



**Consultation on working towards a Wildlife Health Strategy**

**Response Proforma**

**by**

**The Deer Initiative**

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Organisation type	Please mark/give details as appropriate
Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Public sector (e.g. local / central government, hospitals, universities) <i>(please give details)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic / research	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other <i>(please give details)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NB: On the form below, please leave the response box blank for any questions that you do not wish to answer. Any other comments can be recorded in the box at the end of this form. All boxes may be expanded as required.

### Introduction

The Deer Initiative (DI) is a wide partnership of statutory, non-statutory, voluntary and private interests. Whilst originally set up by the Forestry Commission and still, in the main, funded by the Forestry Commission and Natural England, it has a core staff whose activities are both to co-ordinate the relevant activities of the Partners and to deliver some functions directly. We currently receive funding from Defra to support a Deer Liaison Officer in South West England, part of whose role includes a national remit to assist disease surveillance in wild deer – particularly with regard to BTb.

The aim of the DI is “to ensure the delivery of a sustainable, well managed wild deer population in England and Wales”. The staff and finances of the DI are managed through the DI Ltd, a charitable company limited by guarantee, dedicated to supporting the DI. This response reflects the views of the staff of the DI, our Partner organisations affected by this proposed legislation will no doubt respond separately.

Our remit is restricted to wild deer however we believe our comments probably also apply to other wild large mammals such as wild boar.

<b>QUESTION 1.</b>	
Would a table or chart detailing responsibilities for wildlife health be useful to your organisation?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>QUESTION 2.</b>	
Should we establish a communications network / group?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, how should this be structured?	
<p>1. A chart detailing responsibilities would be useful.</p> <p>2. We would fully support a communications network or group to liaise on wildlife health issues. It may be appropriate to have an over-arching group with sub-groups for differing diseases eg avian influenza or FMD. We currently facilitate a number of Working Groups made up from all interested stakeholders and this and our regular Partnership meetings and conferences already provide opportunities for communications on deer specific health issues. Bovine TB in wild deer, tick borne diseases and TSEs were all discussed at our most recent conference.</p>	
<b>QUESTION 3.</b>	
Would you / your organisation like to participate in a communications network / group?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
How we can ensure that all organisations, networks and groups are included whilst keeping the system manageable?	
<p>We would be happy to be involved in such a Group. We are currently funded by Defra (AH) to assist in increasing disease surveillance in wild deer (in particular bTB) and as such provide a link to the deer industry through our Partners. During the current FMD outbreak we have acted, when appropriate, as a 'gateway' to the wild deer industry and have facilitated a number of deer specific meetings and provided advice through our website. We would be happy to continue to provide and if appropriate expand this service – subject to agreement over funding</p>	
<b>QUESTION 4.</b>	
Is there a need to improve links with overseas governments and organisation working in the wildlife health area?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, how can stronger links with overseas governments and organisations including the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) be developed by government and stakeholders to ensure that we have full understanding of the international disease situation and that the UK is involved as a key player in international wildlife health issues?	
<p>The current Bluetongue outbreak has emphasised the need for all stakeholders to have a full understanding of the international disease situation. It is also essential that we monitor emerging responses to such diseases so we are in a position to use the latest and most appropriate techniques to tackle outbreaks in this country. We are not in a position to advise on how this might best be achieved by Government and our restricted resources suggest that we will not be able to maintain a comprehensive overview, even within the limited deer sector.</p>	

<b>QUESTION 5.</b>	
Could Defra contribute to collaborative research programmes in ways other than merely providing funding?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, what?	
The Defra contribution to our Deer Research Working Group (provision of Chairman, representatives, meeting venues etc) is a good example of how limited in-kind support can provide a valuable link to a sector. This Group reviews both Governmental and private sector priorities and looks for synergistic approaches to research. The Group also has a valuable role in publicising the results of research and ensuring there is no overlap in projects. Inevitably however the major role that Government can play is that of funding research.	
<b>QUESTION 6.</b>	
Would you agree to being included in a database of specialists and scientists who could provide expertise to Defra?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What specialist knowledge could you provide?	
We would agree to being included in a database of specialists and scientists who could provide expertise to Defra. We already fulfil this function, providing specialist collaborative deer management advice to Government, including Defra and the Highways Agency. As a Partnership we have access to the expertise provided by a wide range of Partners who routinely contribute to policy development including our Best Practice Guidance which is currently under development as part of the Defra Wild Deer Action Plan.	
<b>QUESTION 7.</b>	
In principle, could you / your organisation provide data and information for surveillance and prioritisation?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What issues do you feel would be important for us to address in order to achieve this outcome?	
We already provide Defra with data on deer distributions and densities to support disease surveillance and allow targeting of sampling. The Partnership has a huge amount of data on land ownership and wildlife management activity and this allows us to bring together information on deer and their management to support disease control operations. We are constrained by resources. Our current funding agreement with Defra(AH) supports the collection and dissemination of data to support the bTB programme, but our recent work on FMD and Bluetongue has highlighted the need (and the cost) to provide timely, accurate information on deer densities and management capacity. If there is a long term requirement for such a capacity we believe we are well placed to provide it, but there would be resource implications.	
<b>QUESTION 8.</b>	
Could you / your organisation provide information for inclusion in RADAR?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, what?	
See Question 7.	

<b>QUESTION 9.</b>	
Should wildlife health issues be integrated into the prioritisation model and compete with other issues considered for government intervention?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Please explain your response.	
Yes. Wildlife health issues have traditionally had a low profile within Government however they have the potential to significantly affect other policies. The possibility of wild deer providing a reservoir of disease for either FMD or Bluetongue and the emergence of tick borne diseases all suggest that the links to with other issues (Human health, food safety) are likely to increase with time.	
<b>QUESTION 10.</b>	
Could you / your organisation provide carcasses for surveillance?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What systems might usefully and affordably be put in place to obtain wildlife carcasses or data for scanning surveillance from stakeholders?	
Yes. We have already facilitated sampling for bTB by both the public and the private sector. This project has highlighted the value of maintaining a public/private Partnership, with regional representation that is capable of providing a timely landscape scale response to any requirement in an extremely cost effective manner, utilising existing contacts with partners, landowners and deer managers.	
<b>QUESTION 11.</b>	
Could research projects be integrated into national disease surveillance?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What potential problems may there be?	
Yes, Our Best Practice Guidance promotes the collection of standard data and all our projects (whether research or delivering other objectives) are supported by extensive data collection which could be used to support RADAR. The major difficulty is handling and presenting the large amount of data collected in such that it is usable in a timely way.	
<b>QUESTION 12.</b>	
Is data quality important?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
How can we ensure that any wildlife health information that we capture from stakeholders is of a consistent and appropriate standard?	
See Question 11. We provide training for our Partners and other participants in our projects and our recent bTB surveillance has shown that deer managers are capable of providing viable samples providing they receive the appropriate training. This work has also shown that incentives such as, pay per sample or the provision of the necessary infrastructure also helps.	

<b>QUESTION 13.</b>	
Would you / your organisation be willing to join wildlife health stakeholder partnership initiatives?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
How can we establish such initiatives in order to share information and resources effectively and fairly?	
Yes. We would highlight the DI model as an example of a public/private partnership that is already achieving joint objectives in this manner.	
<b>QUESTION 14.</b>	
Do you feel that your organisation would benefit from this collaborative approach to wildlife disease surveillance?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, how?	
Our answers above hopefully show that we are already taking a collaborative approach to disease surveillance in wild deer and we would support anything that strengthens and consolidates existing knowledge and sets the framework for future surveillance and if necessary, intervention.	
<b>QUESTION 15.</b>	
What could you or your organisation contribute?	
See Question 13. As a Partnership we have a number of years experience of collaborative working and DI Ltd has successfully facilitated this work and provided enhanced surveillance delivery. The Partnership supported by DI Ltd has a wide range of expertise and capacity to support future collaborative disease surveillance at a landscape scale.	
<b>QUESTION 16.</b>	
Do you think that regulation of native species re-introductions and translocations, not currently covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) should be controlled?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, should this be by code of practice, legislation and licensing or some other method?	
Non-native deer species are covered by WCA(1981) and we are content with the current controls.	
<b>QUESTION 17.</b>	
Do you think that wildlife rehabilitation poses a significant risk to the health of free-ranging wildlife in the UK?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Please explain your response.	
Yes, it is possible that wildlife rehabilitation poses a risk to the health of free-ranging wildlife in the UK if not correctly monitored. However we do not believe that this risk is likely to be significant in relation to wild deer.	

<b>QUESTION 18.</b>	
Do you think that codes of practice will be effective in minimising any disease risks associated with wildlife rehabilitation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If not, what should be done?	
We are not aware of the current codes of practice, but would re-iterate our response to Question 18.	
<b>QUESTION 19.</b>	
Would a change in wildlife and agricultural importation impact on you or your organisation?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If so, how?	
We would support a comprehensive review of wildlife importation and of possible additional controls. We would also support additional work to identify potential disease risks which are not currently mitigated.	
We are not aware of any impact on our Partners of such work, however some individual members may have non-deer related concerns.	
<b>QUESTION 20.</b>	
What are your top three wildlife health issues which you would like to see in the implementation plan for the Wildlife Health Strategy?	
In relation to wild deer our priorities are:	
1. Increasing our knowledge base of deer distributions and densities and establishing a robust database of both deer and management capacity to allow us to better predict disease progression and the best method of managing any outbreak.	
2. Ensuring that an effective communications network is in place to ensure that a rapid response to any future disease is possible and that stakeholders are kept informed of developments.	
3. Clear advice is available both to and from Government on consistent, appropriate responses to the veterinary risk posed by emerging diseases.	

<b>Additional comments:</b>
This consultation is timely from the point of view of the Deer Initiative Partnership. The Deer Initiative Delivery Plan 2005-8 stemmed from the Defra Wild Deer Action Plan and our funding (including that for supporting increased disease surveillance) is currently under review and we are developing the next Delivery Plan for 2008-11. We would therefore welcome discussion about the requirement for the next 3 years and how we might match DI Ltd resources to the need.
A Robust attitude to wildlife management Boar, Grey squirrels etc is needed