



FENCING(1)



Aim

The aim of this guide is to provide deer managers with key points to consider before, during and after the erection of deer fencing. The publication 'Joint Agency Statement and Guidance on Deer Fencing', available from the Deer Commission for Scotland¹ provides additional information on this topic.

Purposes

Deer fencing can be used to:

- ◆ Maintain different deer densities in close proximity to each other;
- ◆ Achieve complete or partial exclusion of deer from particular areas in order to prevent public safety hazards or to achieve environmental, agricultural or forestry objectives;
- ◆ Enclose deer in a specific area, e.g. a farm/park.

Decision making

Management is about making choices. Good managers consider all the options before making a decision. When considering fencing as a management measure, consideration must be given to the full range of options for achieving appropriate deer densities before deciding on whether or not to use,

approve or financially support the use of deer fences. Managers should be satisfied that fencing is likely to be the most effective and cost-effective option available.

Cost effectiveness

This is dependent on the length or type of fence required, how easy it is to erect or remove, how long it is required to remain deer proof, and the cost/benefit to all affected land management objectives.

- 2 Confirm it is essential to exclude deer from, or confine deer in, the fenced area.
- 2 Compare the relative costs/benefits of using alternative methods to achieve the same aim e.g. in the case of protecting woodland; culling the deer, diversionary feeding or using individual tree protection.
- 2 Take into account indirect costs including the effect on neighbour's interests and lifetime fence costs i.e. maintenance, removal or replacement if damaged.
- 3 Consider what type of fencing is required e.g. electrified stock fence or traditional deer fence.
- 3 Consider whether the deer-proof barrier is to be a permanent or temporary feature.

Practicality

The use of fencing will be most suitable and most successful:

- ◆ Where associated negative impacts are low;
- ◆ In areas of low snowfall, although snowfall need not be a problem if fence is well sited;
- ◆ When adequate maintenance is carried out.

Impacts

- 1 Comply with legal responsibilities related to designated land areas.* Consult relevant authorities e.g. DCS, SNH, FCS, Local Planning Authority.**
- 2 Assess impacts and understand implications for public safety, deer welfare, biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage and access.
- 2 Where the impacts are high, and cannot be reduced through good fence design and siting, adopt an alternative approach if available.

Some negative impacts associated with fencing may be proportionally greater for larger enclosures or long barrier fence-lines.

Grant aid may be withheld for fences with high potential negative impacts and fencing may be prohibited in some circumstances (e.g. a designated site).

Planning considerations: impacts

Approval, planning and designing of a deer fence should take into account and seek to minimise impacts on the following interests:

Public safety

- 2 Consult the relevant roads authority during planning of any fence which may affect deer movement near or across roads.
- 2 Assess the need to form a closed circuit system (i.e. using a physical barrier such as a cattle grid on the road) where fences occur close to both sides of a road.

- 2 Ensure that fences are inspected and maintained in order to:
 - remain deer proof;
 - provide adequate visibility.

- 2 Cull or chase out any deer found inside parallel fencing.

- 2 Where deer are used to crossing, and one side of the road is being fenced, determine whether the increased threat to road users is acceptable. If not, cull or divert deer to a safer area of crossing which may require additional fencing.

- 2 Ensure that fencing does not channel/funnel deer so that they cross roads where visibility is restricted by bends, crests, tall ground cover on and behind verges etc.

- 2 Plan and construct fences in such a way as not to interfere with existing sight lines. Further information on minimum available sight distance to the end of a new fence may be sought from DCS or the road authority.

- 2 Discuss with the local highways authority the need to locate traffic-warning signs at the approaches to all points where deer will cross once a new fence is constructed.

Deer welfare

- 2 Ensure that the health of deer dependent on the fenced area for food, shelter or a migration route remains the same. Either provide alternative grazing and shelter or cull deer. Exclusion of deer should not result in increased winter mortality.

Providing access to alternative grazing and shelter may reduce the level of compensatory cull required without compromising deer welfare. This approach will require knowledge of deer movement and availability of alternative shelter.

- 2 Carry out regular monitoring so that any impacts are quickly identified and addressed.

continued in Fencing(2)

* See DCSG Natural Heritage Statutory Designations ** See BP Contacts

Publication available on-line at www.dcs.gov.uk