A Guide to Writing Deer Management Plans

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## Revision History

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date  | Version  | Comments  | Sections updated  |
| 20.01.2022  | Draft  |   |   |
| 28.01.2022  | V1  | Reformatted into FC standard template |  Aesthetic changes only |
| 11.01.2023 | V2 | Content review | All, minor text changes |

Author/Who to Contact?

Jamie Cordery

## Deer Management Plan Guidance Notes

If completed in full, the Deer Management Plan (DMP) will meet the requirements of both the UK Forestry Standard and Forestry Commission grant schemes. It can also be used in any other situation requiring a DMP.

The [DMP template (available on Operations Note 59 page of GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-requirements-for-woodland-supplement-ws1-deer-control-and-management-operations-note-59)) has been designed to be used by an estate, farm, or woodland area. Deer management plans should be written in conjunction with the woodland or overall management plans for a holding. At any stage this can be discussed with the Forestry Commission Woodland Officer and Deer Officer.

For WS1 a draft DMP must accompany the application, be active from the start of Year 1 and reviewed in consultation with the Deer Officer before the end of year 1.

Each section of the template is numbered, and the guidance here follows the same numbering.

Feel free to expand/condense any part or add pages where appropriate.

### 1. Contacts

Details of ownership and contact information should include those most relevant to the holding and its deer management.

An important part of the plan is an understanding of who holds the right to cull deer on the holding.

### 2. Location and area of holding

A central grid reference of the woodland(s) or of the estate as appropriate.

* the area (ha) of woodland in Countryside Stewardship
* the area (ha) of woodland in any Woodland Creation Scheme
* the total area (ha) of woodland on the holding
* the area (ha) of arable crops or other crops open to deer access
* the area (ha) of grass / marsh other habitats open to deer access
* the total area of the holding

List all grant schemes and statutory designations which apply to the holding

The location of the area included in the management plan should be marked on a 1:50,000 or 1:25,000 scale map which shows key location features such as the woodland(s), the boundary of the holding. If the estate/holding is part of a deer management group, a map showing the boundary of the group should be included.

Maps should be appended to the Deer Management Plan to form a single document.

### 3. Deer – Current situation and trends

This section records the species of deer currently present on the holding, and those species that may be expected to arrive within the next 5 years.

Estimates of deer activity level should be recorded simply as high, medium or low, with an indication of current trend – i.e., is the activity decreasing, stable, or increasing. Include estimates of deer numbers if they are available.

In the comments section, place any note relevant to the current situation at both holding level and landscape level, with an indication of the assessment method(s) used to estimate activity or numbers.

### 4. Obstacles and challenges to achieving effective deer control

This section identifies potential challenges to deer control. Issues should be assessed and wherever possible workable solutions should be described.

The intention of the WD2/WS1 incentives is that improvements to deer management are achieved and obstacles removed to enhance efficiency, with the aim of reducing adverse impacts by deer.

### 5. Land management objectives*.*

This section identifies woodland/land management objectives and the key areas where deer impacts may affect them.

The starting (baseline) impact levels (taken either from known/perceived information or habitat impact assessment within year 1) should be recorded, with an indication of where the target level of impact is expected to be within 5 years. Insert a “**P**” copied from the heading in the appropriate box.

The comments section might include an indication of the ultimate level of acceptable impact.

### 6. Overall Deer management objectives.

This section discusses strategic future deer management objectives which should support the achievement of the desired habitat/woodland management or woodland creation objectives as in 5. above. State targets as “Reduce/ Maintain/ Increase or N/A”, and make comments as required.

### 7. Cull Strategy by species

In this section the cull strategy for each species should be discussed. Different deer species are likely to impact in slightly different ways depending on their behaviour and grazing / browsing preferences.

Where a deer species is absent but likely to become present the policy for dealing with it should also be included.

The deer strategy can be described in this section in general terms e.g., “shoot on sight, in season until management objectives at 5 are met” or “maintain current roe density”. Strategies should be realistic but must support the delivery of woodland and landscape management objectives.

### 8. Annually reviewed cull and trend summary

In this table record the “expected” cull numbers, guided by the ‘Annually reviewed cull / trend summary’ table, for at least the 5 years of the scheme, together with the “actual” cull figures as they become available annually. If past data is available place those as actuals in the first few years of the table or as an annexe to this plan. Note that the expected cull is aspirational only but should be realistic and regarded as a desired minimum.

The cull year is from 1st May to end April (for example, the cull year 1/5/23 to 30/4/24 is written as 23/24 at the head of the table. For WS1 a [cull record sheet (available on Operations Note 59 page of GOV.UK)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-requirements-for-woodland-supplement-ws1-deer-control-and-management-operations-note-59) is provided.

Either a trend arrow (for Deer numbers and DVCs) or score (H, M, L for impact and activity) should be added annually to the bottom of the table.

The expected cull figures should be reviewed annually.

### 9. Deer Management Effort

The WS1 supplement has been developed with the expectation that additional/sustained time spent culling each year will lead to monitored reductions in deer activity and related impacts, or maintenance of these at satisfactory levels.

The time required to cull high level populations must not be underestimated. Even after populations are reduced, the culling effort (time) (to sustain lower population levels) can remain as high as it was previously, despite fewer animals being culled.

Although the WS1 deer incentives are targeted at woodlands it would be expected that enhanced control levels will occur over the wider holding.

Day to day deer management can involve either single deer stalkers, team or collaborative culls.

Effort is calculated as the number of “stalker days” applied to culling deer through the year. For simplicity a day relates to approximately 6 hours of deer management time. For example, a morning stalking session for one stalker would be allocated as ½ a person day. Where multiple deer stalkers are involved in a collaborative cull or group event, multiply the number of events by the number of hours per event, divided by 6, multiplied by the number of stalkers deployed for each event e.g. 7 stalkers attending 4 events of 5 hours would be 23 stalker days.

Collaboration across landholdings and team culling within a landholding helps the effectiveness of day-to-day deer management.

Legal Night and Out of Season (OOS) shooting are subject either to licensing control by Natural England or, in the case of OOS shooting to prevent of serious damage to crops/property, to Section 7 of the Deer Act 1991. Effort is calculated as above.

In addition to deer stalking, time may be spent on deer management group meetings, and stalker training or Continued Skills Development (CSD). Time spent on these should be entered as “stalker days”.

### 10. Monitoring

The data collected in the monitoring process can be used to measure progress and to inform deer and land management decisions and methods on a regular basis. Describe the type of monitoring intended, how frequent, and who will carry out monitoring.

Cull data\*:

To satisfy the requirements of WD2 and WS1, cull monitoring is required. For WS1, completion of a [cull template (available on Operations Note 59 page of GOV.UK) i](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-requirements-for-woodland-supplement-ws1-deer-control-and-management-operations-note-59)s provided in the guidance documents is mandatory. The dates of outings, time spent culling, and animals culled (split by species and sex) should be recorded. The template will collate this information for you to submit electronically to the FC on an annual basis usually at the end of April.

### Habitat Impact Assessment\*:

This survey should be completed in Spring usually by the end of April. It is recommended that habitat impact assessments and exclosure monitoring take place at similar times. Guidance on the [assessment method is provided (on Operations Note 59 page of GOV.UK).](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-requirements-for-woodland-supplement-ws1-deer-control-and-management-operations-note-59) FC deer officers will make training available if required. A [record template (see Operations Note 59 page of GOV.UK)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-requirements-for-woodland-supplement-ws1-deer-control-and-management-operations-note-59) is provided. The survey results sheets should be retained for the life of the grant. Otherwise, a simple summary of the results forms part of a [Survey Report (available on Operations Note 59 page of GOV.UK)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/management-requirements-for-woodland-supplement-ws1-deer-control-and-management-operations-note-59) which is supplied electronically by the end of years 1, 3 and 5 and which includes a photographic record, map of the route surveyed, and the exclosure plot summaries.

Exclosures\*:

Deer impact monitoring exclosures may be required to satisfy the requirements of WD2 and WS1. These will need to be in areas where change is expected to occur as a result of deer management activity. In WS1 the number and location can be discussed with your woodland Officer/Deer Officer. Specifications are given in the [FG11](https://www.gov.uk/countryside-stewardship-grants/deer-exclosure-plot-fg11) guidance. Exclosures will require monitoring at establishment in year 1, and then again in years 3 and 5. Usually exclosure monitoring is carried out during habitat impact assessments with the exclosures being included in the impact survey routes. The exclosure results sheets should be retained for the life of the grant. For WS1 a simple summary of the results forms part of a Survey Report which is supplied electronically by the end of years 1, 3 and 5 and which includes a photographic record, a map of locations, and the habitat impact summary.

### Deer counts:

These are not mandatory but may be carried out to gain extra evidence to the size of the deer population.

### Nearest neighbour crop damage:

This monitoring method is not mandatory but can be used when monitoring woodland creation sites, woodland restock sites, or supplementary plantings.

### Arable crop impacts:

These are not mandatory but can be monitored using a modified habitat impact assessment form or agronomist data/harvesting yield data.

### Quadrat Surveys:

These are not mandatory. For specialist floral surveys, quadrat surveys may be used to analyse impacts to floral interests, or specific flowering plants.

### 11. Physical protection/infrastructure to support deer culling

Deer culling alone may not fully protect woodland management. In the short-term fencing or tree tubes may be needed. Physical protection may work for a period, but they do not negate the need for the deer population to be controlled.

Please note that areas to be fenced in a current scheme are not eligible for the WS1 Supplement.

### 12. Additional elements

There may be additional elements particular to your site / holding / estate that you wish to discuss with your deer officer who might also place comments here at the WS1 application stage.

Review

The Plan should be discussed, reviewed, and updated annually. The plan should span at least 5 years or for a longer period, with the expectation that it will continue to be used in an evolving form indefinitely.

### Appendices

A range of appendices may be included with the deer management plan.

E.g.

Boundary Map

Habitat Impact assessments Year 1, 3, and 5.

Past Impact assessments (before the start of this plan, if available)

Map of exclosures

Monitoring results for exclosures at years 1, 3, and 5, with photographs

Cull records from start of this plan

Past cull data (before start of this plan, if available)

Deer stalking and associated risk assessments

Formal Stalking Agreement or Contract, if applicable.