



Welcome to your Farm Cluster Newsletter

Here's what we've been up to in the last month - if you have any questions about the stories in this newsletter or suggestions for future articles, please contact:

[Ross Wingfield](#) or [Christine Meadows](#).

Managing wild deer in the High Weald

The High Weald has a long association with wild deer, roe deer being our elusive, native woodland species. Fallow deer were brought to Norman Britain from Europe and have naturalised but without predators they're increasing rapidly. The small fields, woodlands and hedgerows of the High Weald provide cover and food, allowing them to thrive. However they're causing damage to grassland and crops, and affecting woodland vitality - both timber and wildlife, reducing rarities such as nightingales and dormice. It's thought the cost of crop damage can be significant, as a deer can graze at least the equivalent of a sheep.



Keeping fallow deer at sustainable levels requires management across boundaries as they roam widely. For deer management to be effective, active co-operation and good communication between landowners is needed.

What we're doing: Guided by Farm Cluster members, we're bringing landowners and deer stalkers together to form local deer management groups. These groups aim to share knowledge of: deer and their local movements, best practice for management and rural crime issues. Landowners and deer managers can support each other with shared aims, such as controlling deer to reduce crop damage.

The first Neighbourhood Deer Liaison Group is centred around Stonegate. Another will start early next year, near Dallington. Working with an expert deer manager, we've also produced clear, simple deer management guidance for landowners.

What you can do: Are you interested in joining a deer group? Please email Christine to let her know. Our landowner deer management guidance includes:

- Frequently Asked Questions
- Deer Stalking Licence Agreement Template
- Cull Data Recording Template
- Risk Assessment Templates.

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These can be downloaded from the new Deer Management section of the High Weald website. See: www.highweald.org/look-after/deer-management
We'd like your feedback! This new guidance was developed for the Farm Cluster and we'd like you to comment on it before we promote it more widely. We'd be grateful if you could email Christine with your views: christine.meadows@highweald.org

Member news

Welcome to new member Nigel Bowie, farm and woodland owner at Stonegate.

Events

Dates for the diary:

- **Making the Most of Your Soils** free workshop, 29 January, in Plumpton by Innovation for Agriculture, [register on Eventbrite](#).
- **Annual 'Upper Rother & Dudwell Farm Cluster' Get-Together**, 31 January. Meet other members and find out what our Cluster and others in the South East region are doing. Invite with location and details to be sent in January.
- **Sussex Lund Grants Programme 'drop-in clinic'**, 14 February, location tbc. To register interest contact Sam: 01424 723011 or sussexlund@highweald.org

National events:

- **Oxford Real Farming Conference**, 3-4 January, www.agricology.co.uk
- **Oxford Farming Conference**, 2-4 January, www.ofc.org.uk
- **British Cattle Conference**, 21-23 January, www.cattlebreeders.org.uk
- **Big Farmland Bird Count**, 8-17 February, to take part see: www.bfbc.org.uk

I-Spy this month

Boundary stubs (right): These features of the High Weald stand out at this time of year. Much of the High Weald ancient woodland was historically coppiced. Veteran 'stubs', trees pollarded as boundary markers for coppice areas (or cants), remain as evidence of past and present land use. See the website for other local features of former human activity: www.highweald.org/look-after/archaeology.



About

The Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster helps farmers, foresters and other land managers work together to improve farm profitability and benefit soil, water, wildlife and historic features not just on their individual farms, but across the area. It has 42 members covering over 3,500ha.

The Cluster is helped by the High Weald AONB Partnership with financial support from Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, the Environment Agency (Giant Hogweed control), and the Woodland Trust (deer management). For more information visit: www.highweald.org