

Supporting guidance for Heather Restoration – Follow-up Molinia Control

Date published: 30 March, 2015

The extent of heather on many Scottish hills has declined markedly over the past 50 years. This is particularly the case in western Scotland, where the dominance by flying bent (*Molinia caerulea*) has suppressed heather growth and made it more difficult to safely muirburn these areas.

The [Heather Restoration](#) item helps to reinstate heather cover from areas where it has been lost to benefit black grouse, other breeding birds and the wider habitat.

This item – [Heather Restoration – Follow-up Molinia Control](#) – will help prevent areas subject to the Heather Restoration item from re-establishing as species-poor Molinia dominated swards

Which areas are suitable?

Areas for Heather Restoration – Follow-up Molinia Control will have been treated using the Heather Restoration item.

What needs to be done?

Spray the vegetation with a graminicide (grass-specific herbicide) at the label-recommended dose using suitable spraying machinery. Spray in the year following heather restoration or in the next again growing season.

Take care to ensure that the bird nesting period has finished and that the grasses are actively growing, ideally between 10 July and 31 August, although it would still be possible to spray until 30 September in most years.

Care should be taken to:

- ensure machinery does not rut the existing sward
- ensure where possible that vehicles avoid soft, wet areas and areas of fragile exposed soils
- avoid spraying areas of high nature conservation interest for example blanket bog
- spread treatment in patches across land parcel rather than in a few extensive blocks

The spraying should be undertaken in accordance with [The Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products in Scotland](#) guidance.

The sprayed sward does not need cutting or burning as heather and the other broadleaved moorland plants will be unaffected by the graminicide treatment and continue to grow.

Continue with a light summer grazing regime for the treated areas provided the heather and ericaceous plants are viable, well-rooted plants. As a guide graze at levels equivalent to no more than 0.15 LU/ha on dry heath and 0.06 LU/ha on wet heath & blanket bog between 1 May and 15 August. Support is available for any necessary fencing costs. In subsequent years, light summer grazing will help to maintaining a diverse heather and grass mix. Do not graze the treated areas in winter for the duration of the contract.

Complementary options

- [Moorland Management](#)
- [Upland Habitat Impact Assessment for Deer Management](#)
- [Stock Disposal](#)
- [Away Wintering of Sheep](#)
- [Muirburn and Heather Cutting](#)
- [Heather Restoration](#)

Complementary capital items

- [Stock Fence](#)

- [Gate](#)
- [Enhancing or Modifying a Deer Fence](#)
- [Enhancing or Modifying a Stock Fence](#)
- [Scare and Temporary Electric Fencing](#)
- [Predator Control](#)
- [Ditch Blocking – Plastic Piling Dams](#)
- [Ditch Blocking – Peat Dams](#)
- [Open-range Deer Management](#)

[Further information](#)

The methods for heather restoration were initially developed in northern England and have been successfully undertaken on a number of moors in Southern Scotland including at Langholm – www.langholmproject.com.