

Supporting guidance for Predator Control

This is an old version of the page

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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 will encourage predator control to be undertaken where this has not already been conducted or increase the predator control effort where you are already engaged in predator control.

You must demonstrate in your predator control plan how the predator control effort is likely to provide benefit to 'qualifying bird features'.

You may apply for either:

- crow control only (which funds the purchase of individual crow traps. Shooting effort will require to be combined with trapping effort)

Please note, where you claimed crow control only in a previous AECS contract, these traps are only 5 years old and should continue to be used. Therefore, 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 hectare 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). You must include effort proportionate to the needs of the site, within the eligible funding period of 1 March - 30 June. Limited days lamping over a large area will not be accepted. Any predator control occurring outwith the funding period is at the applicants expense.

The hectare claimed is limited to a 500m radius of notified bird feature nesting sites, within the designated site LPID's being claimed for predator control. Any of the buffer area falling into non designated site LPID's is not eligible for payment. If you are unsure of the eligible claim area, contact NatureScot at application stage.

You must include effort proportionate to the needs of the site, within the eligible funding period of 1 March - 30 June. Limited days lamping over a large area will not be accepted. Any predator control occurring outwith the funding period is at the applicant expense.

Where to locate the option

Where there are ground nesting bird features designated on your land or black grouse leks (including land up to 1.5km from the boundary of the lek that is still within your land).

For ground nesting birds, not black grouse leks, you must confirm that the bird features are at risk of being in 'unfavourable condition', or prevented from returning to 'favourable condition'.

You will need to confirm with NatureScot prior to applying, that predator control has the potential to improve the condition of 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.

In your predator control plan, 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 lamping and or trapping.

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

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 improve qualifying bird features to favourable status or protect functioning leks.

Also show what the current predator control activities are and what is being proposed above and beyond the current situation.

This option only supports actions over and above the current activities that are focused within or immediately adjacent to the boundary of the designated site.

Predator control aimed at protecting black grouse leks is limited to the area within 1.5 kilometres of the lek. 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.

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 (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 Natura 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. This [webpage](#) has the list of sites and the Standing Conditions for 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 paragraph on eligible claim area |
| Where to locate the option | Revised/added text stating the need to confirm with NatureScot prior to applying, that predator control has the potential to improve the condition of qualifying bird features. Also, returning applicants are to consult NatureScot before re-applying to check eligibility to claim the option. |

Added text stating any lek must be verified as active by your local Black Grouse Project Officer, the RSPB or survey data from the last 5 years. The consequences of not providing the supporting information are also explained.

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