

## Strathspey Deer Management Information

Strath Caulidh Ltd carried out an independent deer density assessments in 2014 & 2019. The report recommended a cull of 500-600 deer for 5 years from 2014 to bring the deer density down to a suitable level of two and seven deer per km<sup>2</sup>, to allow natural regeneration and planted tree establishment.

Table below shows the culls from 2014 to 2020. This shows that the cull was carried out following the recommendation from Strath Caulidh from 2014 to 2018 and is now operating a maintenance cull to maintain deer at their current sustainable levels of between two and seven deer per km<sup>2</sup> as per FLS deer management strategy.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Glenmore</b>	141	138	139	135	143	107	102
<b>Rothiemurchus</b>	197	181	207	208	114	68	77
<b>Inshriach</b>	261	300	286	236	340	162	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>597</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>329</b>

The cull results are translated below in deer density per km<sup>2</sup> and approx. deer population. The figures only suggest occupancy and do not account for incursion. The 2019 deer density is in line with FLS policy and future direction for establishing woodland.

	km <sup>2</sup>	2014		2019	
		Density	Quantity	Density	Quantity
Glenmore	35.5	9.3	330.2	7.1	252.1
Rothiemurchus	23.5	14.4	338.4	3.8	89.3
Inshriach	33	12.8	422.4	3.0	99.0
<b>Average</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>1091.0</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>440.4</b>

### Comments on Strathspey cull;

#### Glenmore:

Currently controlled by FLS Ranger.

Ranger reporting increase in early morning and night time recreational use of forest road network causing disruption to deer patterns and culling operations. COVID restrictions has seen a dramatic increase in outdoor recreation which is having a direct impact on practical deer management and safety. It is anticipated that the Glenmore deer population will remain stable at seven deer per km<sup>2</sup>. This is due to the high recreational pressure and challenges of culling.

Deer browsing will have minimal impact on new natural regeneration establishment as the deer density is within acceptable levels for woodland establishment. If there are specific problematic areas experiencing higher deer browsing, these can be targeted for increase deer culling visits.

It should also be noted that Glenmore has high recreational use year round. Summer time attracts walking and mountain biking while winter attracts cross country skiing leaving little room for deer culling operations.

### **Rothiemurchus:**

Currently controlled using a mixture of contract resource, Cairngorm Connect stalkers and FLS staff.

Ongoing communication with Rothiemurchus Estate regarding the neighbouring sporting deer herd. During bad winter weather the deer living in Glen Einich descend into FLS Rothiemurchus for shelter and food. Following the purchase of Rothiemurchus in 2014 an agreement was made where FLS would only shoot 1 or 2 deer from the Glen Einich herd at a time. This agreement implies ownership of the deer, has welfare implications and restricts FLS objectives for designation habitat improvement. FLS are currently seeking to amend this agreement for future sustainability.

Plan to incorporate Rothiemurchus into a larger contract parcel to make it more attractive.

### **Inshriach**

Controlled by FLS Ranger.

Annual culls from 2014 – 2018 has resulted in a reduced population. However, the cull continually exceeds the anticipated cull target due to a high rate of incursion from neighbouring properties. Incursion rates are suspected to be approx. 30% in Inshriach.

Reports of increased daily recreational use as people expand out of the Glenmore basin. Mountain biking in Inshriach is becoming more popular and trail development is increasing.

### **Comments on future culling operations.**

Deer culling targets will be informed using population modelling, habitat impact assessments and localised deer browsing data. There will be a commitment to closely monitor establishment sites of both natural regeneration and planted stock. Maintaining the current deer density will ensure successful establishment.

Out of season and night shooting will continue to be a valuable tool for deer management, especially when working closely with recreational facilities. Aim to achieve the minimum cull target for each forest block. However, recreational pressure will continue to increase and a balance of deer density and recreational use will be met. Current cull targets are;

- Glenmore 120
- Rothiemurchus 100
- Inshriach 100

Glenmore will require more attention and monitoring. Finding the balance between culling and recreation will be key. Use of Cairngorm Connect stalkers for monitoring and counting will be useful. Night shooting and out of season authorisations will continue to be a valuable tool.

On Rothiemurchus there are 10 native broadleaved monitoring plots planted in 2021. These will act as a control for monitoring herbivore browsing impact. This will help facilitate future discussions around the management of the Glen Einich sporting deer herd.

Inshriach continues to produce more deer than anticipated. There continues to be incursion from neighbouring areas. Current density is good and culling will work to maintain this level. Newly scarified areas are producing lots of initial seedling which will be used as a control to monitor current deer browsing levels.