

## Mountain Hare Management Guidance

Scotland's Moorland Forum is preparing a range of guidance through the Moorland Management Best Practice project that provides practitioners, working in upland and moorland areas, with a source of information that reflects good practice and establishes a standard for accepted management techniques.

Information that is available elsewhere has not been duplicated, but a reference to it is included.

All the documents should be seen as representing evolving guidance. The aim is to review the documents at least annually so that they reflect the latest information.

Practices in this guidance, which are backed up by legislation and/or regulation, contain the word '**MUST**' in bold, letters. Failure to adopt these practices could lead to prosecution.

Parts of the guidance contain the word '**should**' in bold, lowercase letters. The actions identified in this way are not covered by legislation but land managers are expected to follow these parts of the guidance, as they represent sound, acceptable practices, which aim to achieve sustainable management of the hare population.

This Mountain Hare Management guidance has been reviewed following the new legislation that came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

Mountain hares have been added to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981<sup>1</sup> which means they now have full protection. From 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 mountain hares may only be killed under licence for certain limited reasons as listed in section 16 of the [Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981](#)<sup>1</sup>. Licensing arrangements will include requirements to report on the number of hares shot and to comply with best practice with regards to how such culls are undertaken.

## 1 The Law and Mountain Hare management

- 1.1 It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take a mountain hare without a licence.
- 1.2 A licence **MUST** be held to:
  - 1.2.1 Take mountain hares at any specified time of year
  - 1.2.2 Take mountain hare by any means including the use of: snares, spotlight, thermal imaging, semi-automatic weapons<sup>1</sup>, and non-selective traps.
- 1.3 Licences may only be issued by NatureScot in exceptional circumstances and for specific purposes including: to prevent the spread of disease, to prevent serious damage to forestry interests or for social, economic or environmental purposes.
- 1.4 A General Licence 16/2021 is now available for the sale, advertisement, possession & transportation of mountain hare carcasses & mountain hare meat by controllers, caterers and retailers. It is valid from 1 March to 31 July 2021.

NatureScot are developing a licensing scheme for mountain hare which will be available from July 2021. Close season licenses may be applied for the period up until the beginning of August 2021 by filling out the relevant [licence application form](#)<sup>2</sup> and submitting it to [licensing@nature.scot](mailto:licensing@nature.scot) as per usual. There is guidance concerning when [licences for social, economic or environmental purposes](#)<sup>3</sup> may be appropriate. [General Licences](#)<sup>4</sup> are available for the sale, advertisement, possession and transportation of mountain hare meat by controllers, caterers and retailers.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

1. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981  
[Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
2. Licence application form to control mountain or brown hares:  
[Licence application form - to control mountain or brown hares | NatureScot](#)
3. Guidance concerning licenses for social, economic and environmental purposes:  
[Guidance - Licensing - Licence for social economic or environmental purposes in respect of Protected Species - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 | NatureScot](#)
4. General Licences:  
[General Licence - GL16/2021 - Sale, advertisement, possession & transportation of mountain hare & mountain hare meat by controllers, caterers and retailers - 1 March to 31 July 2021 | NatureScot](#)

### **Acknowledgements**

The guidance was originally prepared for Scotland's Moorland Forum by representatives of the: Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Scottish Gamekeepers' Association, James Hutton Institute, Scottish Land & Estates and NatureScot; and it has been reviewed by the Moorland Management Best Practice Steering Group.

The members of the MMBP Steering Group are available from the [MMBP website](#), and the members of Scotland's Moorland Forum are listed on the [Forum's website](#).

### **Revision Table**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Details</b>
18/04/18	Links to Moredun links in Further Information para 10 updated.
28/01/20	Update from PoMM to MMBP terminology
22/03/21	Revision in the light of mountain hare becoming a fully protected species