

# *How to control deer populations in Scotland*

In a report published today by the Scottish Economic Policy Network (scotecon), the question of finding the most effective method of controlling the rising deer population is examined. Author, Douglas MacMillan<sup>1</sup> says “ Traditional measures to control marauding deer on farmland has been partially effective. However, damage to the rest of our natural heritage is less easy to prevent.”

## *Key findings*

- The voluntary approach used by the Deer Commission for Scotland (DCS) has had limited success in meeting the government’s culling targets for red deer, and grazing pressure on the natural heritage continues to increase.
- The DCS is reluctant to use its powers to enter estates and shoot deer to protect the natural heritage for fear of antagonising landowners, and because it would place considerable strain on the limited resources of the DCS.
- Incentive based approaches could provide a more cost-effective and practical alternative to the voluntary approach. In particular, the introduction of tradable culling ‘obligations’ has considerable potential to reduce deer numbers, as it would allow estates to meet their culling target at least cost to themselves and to the national economy.

## *Policy Implications*

- There is considerable untapped demand for hind stalking and many estates could therefore profit from the system by offering more stalking, with positive knock on effects for local employment and businesses.
- Although intervention of any kind is unlikely to be welcomed by many estates, the system described in the report may be more attractive than other options because the DCS will not be directly involved in the day-to-day management of the system and individual estates would be free to choose how to meet their quota obligations.

## *Contact*

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### **Notes for editors:**

Scotecon is a network of economists based in Scotland’s universities, which aims to stimulate research on the Scottish economy, particularly in those areas of interest and concern to the Scottish Parliament. Scotecon is funded by a Research Development Grant from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council.

Copies of this report entitled ‘The Advantages of Introducing a Tradable Hunting Obligation System as a Mechanism for Reducing Deer Numbers’ are available to the press from **Scotecon**, University of Stirling, FK9 4LA (e-mail: [wilma.ellis@scotecon.net](mailto:wilma.ellis@scotecon.net)). A full version of the report will be available in PDF format on our website ([www.scotecon.net](http://www.scotecon.net)) from Friday May 16th.

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