

## DCS Policy on Deer Counting

DCS will use data collected from individual and collaborative counts within the annual census programme to provide estimates on the scale of both regional and national deer populations.

However, in order to use public resources to count deer, DCS has to demonstrate public benefit. Consequently DCS targets and prioritises its limited resources at:

- Counting where there are concerns of negative impacts on the public interest.  
This may include counting deer to:  
Support the **Joint Working Process** considering impacts on the natural heritage  
Quantify concerns over impacts to **Agriculture** and/ or **Forestry**  
Understand and assess the scale and distribution of deer **In and around towns** or where there maybe a risk to **Public Safety**
- DCS will consider the range over which deer are to be counted, the frequency of counts and counting with estates to promote **Best Practice in Collaborative Deer Management**

### Counting to Assist Joint Working and Where There are Concerns of Damage to Agriculture and/or Forestry

DCS counting policy and any resulting action are driven by deer impacts rather than deer numbers or density. However, it is important to link numbers to habitat impacts in order to estimate culling requirements. When DCS initiates a deer count, the purpose of the count is to secure information that will help find management solutions. Direct counts of deer on open range only provide a 'snapshot' of where deer are at a particular point in time. Therefore, the larger the area that can be counted the less is the risk of errors due to movements of deer into and out of the count area.

When counting deer on Joint Working sites or where there are concerns over impacts on agriculture or woodland, DCS will identify the area of ground over which deer need to be counted. The count area could be either part of a DMG, all of a DMG or a combination of DMG areas. If only part of the DMG area is affected then DCS will explore with DMG members the possibility of a jointly-funded count of a larger area within the DMG. In carrying out counts in Joint Working sites, DCS will always seek to work closely with the estates involved. On completion of counts, DCS will provide each estate and office bearers of the DMG with one count report, map and copy of any relevant digital photographs.

In contrast to direct counts, DCS may fund dung counts, which will provide a measure of occupancy (average density over a time period) and are particularly useful in concealing habitats such as woodlands.

## **Public Safety**

In addition, DCS may seek to collect data on the distribution and frequency of deer populations in and around urban areas and transport corridors. DCS will initiate a census and contribute to the costs following specific issues which may arise, either from expressions of concerns about a risk to public or in order to assist with planning for local deer management.

## **Counting to Promote Best Practice in Collaborative Deer Management**

Outwith the Joint Working process, DCS may be able to assist (subject to available resources) with deer counts to promote Best Practice in Collaborative Deer Management. DCS assistance will be in the form of manpower and equipment rather than direct funding (for example direct funding for the hire of helicopters). Guidance on counting deer as part of the Best Practice series is published. To assist with collaborative deer management, DCS aims to promote (subject to available resources) Best Practice for counting deer:

- to those with responsibility for co-ordinating DMG counts, and;
- to those who promote a collaborative approach to deer management.

In the above circumstances and where staff time is available, DCS staff member(s) may participate in a count with a digital camera (depending on availability) as an independent observer where the Deer Officer for the area is satisfied that:

- the proposed count area represents a practical area of deer range;
- there is a public interest in the count;
- all data collected during the count will be in the public domain.

On completion of these counts DCS would normally expect the DMG to collate the data and produce count maps and reports. Where those participating are agreed that the count and the count data is robust, DCS may have resources to assist in this aspect.