

1. Key Changes to Secondary Legislation

From **21st October 2023**, there will be no close season for male deer of any species in Scotland, following a vote in the Scottish Parliament

From 1st November the minimum bullet weight will change to 80 grains and thermal and image intensifying sights will become legal. An authorisation will still be required from NatureScot to shoot deer at night (i.e. from one hour after sunset until one hour before sunrise), but these sights can be legally used in daylight from November in Scotland.

2. Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan Consultation

Deer managers have until the **14th December** to respond to a consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity, including the first 5-year Delivery Plan for the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. The main actions for deer are as follows:

Substantially reduce deer densities across our landscapes in parallel with ensuring sustainable management of grazing by sheep to improve overall ecosystem health

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce new deer legislation which will modernise the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 and introduce new powers for intervention for the purposes of enhancing or restoring nature, including preventing biodiversity loss, by 2025.• Establish a national deer management programme including monitoring capacity.• Set deer cull to level at which habitats and ecosystems can recover and regenerate and deer densities are maintained at sustainable levels and appropriate to context by 2030;• Broad targets of 2 deer per km² in priority woodland, 5-8 deer per km² in Cairngorms National Park and 10 deer per km² nationally by 2030.• Explore how best to support optimal herbivore densities to enhance biodiversity outcomes in the uplands.• Establish mechanisms to ensure new and existing woodlands are designed to enable effective and safe deer management such as within revised FGS by 2027. |
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ADMG will be preparing a full response but individual deer managers and DMGs are encouraged to respond to the consultation at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-nature-emergency-consultation-scotlands-strategic-framework-biodiversity/documents/>

3. Environment Bill

The Scottish Government is developing draft deer legislation, based on the 2019 Deer Working Group report and recommendations, for introduction in 2024, to be preceded by a full public consultation later this year. These changes will be part of a wider Environment Bill.

4. Common Ground Forum

Organisations and individuals across the Highlands have come together to form **The Common Ground Forum (CGF)**. Initiated by ADMG and Scottish Environment LINK with the aim of setting aside long entrenched disagreements over some areas relating to deer management, the Forum includes deer stalkers, foresters, farmers, landowners, community representatives, nature conservationists and many others. ADMG is also providing financial support to the project.

This coming together represents a commitment to work together while respecting different viewpoints, and already a number of joint initiatives are planned. Particular emphasis is put on what the coming changes will mean for those directly involved in managing deer and in providing support and reassurance in the face of the changes associated with the climate and biodiversity crises, for which an increasing level of deer cull has been identified as a required action by Scottish Government agency NatureScot.

'Our Common Ground Accord' sets out seven commitments including identifying a common purpose, respecting others' objectives, and working for mutually beneficial solutions. The Accord has so far been signed by more than 25 of the key organisations with an interest in wild deer management.

For further details see www.thecommongroundforum.scot

Heading for the Scottish Hills

Deer managers are reminded to ensure that information on the Heading for the Scottish Hills website is kept up to date and to provide as much information as possible about both stag and hind stalking dates. Specific information for land managers is available at <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/doc/how-join-heading-scottish-hills-information-land-managers>. Land managers can email updates to HFTSH@nature.scot.

5. ADMG Programme Ahead

Events

London Discussion & Dinner: ADMG, in partnership with the Fishmongers' Company, is holding an evening event on 13th November in London to discuss deer, salmon and the future of the Scottish Uplands. Places are extremely limited but contact Clare Irving (clare.iring@bidwells.co.uk) if you would like to attend.

Regional Meeting: This will be held virtually by ZOOM on **Tuesday 5th December at 5pm**. Contact Clare Irving (clare.iring@bidwells.co.uk) to register for this event.

ADMG AGM. Provisionally this will be held at Kingsmills Hotel, Inverness on **Wednesday 20th March 2024**.

ADMG projects

DMG Health Checks. ADMG is scoping arrangements for a voluntary DMG Health Check for Spring 2024.

DeerMap. Development of a predictive landscape scale mapping tool for deer managers is progressing and ADMG will hope to provide an update at the AGM in March.

Scottish Venison

The Scottish Venison Association has changed its name to Scottish Venison to more broadly encapsulate both the representative organisation and the brand. Much is underway including a refreshed **Scottish Venison Strategy** to be launched in November, a **detailed report** from JF Consulting and SAOS for the Scottish Government on capacity/infrastructure and the **sector response** to the climate change challenge and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A [template](#) has also been agreed and launched with the **Country Food Trust** to simplify the route for carcasses to be donated to the charity sector.

A full-day event, '[Taking Stock – the Scottish Venison Summit](#)' takes place at the Birnam Arts and Conference Centre on **Monday 20th November** covering these topics and more. For more info: mail@scottish-venison.info.