



ACCESS & AWARENESS

GUIDANCE ON ELECTRIC FENCES ON MOORLAND

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The use of long lengths of electric fencing on moorland has increased in recent years. The main objective of these fences is to reduce tick burdens on grouse moors by excluding deer. Seasonal electric fencing has also been used to manage sheep on nature reserves. The use of long lengths of electric fencing on moorland is raising concerns particularly amongst outdoor recreation interests and there are issues regarding the compatibility of such fencing with the access provisions of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act.
- 1.2 This guidance note does not seek to justify the use of long lengths of electric fencing but seeks to mitigate their impacts. Long lengths of electric fencing raise many similar issues to other types of deer fences, for instance, impacts on landscape and natural heritage. These issues are fully addressed in deer industry Best Practice Guidance, which is available to download from: http://www.dcs.gov.uk/BestPractice/crop_fencing.aspx.
- 1.3 Many people consider that electric fencing creates unique difficulties for recreational access as electric fences are particularly difficult to cross if adequate crossing places are not provided. Fences of all types require adequate crossing places which should be appropriate to the type and number of users. The provision of adequate crossing places on an electric fence are particularly important as, in their absence, they may become impenetrable barriers. The problems of crossing long lengths of electric fences have been raised at the Cairngorms Local Access Forum and are the subject of discussion between recreation and other interests at a national level.
- 1.4 However, electric stock fences on moorland are not new and in some places have been used for up to 25 years without causing problems for recreational access. Managers have found that the following guidelines help to minimise access problems:
 - Where possible new electric fences should follow the line of existing stock fences so that walkers are used to them.
 - Pedestrian gates or stiles can be installed at suitable intervals according to topography and patterns of use by walkers.

c/o The Heather Trust, Newtonrigg, Holywood, DUMFRIES DG2 0RA

web site: www.moorlandforum.org.uk e:mail: info@moorlandforum.org.uk

Tel: 01387 723201

Chairman: Lord Lindsay
Secretary: Simon Thorp

Administrator: Alison Young
Adviser: Professor Des Thompson

- Tracks and roads will normally have full size gates installed anyway for vehicle access and moving stock.
- Warning signs attached to fences on high ground must be robust to prevent them being blown off.

2 Guidance

2.1 Rights to responsible access apply to most of the area of Scotland and are exercisable by the public both on and off paths. It is therefore recommended that there is discussion with the local access officer before building a new electric stock fence on moorland so that crossing points can be put in according to the likely number of walkers, path lines and natural features. Where possible, fences should avoid being sited along ridge lines for visual amenity reasons.

2.2 All electric fencing should be installed and maintained to ensure there is no electrical hazard to humans, animals or their surroundings and should comply with relevant regulations and standards. Fence construction must not risk entanglement for people or animals.

2.3 Two types of electric fencing are commonly used on moorland:

2.3.1 Stock fence where some or all of the line wires are electrified.

- Electric fences should be clearly identified so that people approaching the fence at any point should be aware that the fence is electrified and the nearest crossing point indicated.
- Gates should be constructed where the fence intersects with all paths or popular desire lines to allow passage for other legitimate users such as cyclists and horse riders, and stiles for walkers at appropriate intervals along the whole fence line.
- Signage should be used to direct people to crossing places and gates. Estates should consider explaining the purpose of the fence through signage in locations like car parks, which can include appropriate Health and Safety messages.

2.3.2 Un-electrified stock fence with an offset electric wire.

- Normal stock fences with an offset electric wire should be identified so it is clear to people approaching at any point on their length which parts of the fence are electrified.
- Again, adequate crossing places should be put in place, as above. Paths and all obvious access routes should be gated.

- 2.4 Standard deer fences where some of the wires are electrified or where there are electrified offset wires are rarely used, but potentially cause much greater problems for access than an electrified stock fence. Any land manager considering the erection of an electrified deer fence is advised to consult with the access authority and explore whether an alternative management solution is possible.

3 Task Group Members

Full members

Tim	Baynes	Scottish Countryside Alliance (Chairman from Jan 09)
Colin	McLean	Cairngorms National Park Authority (Chairman until Jan 09)
Hebe	Carus	Mountaineering Council of Scotland
Finlay	Clark	Association of Deer Management Groups
Davie	Black	Scottish Ramblers Association
Colin	Shedden	British Association for Conservation and Shooting
Alastair	MacGugan	Deer Commission Scotland

Corresponding members

Simon	Thorp	The Heather Trust
Alex	Hogg	Scottish Gamekeepers Association
Ronnie	Kippen	Scottish Gamekeepers Association