of October, whereas at Strone Estate the first roar was heard on 27 September and stags were still roaring in the first week of November. At Benmore some stags started rutting in early September, while at Ardtornish the rut started about 10 days later than usual and carried on into November. The condition of the deer was described as generally good to very good considering the poor summer.

Ardtornish reported a "notable lack of poor quality heads, with only a few switches seen", while Ardnamurchan and Glenborrodale noted that there has definitely been a marked increase in visitors coming to the area to watch the rut and deer in general.



Loading the stag  
at Invercauld



**Inverness-shire**

While Dalwhinnie reported the condition of the deer as being "not great", by far the majority of forests noted stags in good to very good condition, while Coignafearn reported "excellent, the best for many years". Struy reported stags weighing well and rolling in fat with ticks fewer than normal.

The rut varied considerably. At Glen Roy the cull commenced on 29 August while at Dalwhinnie stags broke out in the third week of September. Several forests reported first roars around the middle of September, while Kingie noted that many of the older stags had finished the rut by 11 October. An early and relatively short rut seems to sum up the majority of forests, though Mamore reported a lot of activity in the first week of October, but rapidly tailing off, and a similar situation at Knoydart. However, at Kingairloch and Glensanda the rut did not commence until early October and stags were still roaring in November. At East Monar Estate it lasted for only two days in October but carried on into November.

One word sums up the weather conditions – wet. Iain Biggart, stalker at Kilchoan Estate, claims it was actually the worst season he can recall in terms of weather. However, at Mamore, although there were some stormy days, it was possible to stalk between the showers on all but one day.



Snow setting in - Assynt

| Forest                         | Owner                                  | Tenant           | Stalker              | Stags Shot | Average Weight | Heaviest | SQWV Member |
|--------------------------------|--|------------------|----------------------|------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| <b>ABERDEENSHIRE</b>           |  |                  |                      |            |                |          |             |
| Ballogie                       | Ballogie Estate                        | N/a              | Peter Littlejohn     | 32         | 07-06*         | 14-00*   | Q           |
| Glenmuick Estate               | Sir Andrew Walker Okeover Bt           | N/a              | A B Taylor           | 59         | 13-05          | -        | -           |
| Glen Tanar                     | Michael Bruce                          | N/a              | Colin McClean        | 58         | 14-07          | 22-12    | Q           |
| Invercauld                     | Baddoch                                | Invercauld Trust | Various              | 21         | 14-03          | 17-02    | Q           |
|                                | Glen Callater                          | Invercauld Trust | Various              | 43         | 14-00          | 16-08    | Q           |
| Mar Estate                     | M M Nicolson and others                | N/a              | Ian Campbell         | 37         | 13-10          | 16-12    | Q           |
| Mar Lodge                      | National Trust for Scotland            | N/a              | Chris Murphy         | 56         | 13-03          | 17-05    | Q           |
| <b>ANGUS</b>                   |  |                  |                      |            |                |          |             |
| Glenclally                     | A Bennett                              | J Williamson     | Jason Williamson     | 54         | 14-01          | 19-06    | -           |
| Glenisla Estate                | Major J P O Gibb                       | N/a              | Nicholas Gibb        | 17         | 12-07          | 19-11    | -           |
| Invermark                      | The Earl of Dalhousie                  | N/a              | Fred Taylor          | 82         | 13-08          | 21-05    | Q           |
| Tulchan of Glenisla            | Dr Florian Kühnle                      | N/a              | W H Mearns           | 93         | 13-10          | 18-08    | -           |
| <b>ARGYLL</b>                  |  |                  |                      |            |                |          |             |
| Ardchattan                     | Mrs S H Troughton                      | N/a              | Bruce Campbell       | 16         | 10-10*         | 12-06*   | -           |
| Ardnamurchan and Glenborrodale | Ardnamurchan Estates                   | Various          | Niall A Rowantree    | 76         | 16-09          | 29-05    | -           |
| Ardtalla                       | Ardtalla Estates Ltd                   | N/a              | Callum Sharp         | 49         | 15-07          | 19-09    | -           |
| Ardtornish                     | Ardtornish Estate Ltd                  | N/a              | Simon Boulton        | 35         | 15-04          | 18-03    | -           |
| Argyll Estates                 | His Grace the Duke of Argyll           | N/a              | Tom Kirsop           | 104        | 15-00          | 21-00    | -           |
| Auch                           | Executors of A Besterman               | N/a              | J Campbell           | 6          | 14-08          | 15-10    | Q           |
| Benmore                        | T Radford                              | N/a              | D Bisset             | 50         | 13-12          | 19-06    | -           |
| Black Corries                  | Black Corries Estate Management Ltd    | N/a              | Davy Thomas          | 34         | 13-09          | 17-03    | Q           |
| Blackmount                     | P Fleming                              | N/a              | A Macdonald          | 87         | 14-04          | 17-09    | Q           |
| Dunlossit                      | Dunlossit Trustees Ltd                 | N/a              | Donald James Macphee | 36         | 14-05          | 18-13    | -           |
| Glen Noe                       | Glen Noe Estate Partnership            | N/a              | Andrew Servant       | 6          | 15-11          | -        | -           |
| Glen Strae                     | R D Schuster                           | N/a              | M Brown              | 23         | 13-09          | 18-06    | -           |
| Glencoe – Dalness              | National Trust for Scotland            | N/a              | John MacDonald       | 21         | 12-08          | 16-07    | -           |
| Glenforsa                      | Glenforsa Estate                       | N/a              | Graham Waugh         | 23         | 15-00          | 23-01    | #           |
| Glenkinglass                   | R D Schuster                           | N/a              | A Ross               | 30         | 14-07          | 19-00    | -           |
| Laggan Estate                  | Laggan Properties Ltd                  | N/a              | Neil Park            | 28         | 13-12          | 17-13    | -           |
| Shielbridge Estate             | Trustees of CB Holman Settlement Trust | N/a              | Doug Macdonald       | 14         | 14-07          | 20-06    | -           |
| Strone Estate                  | Tom Turnbull                           | N/a              | Tom Turnbull         | 36         | 13-03          | 17-03    | -           |
| Stuckandoin                    | Ove Wolff Madsen                       | N/a              | Colin Stark          | 3          | 12-05          | -        | -           |
| West Highland Venison          | West Highland Venison                  | J MacDonald      | J MacDonald          | 65         | 10-12          | 18-02    | -           |
| <b>ARRAN AND BUTE</b>          |  |                  |                      |            |                |          |             |
| Dougarie                       | S C Gibbs                              | Various          | Alastair Chalmers    | 26         | 15-01          | 18-12    | Q           |

| Forest                     | Owner   | Tenant                                   | Stalker                  | Stags Shot | Average Weight | Heaviest | SQWV Member |
|----------------------------|---|--|--------------------------|------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| <b>CAITHNESS</b>           |   |  |                          |            |                |          |             |
| Braemore                   | The Welbeck Estates Co Ltd                      | N/a                                      | J H Miller               | 24         | 15-01          | 18-00    | -           |
| Langwell                   | The Welbeck Estates Co Ltd                      | N/a                                      | J J Bain                 | 33         | 16-00          | 20-06    | -           |
| <b>DUNBARTONSHIRE</b>      |   |  |                          |            |                |          |             |
| Garabal                    | Ove Wolff Marsden                               | N/a                                      | Colin Stark              | 9          | 14-01          | -        | -           |
| <b>INVERNESS-SHIRE</b>     |   |  |                          |            |                |          |             |
| Achdaliu                   | West Highland Woodlands                         | N/a                                      | Alan Currie              | 30         | 14-08          | 18-02    | -           |
| Achlain Estate             | Achlain Estates Ltd                             | N/a                                      | Alastair Gillies         | 27         | Not given      | -        | -           |
| Achnacarry North           | D A Cameron of Lochiel                          | Achnacarry Sporting and Country Pursuits | Alex Macdonald           | 59         | 14-10          | 18-12    | Q           |
| Achnacarry South Forest    | D A Cameron of Lochiel                          | Achnacarry Sporting and Country Pursuits | John Morrison            | 43         | 13-09          | 20-00    | Q           |
| Ardgour Estate             | E MacLean                                       | J Guthrie                                | Ross MacLean / Iain Lang | 24         | 14-02          | 19-03    | -           |
| Ardverikie                 | Ardverikie Estate Ltd                           | N/a                                      | D Langlands              | 102        | 14-03          | 17-06    | -           |
| Barisdale                  | Robert and John Gordon                          | N/a                                      | Craig Harbison           | 22         | 14-00          | 17-02    | -           |
| Ben Alder                  | Ben Alder Estate Ltd                            | N/a                                      | Ian G Crichton           | 55         | 14-06          | 17-04    | -           |
| Camusrory                  | The Hon Rupert Soames and Mr R Crosthwaite-Eyre | N/a                                      | Victor Stockwell         | 15         | 15-09          | 18-10    | -           |
| Cluanie, East Quoich       | Mr C Siva-Jothy                                 | N/a                                      | Rhuairidh Campbell       | 40         | 14-13          | 18-00    | -           |
| Coignafearn                | Coignafearn Estate                              | Various                                  | Sandy Dey                | 144        | 14-12          | 20-02    | -           |
| Conaglen                   | Mr J Guthrie                                    | N/a                                      | Ross MacLean             | 46         | 14-07          | 20-00    | -           |
| Corrour Estate             | Corrour Lands Ltd                               | N/a                                      | Donald Rowantree         | 225        | 13-09          | 17-06    | -           |
| Craig Dhu and Biallid Farm | Angus Macpherson                                | N/a                                      | Graham Christie          | 6          | 10-02*         | 11-02*   | -           |
| Culachy                    | Culachy Estate Management Ltd                   | N/a                                      | Scott Bremner            | 44         | 13-08          | 17-05    | Q           |
| Dalwhinnie                 | Ben Alder Estate Ltd                            | N/a                                      | Iain MacDonald           | 11         | 12-07          | 15-03    | -           |
| Dell                       | J P G Finnis                                    | N/a                                      | Colin Barclay            | 13         | 12-07*         | -        | -           |
| Dunachton                  | John Forbes-Leith                               | N/a                                      | Andrew Drummond          | 20         | -              | 12-03*   | -           |
| East Monar                 | D C R Allen                                     | N/a                                      | Stephen Potter           | 25         | 12-09          | 16-04    | -           |
| Glenaladale                | R G Cheape                                      | N/a                                      | David McCauley           | 19         | 14-00          | 17-07    | -           |
| Glenavon Estate            | Glenavon Estate Ltd                             | N/a                                      | Richard Greenlaw         | 29         | 11-12          | 16-10    | Q           |
| Glenbancher                | Glenbancher Estate                              | N/a                                      | Jim Grant                | 40         | 14-05          | 18-00    | -           |
| Glen Dessary               | Sir Patrick Grant                               | N/a                                      | Sir Patrick Grant        | 34         | 15-01          | 18-05    | -           |
| Glendoe                    | Messrs G and R Vernon                           | N/a                                      | Jonathan Carslaw         | 41         | 13-12          | 19-04    | -           |
| Glenmazeran                | Englefield Estate                               | N/a                                      | James Irvine             | 28         | 14-09          | 18-07    | -           |

On one day at the forest the stalker was glassing high ground and noticed ptarmigan rising. An eagle then appeared carrying a struggling fox, a cub of the year.

At Glenquoich, a guest David Leggatt, shot a stag which failed to react and walked out of sight. Stalker Lea MacNally thought he had missed but David thought otherwise. A second stag appeared, which he shot, and on going to collect it from a ravine, a fox bolted. Lea went back to look for the first stag, which he found dead with the fox eating out of the bullet entry hole. Sadly he missed the fox.

Only one forest reported disturbance by hillwalkers. At Kingie, John Cameron, head stalker, had two stalks disturbed by walkers failing to use paths or ridges. He also noted the most rainfall in September and October since he started recording it back in 1994.

### Perthshire

On the whole, the rut tended to be late getting under way for many forests and was then short and sharp. At Invergeldie the first roar was heard on 24 September and Auchlyne and Suie reported the first proper rut for years. Kevin Grant, head stalker at Craiganour, noted stags holding hinds on 6 October, but some stags never went near hinds. While at Acharn Hill there was a very high concentration of young animals, and a few stags were seen holding hinds, even at the end of the season. At Boreland, the rut was late and never seemed to get going, while at Corrievarkie by 5 October the rut was well underway. At Glen Bruar stalking started on 22 September and went very well although only half the beat was stalked.

The majority of forests reported stags in good to excellent condition, with plenty of fat. However, South Chesthill, although noting good condition overall, had several thin, young and middle-aged stags with missing incisors, possibly a result of frozen winters. Deer were described as full of fat at Glenlochay, but quite a lot of liver fluke in stags from lower ground was reported. As for the weather, wet, misty with mainly west, south and south-westerly winds sums it up – desperate stalking weather!

The good days could be counted on one hand and at Acharn Hill a number of days were lost. At Dalnaspidal several freak heads were shot, though many good stags were seen holding

hinds during the rut. There was a great deal of hillwalker disturbance at North Chesthill, Glenlyon with several stalks spoiled. A similar situation pertained at Dunalastair and Crossmount where almost every day hillwalkers had to be negotiated and stalks were ruined. At Camusericht, a hind was seen chasing a fox, and some nice coveys of ptarmigan were noted on the high ground.

The stag season at Invermearan was saddened and upset by the untimely death of the estate owner Adam Besterman.

### Ross-shire

As with so many areas in Scotland, the weather generally was absolutely appalling. Constant driving rain and strong winds made life difficult for both deer and stalkers alike. Coulin suffered from 27 days of persistent rain, and at Achnashellach many burns were too dangerous to cross, thus limiting stalking areas. At Druadaig the rut only lasted for two weeks and during the second week stags were all sheltering in forestry plantations to produce nothing but blank days. The rut itself seemed to vary greatly from forest to forest.

There was a quick, late rut at Eishken, Isle of Lewis, where foggy conditions made stalking difficult. But it was a different story at Arnisdale where the rut commenced on 23 September and by 8 October stags were completely run, with weights quickly falling off. Here, poor calf counts for the past two springs are a matter of concern.



Easy does it. Benmore.



| Forest                     | Owner                            | Tenant         | Stalker           | Stags Shot              | Average Weight | Heaviest | SQWV Member |   |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------|-------------|---|
| Glenquoich                 | Duncan Gordon                    | N/a            | Lea McNally       | 38                      | 16-10          | -        | Q           |   |
| Glen Roy NNR               | Scottish Natural Heritage        | N/a            | John Macdonald    | 5                       | 12-00          | 13-12    |             |   |
| Glenshero                  | Rio Tinto Alcan Estates          | Various        | Bruce Hendry      | 126                     | 13-04          | 19-05    | Q           |   |
| Inverguserrain             | Iain Wilson                      | N/a            | Iain Wilson       | 6                       | 15-04          | 17-02    | -           |   |
| Kilchoan Estate            | Eric Delwart                     | N/a            | Iain Biggart      | 30                      | 15-01          | 18-09    | -           |   |
| Killiechonate Forest       | Rio Tinto Alcan Estates          | Various        | A Walker          | 66                      | 13-10          | 18-08    | Q           |   |
| Kingairloch and Glensanda  | Kurt Larson                      | N/a            | Ewen Kennedy      | 47                      | 15-13          | 21-01    | Q           |   |
| Kingie                     | I & H Brown Ltd                  | N/a            | John Cameron      | 28                      | 14-12          | 19-03    | -           |   |
| Kinloch Hourn              | Henry Birkbeck                   | N/a            | Donald Cameron    | 12                      | 14-05          | 18-01    | -           |   |
| Knoydart Estate            | The Knoydart Foundation          | N/a            | Jim Brown         | 49                      | 14-04          | 18-01    | -           |   |
| Mamore                     | Rio Tinto Alcan Highland Estates | Various        | George Loudon     | 56                      | 13-01          | 22-00    | Q           |   |
| North Morar                | Ian Bond                         | N/a            | Alec Mackay       | 36                      | 15-03          | 20-06    | -           |   |
| Pitmain Estate             | Pitmain Estate Ltd               | N/a            | Graham Mabon      | 14                      | 12-07          | 16-02    | -           |   |
| Roshven Hill               | J A P Forbes                     | Colin Surman   | Colin Surman      | 7                       | 13-06          | 14-07    | -           |   |
| Struy                      | Angus Spencer-Nairn              | N/a            | Roddy Legge       | 21                      | 14-08          | 17-11    | -           |   |
| PERTHSHIRE                 |                                  |                |                   |                         |                |          |             |   |
| Acharn Hill                | A N B Baillie-Hamilton           | Keith Hall     | Keith Hall        | 10                      | 05-13*         | 06-13*   | -           |   |
| Atholl                     | Clunes                           | Bruar Trust    | Various           | Ronnie Hepburn          | 71             | 13-05    | 16-10       | Q |
|                            | Dalnamein                        | Bruar Trust    | N/a               | Benjamin Rhodes         | 46             | 13-11    | 17-09       | Q |
|                            | Forest Lodge                     | Atholl Estates | Various           | Richard Fraser          | 95             | 13-01    | 20-07       | Q |
|                            | Glen Bruar                       | Bruar Trust    | Various           | Dominic Morrogh Bernard | 32             | 13-10    | 15-10       | Q |
|                            | West Hand                        | Atholl Estates | N/a               | Graeme Cumming          | 64             | 13-04    | 17-00       | Q |
| Auchleeks                  | Nial Mackinlay                   | N/a            | Bob Pirie         | 34                      | 13-04          | 15-09    | Q           |   |
| Auchlyne & Suie            | Mrs Emma Patterson               | Various        | Ian Dingwall      | 40                      | 13-08          | 16-06    | Q           |   |
| Boreland                   | Judge R A R Stroyan              | N/a            | Morven Frost      | 65                      | 13-08          | 20-02    | Q           |   |
| Camusericht                | Ben Alder Estate Ltd             | N/a            | Duncan Richardson | 65                      | 13-00          | 18-03    | Q           |   |
| Cashlie                    | W H Porter                       | N/a            | Steven Martin     | 42                      | 13-09          | 18-03    | -           |   |
| Cluniemore                 | Pitlochry Estate Trust           | N/a            | Brian Troup       | 19                      | 15-02          | 23-00    | -           |   |
| Corrievarkie               | Ben Alder Estate Ltd             | N/a            | Richard MacGregor | 25                      | 13-00          | 22-09    | Q           |   |
| Craiganour                 | Astel Ltd                        | Various        | Kevin Grant       | 68                      | 12-06          | 16-03    | -           |   |
| Dalnaspidal                | Ben Alder Estate Ltd             | N/a            | Ian Kennedy       | 50                      | 12-08          | 15-12    | -           |   |
| Dunalastair and Crossmount | Ian de Sales la Terrière         | N/a            | Mark MacKenzie    | 31                      | 13-08          | 19-02    | -           |   |
| Dunan                      | Hamish McCorquodale              | N/a            | David Rankin      | 56                      | -              | -        | Q           |   |
| Edradynate                 | Michael Campbell                 | Alex Cargill   | Alex Cargill      | 5                       | 10-00*         | 11-06*   | -           |   |
| Glenartney                 | Lady Jane Willoughby             | N/a            | Alistair Work     | 97                      | 13-07          | 17-08    | -           |   |
| Glenlochay                 | Struan Robertson                 | N/a            | James Barrie      | 55                      | 11-09          | 18-04    | -           |   |
| Glenlyon Estate            | Iain Wotherspoon                 | N/a            | James Lambie      | 43                      | 13-07          | 25-07    | Q           |   |
| Glenturret                 | Mr and Mrs Seldon                | N/a            | Mike Reddington   | 8                       | 08-05*         | 11-00*   | -           |   |
| Innerhadden                | Richard Barclay                  | N/a            | Craig Macintosh   | 34                      | 15-03          | 16-01    | #           |   |

| Forest                                | Owner                          | Tenant          | Stalker               | Stags Shot | Average Weight | Heaviest | SQWV Member |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| Innerwick                             | Mrs E Whewell                  | N/a             | David Pirie           | 37         | -              | -        | Q           |
| Invercauld - Rhiedorrach and Glenshee | Invercauld Estate              | N/a             | Liam S Donald         | 75         | 14-03          | 19-02    | Q           |
| Invergeldie                           | Priestley Family               | N/a             | Craig Ross            | 34         | 13-08          | 19-09    | -           |
| Invermearan                           | Executors of A Besterman       | N/a             | J Campbell            | 38         | 13-08          | 16-08    | Q           |
| Lochs                                 | Lochs Estate Trust             | N/a             | Steven Macdonald      | 45         | 13-01          | 16-00    | -           |
| Lude                                  | Duncan Gordon                  | N/a             | Sandy Lean            | 50         | 14-02          | 18-02    | Q           |
| Meggernie                             | Mrs B Malim                    | N/a             | Ally Macaskill        | 51         | 13-05          | 18-07    | -           |
| Monzie                                | Mrs C M M Crichton             | Mr & Mrs Seldon | Mike Reddington       | 7          | 07-06*         | 09-13*   | -           |
| North Chesthill                       | Alastair Riddell               | Various         | Stewart Cumming       | 16         | 13-09          | 16-01    | -           |
| Pitlochry                             | Pitlochry Estate Trust         | N/a             | Brian Troup           | 20         | -              | -        | -           |
| Remony                                | A & J Duncan Millar            | N/a             | Bruce Blackley        | 33         | 12-07          | 17-00    | Q           |
| Roro Estate                           | C/o Edwin Thompson, Galashiels | N/a             | Roddy Billimore       | 27         | 13-07          | 22-11    | -           |
| South Chesthill and Inverinain        | Major General C A Ramsay       | N/a             | Hamish Rae            | 46         | 13-13          | 18-04    | -           |
| Talladh-a-Bhiethe                     | Aad and Kees Van Well          | N/a             | Bob Robertson         | 41         | 13-05          | 17-02    | -           |
| Tarvie                                | J Colman                       | N/a             | Jim Tod               | 21         | 13-10          | 15-12    | -           |
| <b>ROSS-SHIRE AND ISLE OF LEWIS</b>   |                                |                 |                       |            |                |          |             |
| Achnashellach                         | Captain N Wills                | N/a             | Christopher Mackenzie | 21         | 14-00          | 16-11    | Q           |
| Arnisdale                             | Mr J H Richmond-Watson         | N/a             | Ewen Ballantyne       | 30         | 14-02          | 17-03    | Q           |
| Braulen Estate                        | Glenavon Estate Ltd            | N/a             | Richard Smith         | 130        | 13-12          | 19-01    | Q           |
| Corriellair                           | Ian Brown & Sons               | N/a             | Johnny Matheson       | 19         | 14-10          | 18-07    | -           |
| Coulin                                | The Hon P R Smith              | Various         | Neil Morrison         | 26         | 13-10          | 18-03    | Q           |
| Diabaig                               | Trustees of Sir Edmund Bacon   | N/a             | Donnie Beaton         | 10         | 15-04          | 18-09    | -           |
| Druidaig                              | H I Macrae                     | N/a             | Ian Culbertson        | 2          | 13-08          | 14-00    | -           |
| Eilanreach                            | Lord Dulverton                 | N/a             | Alan Mackenzie        | 38         | 14-10          | 20-00    | -           |
| Eishken, Isle of Lewis                | N Oppenheim                    | N/a             | Chris Macrae          | 74         | 12-00          | 14-12    | -           |
| Fannich                               | Medieval Industries            | N/a             | R Matheson            | 33         | 14-02          | 17-06    | -           |
| Glencarron Estate                     | Alasdair Douglas               | N/a             | Brian Watson          | 32         | 12-00          | 14-00    | -           |
| Keachulish                            | David Bulmer                   | N/a             | Marcus Munro          | 7          | 13-00          | 14-06    | -           |
| Kildermorie Estate                    | Ian A Duncan                   | N/a             | Dougie Russell        | 30         | 12-08          | 17-09    | -           |
| Kinlochdamph                          | Mark Adams                     | N/a             | Duncan McLeod         | 13         | 15-00          | 18-00    | -           |
| Kinlochluichart                       | I H Leslie-Melville            | Various         | Glyn Robson           | 62         | -              | 17-00    | -           |
| Leckmelm                              | Donald Wynne                   | N/a             | Donald Wynne          | 13         | 13-04          | 15-02    | -           |
| Strathconon Estate                    | Kirkbi                         | N/a             | Angus Cameron         | 48         | 14-03          | 17-03    | Q           |
| Strathvaich and Strathrannoch         | Strathvaich Farms LLP          | N/a             | Donald Macrae         | 70         | 14-00          | 18-06    | -           |
| Tullich Estate                        | Hon Richard Curzon             | T Chetwynd      | Tom Chetwynd          | 3          | 13-10*         | 15-06*   | -           |

For several forests the rut started early. At Diabaig stags broke out on 10 September, and at Corriellair they were with hinds 10 days later. Again, an early start to the rut at Strathconon. While the great majority of forests reported deer in good to very good condition, Keachulish noted disappointing weights and head quality poorer than normal. Kinlochluichart found stags to be in fair condition, though weights were down on previous years, while at Coulin stags were found to be lighter than last year. Corriellair has seen an increase in hillwalkers during the season, with one couple losing two dogs on the hill over a week, both of which had vanished chasing deer.

### Sutherland

While the weather was generally wet and windy, with southerly winds, many forest appear to have enjoyed a "normal" rut, with first roars heard in early September. However, at Kinloch the rut was later than usual, as it was at Shinness Estate where few stags were on the ground until the end of the season., while quite a few hinds were without stags throughout the season.

At Glencanisp and Drumrunie the rut peaked in the first two weeks of October with some raging battles involving multiple stags. One client at this forest shot two switches within 10 minutes. At Reay Forest Estate the stags seemed to be more "switched on" than in previous years and a number of battles were seen, with older stags finished by 10 October to make way for younger contenders. Poorer hinds were not being pestered by stags until at least three weeks later than quality beasts. Dalnessie reported the best and earliest rut in years.



Spying, Glencalvie



Conditions varied from forest to forest. At Ledmore weights held well but head quality was poorer, with many switches. There was low body weight at Kinloch after two terrible winters, while at Shinness deer were generally in very good condition, as they were at Clebrig and at Glencanisp and Drumrunie, where antlers are also improving after years of culling switches, and some nice Royals were seen holding hinds. Stags were in good condition and heavier at Reay Forest though a cause for concern is a lack of good, strong calves. Stags were in good condition at Corriemulzie and Dalnессie. At Corriemulzie wet, cold weather in September brought the stags down low and, mixing with hinds, caused an early rut. Mature stags were spent by the second week of October. Three travelling hummels were seen, but not shot, and a number of switches were killed on higher ground.



Assynt



Benmore spying up and down

| Forest                   | Owner  | Tenant                 | Stalker             | Stags Shot | Average Weight | Heaviest | SQWV Member |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|----------|-------------|
| <b>SUTHERLAND</b>        |  |                        |                     |            |                |          |             |
| Achentoul                | Sir John Nutting   | N/a                    | Duncan Bentley      | 35         | 14-04          | 21-03    | -           |
| Alladale                 | Paul Lister  | Various                | Innes MacNeill      | 80         | 13-00          | 16-08    | -           |
| Badanloch                | Badanloch Estate Company Ltd                                 | Various                | Brian Lyall         | 34         | 14-09          | 19-09    | -           |
| Borrobol                 | Sir Michael Wigan  | N/a                    | John Macdonald      | 41         | 13-08          | 17-08    | -           |
| Clebrig                  | A W Nicholson  | Mr and Mrs J Nicholson | A G Robertson       | 16         | 16-06          | 19-05    | -           |
| Corriemulzie             | The Corriemulzie Trust                                       | Various                | Alasdair Mackenzie  | 70         | 14-00          | 19-07    | -           |
| Croick                   | Croick Partnership   | N/a                    | Alasdair Sutherland | 21         | 17-08          | 20-00    | -           |
| Dalnessie                | Ericht Farming Company                                       | Various                | Andrew Mackay       | 30         | 14-08          | 18-04    | -           |
| Glencalvie               | Glencalvie Estate  | Various                | Andrew Sutherland   | 69         | 13-02          | 18-06    | -           |
| Glencanisp and Drumrunie | Assynt Foundation  | N/a                    | John Cullen         | 45         | 14-00          | 15-08    | -           |
| Inchnadamph              | George Vestey  | N/a                    | Peter MacGregor     | 44         | 14-11          | 19-07    | -           |
| Kinloch                  | A W G Sykes  | N/a                    | Hugh Montgomery     | 34         | 14-00          | 16-12    | -           |
| Ledmore                  | David Bulmer   | N/a                    | Marcus Munro        | 31         | 14-08          | 18-02    | -           |
| Loch Choire Estate       | Lord Joicey, Hon Andrew Joicey, David Knowles, Duncan Leslie | Various                | Neil Mackay         | 74         | 12-04*         | 16-02*   | -           |
| Merkland                 | R Woods  | N/a                    | Roddy Watt          | 46         | 13-12          | 18-07    | -           |
| Reay Forest              | The Grosvenor Estates  | N/a                    | David Allison       | 150        | 14-00          | 20-12    | -           |
| Shinness Estate          | CGA Fletcher and Family                                      | N/a                    | Derick Sutherland   | 6          | 12-01*         | 15-03*   | -           |
| Strathmore               | Mrs Heather Gow  | N/a                    | John Spence         | 28         | 13-12          | 16-06    | -           |

\* denotes larger weight

Q denotes member of Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme on SQWV approved producer member list.

- denotes non member of SQWV or information not given

# denotes SQWV application pending at time of publication

More than 70 per cent of Scottish Wild Venison is produced under the SQWV scheme. Not all properties involved in the scheme contribute to the Stag Season Report. No returns from Forest Enterprise larders which are all SQWV assured are included in the report.





# THE BEST DEER FORESTS WILL CONTINUE TO COMMAND PREMIUMS



**Ran Morgan**

Head of Scotland Residential,  
Knight Frank

Last year we reported a surprisingly robust market on the back of a poor winter, partly due to the limited supply of deer forests for sale. Just five deer forests were brought to the market in 2010 and during 2011 six estates of varying size and type were offered for sale of which five have been sold.

The Letterewe Forest was sold in two lots to a neighbour, and to a hydro-electric speculator with no particular interest in stalking. Two smaller forests offering between 10 - 25 stags each attracted good interest and sold quickly. Indeed, one in Sutherland offered the private stalking ideal of 20 stags and possibly topped the market at around £50,000 per stag.

Obviously there are many factors that affect the capital value of a deer forest and scale is certainly one of them. The rates achieved per stag drop significantly either side of the ideal number of 20 - 30 stags.

Likewise coastal and challenging west coast stalking will attract a higher rate per stag than forests where there are plentiful numbers of deer. There were a couple of classic, traditional stalking estates sold on the private market for premium prices. A fundamental factor in achieving these premium prices was the 'privacy' enjoyed by the estates, not only being free of Munros but also free of forestry and with no publicly owned land nearby, all of which does influence the quality of the stalking. They also offered an attractive lodge house (or the potential to create one), suitable staff accommodation, good stalking averages as well as fishing and low ground sporting opportunities.

There appear to be relatively few forests coming forward to the open market this year. This will continue to support prices but, as in all fragile markets, the best will command premiums



while a few will require sensible pricing in order to achieve a successful outcome.

The issue of Scottish Independence is coming to a head as the referendum debate continues. However, it is impossible to judge the effect it may have on this market until we are all clearer about what independence means. Red deer stalking in Scotland is the best in the world and deer forests

will continue to attract buyers whether Scotland becomes independent or not.

The rise in Stamp Duty Land Tax has been the latest issue in the prime market around Scotland but, with only a few exceptional Highland lodges likely to be valued at over £2,000,000, this again is unlikely to deter prime buyers and the appetite for deer stalking remains undiminished despite current global uncertainties.



# THE INSPECTOR CALLS

Dick Playfair meets **Johnny Morison**, assessor for the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme (SQWV)

Mention of the Inspector calling would have many quaking in their boots, but I suspect that a good number of stalkers and deer managers enjoy the company and the craic with Johnny Morison, one of three assessors for the Scottish Quality Wild Venison (SQWV) scheme.

Johnny has been inspecting deer larders since 2001, and looking at Scottish beef and lamb for somewhat longer as a lead assessor for QMS. He knows a thing or two about cereals and dairy too as an assessor for the Little Red Tractor Scheme.

Foot and mouth could have been a big nail in the coffin of Scotland's venison sector. Instead it has probably been a blessing in disguise. The outbreak saw the door slam firmly shut on venison exports and the sector desperately needed new markets. Some pioneering work by both game dealers and estates found openings with UK supermarkets but, in line with their other products, they needed proof of provenance, proof of traceability, and reassurance about a wild product harvested seasonally and differently. The wild venison story is a great selling point but, in terms of food safety, it's one rife with potential pitfalls.



So the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme was born. Forest Enterprise had set the benchmark in terms of deer larders, and Johnny inspected the facilities on a number of estates to see how they matched up against this. He says:

"The main factors were, and still are, hygiene and traceability. The retailer, and through them the consumer, needs absolute confidence that the product they are selling and eating is of the highest standard and contamination free.

"Once shot, deer become food. As an assessor I need to know that the stalker is doing a good job. He has responsibilities in terms of Best Practice for the gralloch on the hill, the method by which the carcass reaches the larder - whether that's pony, quadbike, or argo - work in the larder, and all associated record keeping."

It's not a walk in the park, but any stalker worth his salt will be doing this anyway. Johnny says:

"From my experience I know that stalkers take immense pride in their work, and in the state of their larders. They want their beasts to be presented to the game dealer in the best condition, and they want the game dealer to ensure that that continues right through processing. I've heard of a member of the Royal household being asked to leave the larder because he wasn't clean enough having just come off the hill - and receiving a thorough hose down in the yard before he was re-admitted. That's not uncommon."

Before the invention of chilling technology, the elements were harnessed to do that job. Victorian deer larders, and there are many still in operation, were sited either where there was good airflow or out of sunlight, and designed with thick walls to keep the heat out, enough space to allow the prep and butchery work to be done, louvred openings with flyscreens to help air circulation and ventilation, and a water supply. Scotland's unpredictable climate did the rest - and the skill of the stalker.

Johnny shot his first stag on Glen Dye in 1961 (while just a boy!) under the tutelage of Dan Dowell, "a wonderful old stalker, with a big whisky nose." Dan, by all accounts, managed a whole team when there was an outing to the hill - under-stalker, ponyman, someone to carry the rifle, someone to carry the lunch ...





Nor does Johnny doubt the field craft and expertise that stalkers amass that can only come from days spent out on the hill, in knowing everything about the land they cross and the quarry they seek. Not that it always works. He says:

"I was out with Dan Dowell, it was towards the end of the season. It was cold, snowing, and we were soaking, but we got into a good stag. He just wouldn't get up for the shot. Dan got out a big red hanky that he always carried and waved that. Still staggy wouldn't get up, so Dan very slowly rose to his knees and roared – like only a stalker roars. Still no success. So we just lay there getting colder and eventually, what seemed like hours later, staggy got up of his own accord – and that was that."

Johnny's favourite places to stalk include Glen Dye, Lochrosque, Stronelairg and Achnacarry - although he doesn't think the legs would cope with too many steep gradients any more.

The terrain may have been the undoing of one of the lairds around Achnasheen who (there is no date specified for

this story, but clearly before mobile phones or walkie-talkies!) went out with his stalker and got into a beast after a strenuous approach. The laird had the beast in his sights but dropped dead before he pulled the trigger. The stalker had to get the laird's body off the hill, but the ponyman, who they had left some way behind, was having 40 winks and there had been no shot to wake him. Neither did hollering do the trick, so the stalker lit a fire as a signal. Eventually the ponyman woke, by which time half the hillside was ablaze and then, on reaching his boss, found it was not a stag they were to load onto the pony but the laird's corpse. A cairn marks the place where the laird never fired his last shot.

Johnny also does Best Practice days with SNH. He says that it's a conventional industry and many of the older stalkers have taken time to come round to change, but the youngsters coming through the Colleges and elsewhere are clued up and recognise the need for quality assurance when venison is going into the food chain – whether it goes to the hotel in the village, or for customers at Harrods or The Ivy.

Johnny says:

"Estates and deer forests need to support the SQWV scheme. If the market goes the same way as beef, lamb and pork, and it will, then if you aren't quality assured it will be increasingly difficult to get a good price for your venison."

"And it's not expensive" he says. "To join the scheme costs less than a case of half decent claret."

Now that's telling it like it is.



More information on the Scottish Quality Wild Venison Scheme can be obtained from  
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Johnny discusses the finer points with Fergus McGregor, Head Keeper, Murthly and Strathbraan Estates



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