

Review of the Protection of Wild Mammals Act (Scotland) 2002

Submission to the above review from:-

Aeneas M Nicolson



I shall be obliged if you will accept the following submission to the Review being undertaken by Lord Bonomy on behalf of the Scottish Government.

I have over 40 years of experience in the control of foxes. Most of this control has taken place in this area of the Borders or on the Isle of Skye. I have employed most legal methods over those years and believe that I am well placed to make an informed contribution to the Review. My personal concern regarding the review is the possibility of restricting the use of hounds in line with the current legislation south of the Border.

I must state at the outset that I do not understand the requirement to review the Act. I believe that the current legislation is ensuring that the requirements of the Act are being met fully in respect of hunting with dogs. Hounds/dogs are being used to flush foxes to waiting guns. The foxes are then dispatched by the guns and the hounds are not the primary method of killing the animal.

Hounds/dogs are proven to be very effective in flushing foxes, particularly in areas of large forestry plantations or on open hill ground.

There is a requirement for fox numbers to be controlled, especially in sheep farming areas.

From my personal experience I see the Act working as it was intended and being well enforced.

I accept, however, that despite my views, the Scottish Government has requested the Act is reviewed and wish to defend the use of a pack of hounds rather than the restriction of using two hounds as is seen in England and Wales.

For over 40 years I have used dogs, mainly terriers, to assist in fox control. This has proved a very effective method for flushing foxes to my gun or to other waiting guns. The method is very useful when confined to limited areas of ground. Small woods, rough cover, rock piles and den holes can be easily flushed by one or two dogs. In my experience when faced with large areas of forestry or major expanses of hill ground the use of one or two dogs is very limited.

It is comparable to the long established method of organised fox drives carried out in non-hunting areas. In these, large teams of people are used either as walking guns or as beaters and they form a line to move through cover flushing foxes. These are shot either by waiting guns or by guns in the line. The success of such operations is controlled by the numbers employed. Were the same areas to be flushed by two men it is unlikely this would prove effective as large areas of the ground would be undisturbed.

In precisely the same manner a pack of experienced fox hounds will spread out, or “cast” to use the hunting terminology, over a wide area. This vastly increases the opportunity of finding a scent and flushing a fox. It also ensures that the area is covered much more speedily and efficiently than would be the case with, say, two hounds.

I understand that it is currently intended to receive written submissions in respect of the Review not to accept opportunities to actually witness the current implementation of the Act by hunts. I do trust, and should respectfully request, that once written submissions have been received and recorded, no changes to the current methods of hound use are considered without seeing at first hand the current legal use of hounds. I believe it is essential to witness hound use in terrain such as we have in this part of the Borders.

I shall be pleased to act as a co-ordinator should such a visit be considered of assistance. I have strong connections with our local fox hunt, The Liddesdale. This pack, owned for generations by hill sheep farmers and supported by many others, hunts over a huge area around Langholm and Hawick.

I am grateful for this opportunity to submit my views.

Aeneas M Nicolson

28th March 2016