Supporting guidance for Predator Control

Date published: 22 November, 2023

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the bottom of the page .

Note: Correction to link in Small Mammal Trapping section, 31 July, 2023.

Introduction

The Predator Control option supports predator control on permanent grassland or rough grazing to benefit 'qualifying bird features' on designated sites, or active black grouse leks.

Predator control is an important part of conservation and wildlife management.

It can be carried out to control crows (carrion crow, hooded crow, jay, magpie), as well as foxes, stoats and weasels which prey on birds such as black grouse and waders, particularly during the breeding season.

The option is to encourage predator control to be undertaken where this has not already been practised, or increase predator control effort during bird nesting season where you are already engaged in predator control. AECS can also continue to fund work initiated under a previous AECS contract, where NatureScot agree that it is still required.

You must include effort proportionate to the needs of the site, within the eligible funding period of 1 March - 30 June. In particular, you must demonstrate in your predator control plan how the increased predator control effort is likely to provide benefit to relevant bird populations.

You may apply for either:

- crow control only. This funds the purchase of individual crow traps which must be purchased and operated appropriately.

Please note, where you claimed crow control only in a previous AECS contract, these traps should continue to be used. You can only continue to claim this option **if additional traps are required for new locations.**

or

- mammal and crow control (which funds on a hectarage basis - note that the individual trap payment is not available under this option and that crow control will require shooting effort to be combined with trapping effort).

For the mammal and bird control option, your predator control plan must describe the control methods to be used, the timing and intensity of effort **during the eligible funding period**, and the resources (manpower, etc.) available for delivery of the option. This information should clearly justify the claim area applied for, and proposals will not be acceptable where the effort proposed, for both crow and mammal control, appears insufficient to deliver the option successfully over the entire claim area. Any predator control occurring out with the funding period 1 March – 30 June is at the applicant’s expense.

All returning applicants must provide a copy of the last two years Predator Control reports, to show the activity undertaken.

Where to locate the option

Claims under either sub-option are restricted to land that meets one or both of the following criteria:

- land within 1.5km of active black grouse leks, noting that the black grouse leks must be on your holding;
- land within a designated site (SSSI or SPA) that includes breeding bird species or assemblages as a protected natural feature.

For proposals aimed at benefiting black grouse, any lek must be verified as active by your local Black Grouse Project Officer, the RSPB or survey data from the last 5 years. Failure to provide this supporting

information will result in the predator control option being removed from the application, which may, in turn, jeopardise the whole application.

For proposals aimed at benefiting the qualifying bird breeding features of a designated site, you MUST consult NatureScot prior to applying to check that predator control is necessary to maintain or improve the condition of the qualifying bird features. If you are a returning applicant, ensure you consult NatureScot before re-applying to check that you are still eligible to claim the option. Predator control should be targeted at those areas within the site that are most important to designated bird species by virtue of the nesting or foraging habitats present.

In your predator control plan map, mark the locations which you think are important breeding bird areas and black grouse lek areas. Then mark where you currently undertake predator control, specifying where you undertake e.g. lamping and/or trapping.

Identify where you are increasing predator control effort and how you think this is likely to benefit the qualifying bird features.

If you do not currently undertake predator control, mark out where you intend to undertake such control whether through lamping, shooting or trapping. You must demonstrate how your efforts are likely to benefit qualifying bird features or protect functioning leks.

How to increase the success of this option

In order to carry out predator control in a legal and humane manner, highlight how you currently or intend to comply with all legislation and codes of practice.

Highlight how you will reduce disturbance to nesting birds whilst lamping or trapping, if this may be an issue. Further information on protected birds can be found using the link below.

Protected birds

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation codes of practice provide information about the law and predator control, and also provide guidance on health and safety.

When reviewing your predator control plan NatureScot will assess:

- whether the designated ground nesting bird features are vulnerable to predation
- whether they are likely to benefit from predator control
- that the level of predator control is sufficient to benefit the bird feature over the whole of the area included within the predator control option

For small mammal trapping

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation: Trapping Pest Mammals

There are several types of small mammal traps. The most commonly used are smooth-jawed spring traps or live-catch cage traps, but multi-catch drop traps may also be used. Operators of these do not require an identification number, nor do the traps. The use of spring traps is governed by the Spring Traps Approval (Scotland) Order 2011 and operators must comply with this.

PLEASE NOTE:

As of 1 April 2020 you may only use certain traps to catch stoats and in accordance with a General Licence for the conservation of wild birds (see this webpage for more details). You may no longer use other trap types to catch stoats (e.g. Fenn-type, WCS tube trap, BMI Magnum models); if you use these types of traps for control of other species and you catch stoats you will be breaking the law. If in doubt, don't risk it.

Live capture traps are governed by the Animal Health & Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. If wishing to use a live capture trap to catch stoats you must apply for an individual licence by contacting licensing@nature.scot. For other species the main requirements are for humane dispatch / release of non-target animals and the need to check such traps at least once every 24 hours. Applicants must comply with these legislative requirements.

For corvid trapping

The British Association for Shooting and Conservation: Trapping Pest Birds

Two types of live-catch types are commonly used – Larsen traps and larger multi-cage traps.

Whichever kind of trap is used it is essential to ensure that they are of a legal design and operated legally – including obtaining an operator's Registration Number from NatureScot (formerly SNH)and displaying it on all of your crow traps.

You must:

- provide all decoy birds with adequate shelter from the prevailing weather conditions, a perch, suitable food and drinking water at all times
- make sure you have enough time, in the case of a single occupier / owner, or staff to inspect traps every day at intervals of no more than 24 hours
- kill captured crows quickly and humanely
- release all non-target species immediately, unharmed

Please note that as of 1 April 2020 there have been changes made to the operation of the General Licence that allows the use of live cage traps. Please see this webpage for more details.

In addition, if you intend to use a General Licence from 1st April 2020 on certain European sites (Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation) you must comply with site based Standing Conditions, covering disturbance of species and damage to habitats. List of sites and the Standing Conditions of each site.

If you can meet the Standing Conditions then you can proceed with your activities without the need to contact NatureScot. If you cannot meet the standing conditions set out for the site then you will need to apply for a permission by contacting the NatureScot Licensing team at licensing@nature.scot or on 01463 725 364.

For snaring

Snaring in Scotland - A Practitioners Guide

Accreditation certification is available from the following providers:

- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)
- Scottish Gamekeepers Association (SGA)
- The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC)
- Scottish Association For Country Sports (SACS)
- Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
- North Highland College
- University of the Highlands and Islands
- Borders College

You will also need to register with Police Scotland to obtain an operator ID and ensure all of your snares are tagged with this ID.

For lamping

- The British Association for Shooting and Conservation – Night Shooting Code of Practice

Recent changes

Section	Change
Introduction	Added /revised paragraphs covering the aim, requirements of the option, and what must be demonstrated in the Predator Control Plan
Where to locate the option	Revised/added text explaining claims for 'crow control only' and 'mammal and crow control' sub options are restricted to land that meets the specified criteria.
How to increase the success of this option	Minor edits and updated links to certain Guides, Codes of Practice and websites

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