

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SUBMISSION TO LORD BONOMY

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

What is your name or your organisation's name?

Catriona Dent

What is your address?

[REDACTED]

The Scottish Government generally seeks to publish responses to a review. If you would **not** like your name or address published please click here:

Are you content for Lord Bonomy to contact you in relation to this review?

- Yes
 No

Please indicate which of the sectors you most align yourself/your organisation with. Tick all which are applicable to you.

- Keeper of Working Dogs
 Organisation
 Veterinary Surgeon
 Recreational Shooter
 Hunter
 Gamekeeper
 Landowner
 Pest Controller
 Hunt Staff
 Farmer
 Member of the General Public
 Other

If other, please specify:

I do not own a dog myself but do occasionally work friends' or parent's dogs while out shooting to pick up dead animals or pursue injured animals.

Which, if any, type(s) of dog(s) do you own/regularly engage in exempted activities under the Wild Mammals Act with?

- Lurchers
 Terriers
 Foxhounds

- Beagles
- Spaniels
- Labradors
- Other

If other, please specify:

Bloodhounds and a diverse range of gundogs (german short haired pointers, etc)

Is the Wild Mammals Act providing a sufficient level of protection for wild mammals, while at the same time allowing effective and humane control of mammals, such as foxes, where necessary?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel the activities of organised fox shoots conducted by hunts and individuals using dogs in Scotland are open, public and accountable?

- Yes
- No

Have you noticed any public opposition to the control of pest species using dogs under the Wild Mammals Act in your local area?

- Yes
- No

If yes please explain when and from whom.

Occasional presence of small numbers of 'sabs' (sometimes known persons and sometimes masked/unidentified) who attend legal fox control activities and attempt to interfere or intimidate. Also, general negative comments from members of the public who are not involved with rural activities and do not seem to understand the law as it stands and, therefore, believe the activities they object to are wholly illegal and that hunters/shooters/pest controllers are breaking the law. Often when the conservation aspect of the activity is explained these people are very interested in understanding the process properly.

The Wild Mammals Act allows an unlimited number of dogs to be used to locate and flush wild mammals for the purpose of sport or pest control. Do you feel restrictions on the number of dogs that could be used for these purposes would hinder the ability of individuals to carry out some sporting or pest controlling operations?

- Yes
- No

Please give reasons for your answer.

When an insufficient number of dogs is used to flush a cover, the quarry is often not spooked into leaving the wood immediately but instead allows itself to be chased backwards and forwards within the cover, which is exactly what the law as it stands aims to avoid. Furthermore, once the quarry has left the cover and been fired at by waiting marksmen, it is important that a further number of dogs of different types are available to ensure that any animals wounded but not killed by the guns are brought down as quickly as possible with minimal further suffering; this may include lurchers to give chase or terriers to flush/kill wounded animals which go to ground in holes/cairns.

Someone who hunts a wild mammal illegally under the Wild Mammals Act is guilty of an offence along with the landowner or occupier, as well as the owner or person responsible for the dog(s) if they are not directly committing the offence. The basic penalty is a fine of up to £5,000 and/or imprisonment for up to 6 months. Do you feel this is enough of a deterrent to keep people from using dogs to hunt wild mammals in Scotland as defined by the Wild Mammals Act?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer.

Since the Wild Mammals Act was created there have been a very low number of convictions and a noticeably small number of convictions involving organised hunts which implies that these penalties are amply sufficient to deter people from breaking this law.

Are there any circumstances in which the only way of effectively and humanely controlling a wild mammal, for the purposes listed in the Wild Mammals Act, is to use dogs to flush the wild mammal to guns or to a falconer?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer, including examples if you answered yes as to why other methods of control could not be used.

In most situations, attempting to control pests using a gun/falcon without dogs to flush the quarry and pursue injured quarry is an inappropriately time-consuming method which does not balance financially for the farmers/estate workers. It is possible to spend hours every evening waiting for a single pest to pass within range of a waiting gun, when an organised pack of dogs could flush five such pests from cover in a single day.

If you use dogs to flush a wild mammal to guns or to a falconer, including from underground, how do you ensure that the quarry is despatched by the gun(s) or bird as soon as possible after being flushed? By good understanding of the terrain and species, resulting in correct placement of the gun or bird to ensure a quick, clean kill.

An exception in the Wild Mammals Act means that it is not an offence if a dog(s) unintentionally kills a wild mammal in the course of flushing that wild mammal from cover, or underground, if the intention is for it to be shot or killed by a falcon. Is this a reasonable exception in terms of allowing effective, humane control?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer.

Absolutely, since any change to this law will simply result in a situation where you may be arrested for legitimately attempting a completely legal activity. Furthermore, if a dog were to kill the quarry in a shorter space of time than it would take a well-placed gun or bird to react then it is inconceivable that the quarry would have suffered any more than it would have by the gun or bird.

Do you feel that the use of dogs to flush foxes or mink from underground, or from tight cover, is important in allowing for the effective and humane control of wild mammals in Scotland?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer.

For pest control to be effective it is also important to allow dogs to flush from underground/cover as simply waiting for an opportunistic shot would take an unreasonable number of man hours. This method would also set the quarry up poorly for a quick death since an estimation of where exactly they might emerge and, therefore, where to place the gun/bird would be less accurate. Furthermore, if a wild mammal is injured and goes to ground/cover it is imperative that suitable breeds of dog for tunnels/chase are legally able to humanely dispatch them or flush them back to the surface/open for the gun/bird to dispatch, since leaving them to a prolonged death would be cruel.

The Wild Mammals Act allows a dog(s) to be used to locate and dispatch a severely injured wild mammal for the purpose of reducing suffering. Do you feel that this is important in allowing for the effective and humane control of wild mammals in Scotland?

Yes

No

Please give reasons for your answer.

Once an animal has been injured its behaviour may be less predictable and no matter how many guns you have in multiple positions there may be no way to take a second shot safely. Dogs are, therefore, the only tool with which to quickly dispatch an injured quarry since they are able to track the animal and are specifically bred to be slower than a healthy quarry but faster than a weaker or injured quarry. In many ways, quick pursuit by dogs is also less stressful than a prolonged death due to injury in situations where the animal is unreachable by the gun/bird - for example when it has gone to ground, gone into cover, or gone beyond the range of the guns.

Do you feel there are any ways that the Wild Mammals Act could be improved?

As it stands the Wilds Mammals Act is workable and is a sufficient protection to wild mammals. It has proven especially effective in terms of activities such as poaching by persons unconnected to any organised and registered hunting group, badger baiting, etc while the rarity of convictions involving registered hunting groups has clearly shown how dedicated these groups are to animal welfare and to acting within the law. However, in some aspects of organised and legal pest control the advantage of selective control has been lost since once of the advantages of hunting with dogs was always that the dogs were bred to allow the strongest/healthiest of their quarry to escape; this had the benefit of limiting numbers while ensuring that wild animals likely to struggle in the harsher winter weather would be humanely destroyed rather than being left to die slowly from starvation or disease. It is a great shame in my opinion that the general public and the government have become so distanced from the countryside that they fail to understand this clear benefit to wild mammals of hunting naturally with dogs rather than artificially with guns.

Do you have any other comments for Lord Bonomy?

I feel strongly that those who operate legally within the Wild Mammals Act should be better protected from masked/unidentified vigilantes who trespass in order to harrass/intimidate/distract children and adults who are doing nothing illegal.