

West Knoydart Deer Management Group

Minutes of meeting held at Kilchoan Barn Tuesday 5th March 2013, 11.30am

Present: Eric Delwart, Iain Biggart, Jim brown, Tommy McManmon, Davie Newton, Fred Rous, Lester Standen, Angela Williams

1. **Apologies:** Niel Taylor, Iain Wilson, Graeme Taylor, Rick Rhode

2. **Minutes of the last meeting** held on 14th January were agreed.

3. Review of action points

Collate Records and start database	JB	Ongoing. DN has made a start.
Look to use SNH Deer-line website for making cull returns and retrieving cull data.	All	Ongoing
Provide historical cull return data for KDMG area.	GT	Done
Record grid-refs in future cull records, starting next season.	JB/IB/IW/LS	Start this season.
Make alterations to land management objectives spreadsheet, then circulate.	JB	Done. Need to add in Landholding sizes and target densities.
Allocate priority scores to land management objectives spreadsheet.	All	Ongoing
Copy in neighbours to minutes, agendas, DMP planning, etc.	JB/DN	Done, to be kept up.
Include Rob Cooper in deer count planning.	IB	Done
Habitat Monitoring Training.	GT/LS	Training from SNH and JMT are options.
Set meeting dates for the year in advance.	All	Not yet done
Liaise with Niel Taylor re Sgamadail	LS	LS and JB have been in communication
Coordinate ownership boundary map for the group	LS/JB	Ongoing
Provide shape files of ownership boundaries	GT	Ongoing
Provide examples of DMG mapping from the Cairngorms	GT	Ongoing
Invite all interested parties to be members	JB/DN	Ongoing

4. Hind Cull Progress

Member	Hind Cull to Date	Proposed Hind Cull
Knoydart Foundation	49 hinds & 22 calves	50 + calves
John Muir Trust	41 hinds & 10 calves	C. 45 hinds + calves, & 30 stags
Inverguseran Farm	5 hinds & 1 calf	6 hinds
Kilchoan Estate	94 hinds & 37 calves	total of 135 hinds & calves
Total	189 + 70 calves	c. 200 + calves

Hind culls were reported to have been completed on target. Weather had been quite kind and deer still noted as being generally in good condition. High proportion of calves still apparent at the end of the season. JMT is still carrying on with some out of season culling of both stags and hinds, under an SNH authorisation until the end of March. KF is still culling within fenced woodland if damage to trees is apparent, under the general authorisation.

West Knoydart Deer Management Group

5. Deer Count Feedback

The joint count was carried out from 11th to 16th February and JMT ground on 19th February. Despite a day lost to weather and a 2 day gap until Li and C.D. were counted, it was overall thought to be a very successful count.

	Stags	Hinds	Calves	Total	Calving
Kilchoan	336	765	315	1416	41%
Knoydart Foundation	610	379	163	1152	43%
Inverguserein	45	60	33	138	55%
Sgamadail	65	7	3	75	43%
Li & Coire Dhorcaill	44	46	21	111	46%
Total WKDMG	1100	1257	535	2892	42.5%

IB said that as it was a relatively early count, there is possibility of further natural mortalities, especially among calves so actual recruitment might be lower than seen at the moment.

JB thought that high stag count on KF might be contributed to by more stags being out of the plantations than when previously counted later in the spring.

DN noted that the count result was comparable to that for the old Knoydart Estate from the 1970's. Camusrorry have reported count figures of 48 stags, 282 hinds and 115 calves.

6. Habitat Monitoring Planning

TM thought he would probably attend the SNH training day. JB and IB didn't expect to make it but hoped to coordinate a day with LS.

KF will be carrying on some of their old monitoring, but concentrating on setting up Best Practice system this year. Kilchoan will be carrying on from the Best Practice plots started last year.

LS outlined requirements for monitoring, suggesting that dwarf shrub heath is assessed, along with marked tree seedlings.

7. 2013/14 Cull Planning

There was discussion on whether to try joint cull planning for the group, but it was felt that it would be better left until a full deer management plan is in place. Landholdings to set individual targets for now, with close co-ordination. JB thought that KF would probably cull around 60 stags, plus 30 on the new woodland compensatory culls, to total around 90 stags; plus about 50 hinds. IB said Kilchoan planned to gradually reduce hind population back down to about 500. They want to carry out most with guests, in order to maximise income, with 10 to 12 weeks let, culling about 120 hinds plus calves. JMT hoped to have out of season authorisation again for next year, but also some culling in season.

8. Data Recording Progress

DN outlined the database he had started to work on, to try and produce comparable sets of count and cull data over time, as ownership and returns have changed.

9. Deer Management Plan development

The objectives spread sheet was discussed and it was decided that once scoring had been done by all members, weightings could be applied proportionally to the size of landholding. This could then give an overall picture of the groups' priorities.

No progress with mapping yet.

Next Meeting: Monday 20th May?, to coincide with KF LMG meeting. Later changed to June 10th.

Next KDMG will be 17th June.

West Knoydart Deer Management Group

Action Points

Develop count and cull database	DN
Look to use SNH Deer-line website for making cull returns and retrieving cull data.	All
Record grid-refs in future cull records, starting next season.	JB/IB/IW/LS
Make alterations to land management objectives spreadsheet, then circulate.	JB
Allocate priority scores to land management objectives spreadsheet.	All
Copy in neighbours to minutes, agendas, DMP planning, etc.	JB/DN
Habitat Monitoring Training.	GT/LS
Set meeting dates for the year in advance.	All
Coordinate ownership boundary map for the group	LS/JB
Provide shape files of ownership boundaries	GT
Provide examples of DMG mapping from the Cairngorms	GT
Invite all interested parties to be members	JB/DN