

**From:** Ewing F (Fergus), MSP <Fergus.Ewing.msp@parliament.scot>  
**Sent:** 27 February 2019 08:28  
**To:** [Redacted]  
**Cc:** Gougeon M (Mairi), MSP  
**Subject:** Re: Hill Farmers anxiety - foxes

Dear [Redacted],

thanks for your interesting e mail and I am grateful you have taken the time and trouble to set out your thoughts.

I have always recognised that there is a need for pest control, and in particular for the protection of livestock and forestry. I am aware from discussions with farmers in the Borders and elsewhere of the concern about predation, and in particular the number of foxes ( though there are of course a variety of other predators too, some of which are protected species).

that is why I supported the exemptions in the Watson bill which enabled pest control to be carried out using dogs.

There is no intention to ban that activity, and as the Rural Development minister responsible for farming I have made very clear that the Scottish Government will continue to support proper professional pest control.

My colleague Mairi Gougeon is handling this directly, and I am passing your e mail to her for a formal reply from the Scottish Government .

I wanted however to reply myself to you on this matter .

Kind regards

Fergus Ewing MSP

Sent from my iPad

On 27 Feb 2019, at 06:17, [Redacted]> wrote:

Dear Rachael et al,

I've spent the last week photographing the hill farmers in the Scottish Cheviots gathering their hefts to be scanned for lambs. The gathering is a spectacle worth witnessing, and for those of you who read a national newspaper (other than The National) you will have seen my work on the subject in The Guardian and The Times in the last few days.

Naturally I spend a lot of time talking with my subjects, they are at the coal face and are always full of fascinating primary knowledge.

Something that has come across vividly in the last week is the high levels of anxiety due to predation, in particular foxes. The Scottish Cheviots are adjacent to Otterburn Firing ranges, hectares of open moorland where there are no gamekeepers, naturally the MOD doesn't want people out with civilian rifles, and The Border Hunt, which used to kill copious amounts of foxes in the area but are obviously restricted under English hunting laws. Add to that the large forestry blocks such as Leithope and the Kale Valley has a large reservoir of foxes. Only yesterday morning I stumbled across one without looking at daybreak.

One tenant farmer I photographed yesterday explained that he is now losing Hogs to foxes, not lambs, and that they are hunting in pairs to take down larger stock. He puts this down partly also due to the lack of carrion on the ground as dead stock has to be lifted, therefore less food for predators to scavenge. He has invested in thermal image technology to observe foxes on his farm over the last few years and has noticed how they come out of the forestry at night into his lambing fields. Naturally he has marksmen come in to deal with the issue, again using thermal technology, but, explains that this is still not as effective as a full pack of hounds combing the hill side and surrounding forestry blocks. Why?

In hill country a fox can be sat round the corner and you wouldn't see it, lying in a ditch, or for the three hours you're sat in the pitch black waiting for them they may decide not to appear. On other occasions they have shot foxes but have not killed them outright. Fortunately they have managed to get a second shot off and killed the poor buggler, but also frequently the fox has crawled out of sight and will have died an agonising death.

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My question to him was, even with all the technology available to a skilled marksman a full pack of hounds is still more effective in controlling foxes - the answer, definitely.

Therefore this is just a note to say that farmers are very anxious about the Scottish Government's plans to restrict hunting with hounds. All the farmers I have photographed this week have kids, who get the school bus at 730am. There is an economic impact to these remote communities due to predation by wildlife.

The land isn't balanced, vast hectarage of sitka spruce contrasted with open hill ground creates a high contrast of habitats. Therefore it requires management, foxhounds are part of that management.

What is clear is that regardless of the laws implemented in the coming months, you have not got a hope in hell of stopping these guys hunting with hounds, its a matter of having an income or not having an income - what would you do?

Each farmer is shooting in the region of 30 foxes each, add to that the 100 or so the hounds clear up, a bit of roadkill and you get the picture. This is only in one valley, and I haven't even included the gamekeepers tally.

Rest assured you and your colleagues are playing with fire on this topic.

I will be in touch again very soon with a photographic essay on foxhounds in Scotland.

With regards

[Redacted]

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From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 15 January 2018 11:56:27  
To: Public Engagement Unit  
Cc: Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform  
Subject: FW: Meeting on Fox Hunting.

Attachments: 18 01 08 Ewan Archer - fox hunting letter.pdf

Hi,

One for MACCS please - diary.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Roseanna Cunningham, MSP Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform  
2N.08 - St Andrews House - Regent Road - Edinburgh - EH1 3DG

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[cid:image001.png@01D38DF7.DF3928A0]<http://home.scotland.gov.uk/home>

From: [REDACTED] [mailto:[REDACTED]] On Behalf Of Ewing F (Fergus), MSP  
Sent: 15 January 2018 10:23  
To: Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform  
Subject: Meeting on Fox Hunting.

Dear Roseanna,

I am writing to you in my capacity as the local MSP on behalf of my constituent, [REDACTED], in relation to concerns he has raised with me about the SNP's intended stance on fox hunting.

[REDACTED] raised that he was very concerned that the SNP had intentions to introduce a ban or curb on fox hunting in Scotland. [REDACTED] is the [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] and has recently re-introduced the use of a foot pack for fox control as part of a suite of measures to try save the UK's few remaining capercaillie.

He highlights that [REDACTED] is the last stronghold for this schedule 1 species and the estate are carrying out landscape scale conservation to reverse the steady decline that has seen in recent decades. [REDACTED] has explained that the use of foot packs - where the hounds are accompanied by a running houndsman and the fox is flushed to waiting guns - is an essential part of that work. He argues that the use of footpacks is not only efficient and an effective way to control foxes but also humane to the fox that is shot quickly by experienced marksmen.

[REDACTED] raises that in large forested areas it is difficult to control fox numbers by spotlighting or snaring. He highlights that controlling foxes, and indeed other species such as hooded crows, stoats and weasels, not only helps capercaillie but also a wealth of other vulnerable species are given a chance.

I would therefore be keen to have a meeting with you and have a political discussion about this issue.

I do hope that this is in order and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.  
Kind regards,

Fergus Ewing MSP  
Inverness and Nairn

[REDACTED] Ewing MSP for Inverness and Nairn  
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity

112 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EP

Telephone: 01463 713 004  
[cid:image003.png@01D3889E.ED89AEB0]

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[REDACTED]

Mr Ewing  
CONSTITUENCY OFFICE  
112 Church Street  
Inverness  
Scotland  
IV1 1EP

[REDACTED]

20 December 2017

Dear Mr Ewing

**SNP Party Line re fox hunting**

I am very concerned to read about the SNP's intention to introduce a party line to ban or curb fox hunting in Scotland. I am the [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] and I have recently re-introduced the use of a foot pack for fox control as part of a suite of measures to try save the UK's few remaining capercaillie.

[REDACTED] is the last stronghold for this Schedule 1 species. As an estate we are carrying out landscape scale conservation to reverse the steady decline that we have seen in recent decades. Unlike some other landowners, who do not advocate predator management, we take our responsibilities with regards to capercaillie conservation very seriously. This bird cannot be saved by habitat enhancement alone!

Using foot packs – where the hounds are accompanied by a running houndsman and the fox is flushed to waiting guns – is an essential part of that work. Using footpacks is not only an efficient and effective way to control foxes, it is humane. The fox is simply running away from a noise it does not understand and when it breaks cover it is shot quickly and cleanly by experienced marksmen.

In large forested areas we are unable to control fox numbers by spotlighting or indeed by snaring as snaring in known capercaillie areas is against good practice. Controlling foxes, and indeed other species such as hooded crows, stoats and weasels, not only helps capercaillie – a wealth of vulnerable species are given a chance, such as our important and under threat farmland waders.

I urge your party to reconsider.

Yours sincerely

T Wharton

AP [REDACTED]

All replies to be addressed to the Chief Executive

[REDACTED]

Telephone  
Fax  
Website

E-mail  
General  
Sporting

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]