

NGO Deer Branch news

Survey results revealed

Tim Weston looks at the results of the recent NGO Deer Branch survey.

SINCE THE CREATION OF THE NGO DEER Branch, it has been working behind the scenes on various projects to promote the aims of the NGO and deer in general. Training new stalkers through the DSC1 Course has been such an example and one that fits in well with a core objective of the NGO: “To ensure quality within the profession” and the aim of the NGO Deer Branch: “To improve deer welfare and management in the UK”.

It was with this in mind that the simple survey of members was written, and we would like to thank all of those who have taken the time to fill it in and return it to the NGO.

The findings have and will be very useful when we are lobbying and helping to promote deer management within government and non-governmental organisations. Our findings have shown that the NGO Deer Branch is made up of a vast amount of experience of not

only full-time gamekeepers who manage deer as part of their job, full-time stalkers and semi-professional stalkers, but also a big number of recreational stalkers who manage a large amount of ground. Both full- and part-time stalkers all have their part to play in deer management and our survey shows that the NGO is one of the best-placed organisations to consult on matters of deer, deer welfare and deer management. We also represent a huge cross section of the stalking community,

About half of our survey respondents attend road traffic accidents involving deer.



so your NGO Deer Branch can truly represent all stalkers, be they full-time, part-time or recreational.

There were some very interesting comments from participants who returned surveys with the direction that they thought the NGO Deer Branch should be taking. Some wanted to improve training (which we already have in hand with a very comprehensive DSC1 Course, Meat Hygiene and the Dogs for Deer Course).

Other respondents wanted the NGO to run more deer-related events organised by the branch at a local level, which is something that we are aiming to do over the next 12 months. In fact the NGO Deer Branch is organising an event in Suffolk in October this year and details will be on the NGO website.

Poaching was another issue that the survey raised. Although generally members thought that there is poaching of deer in their local area, in the main they did not believe it was increasing. The NGO has been working with police forces across the country and has been delivering the course *Gamekeepers and the Law – Guidance for the Police* for over two years. This has

had a positive impact on the knowledge of police officers now being far greater than before and we are often contacted with questions about illegal activities such as poaching. The course covers the Deer Act and many aspects of poaching and deer. It also shows the effect of illegal activities on deer including trespass.

The NGO Deer Branch is continuing to field questions from members, organise training where it is wanted or needed and will continue to look at the question of attending road traffic accidents (RTAs) involving deer. An outline of the survey results are here:

- The average NGO stalker looks after 6,087.5 acres.
- On average, each stalker surveyed culls 134 deer per year.
- The muntjac is the species considered by stalkers to be spreading the most.
- Most respondents had poaching problems, but there was a fairly even split as to whether this was increasing or not.
- About half attend RTAs.
- Two thirds have access to a larder.
- Further courses were not generally wanted (only one person for each). Eight people requested the Dogs for Deer course.

■ 80% of respondents were not in a collaborative deer group.

David Wiggins, Chairman of the NGO Deer Branch, said: "Thank you to all who returned their surveys to us. The information is totally confidential and we will use it to fight your corner on matters that concern us as deer managers. The NGO Deer Branch committee is always here to answer any questions that you might have about deer and I can be contacted via email or telephone. With the launch of the new NGO website, you can always use the member's forum to share information."

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