

COWAL AND TROSSACHS FD

DRAFT POLICY ON BIG CATS

Introduction

Recently there has been an increase in the number of alleged sightings of large cats in Central Scotland. None have been confirmed in terms of photographs or carcasses but it is considered prudent to issue guidance “just in case”.

1. Sightings by the Public on FE Land

Safety is of paramount importance. On no account should members of the public approach a big cat. The following guide should be followed on FE land:

- a. Note location (ideally a grid reference) of animal.
- b. If a camera is available, photograph.
- c. Look for and clearly mark pugmarks (paw prints), remains of prey.
- d. Note direction of animal’s departure.
- e. Alert FE Tel No: 01877 382 383 and Police Tel No: 01877 330222

2. Sightings by FE Staff

As above. Inform FE Wildlife Chief/Head Ranger, beat Ranger and Conservation forester immediately (Tel No: 01877 382 383).

3. Suspected Big Cat Kills or Spoor Markings

- a. Photograph.
- b. Mark area and record location (grid reference).
- c. Chief/Head Ranger, beat Ranger and Conservation forester to be informed immediately.
- d. All evidence to be sealed in plastic bags and labelled - location, date and time.

4. Wildlife Ranger/Lease Holder Action

i. If safe and possible, shoot the animal immediately (this potential breach of an individuals’ Firearms Certificate will not be pursued). The following conditions must be adhered to:

- a) Rifle only, .240 or larger calibre.
- b) No shot to be taken if the animal is more than 150m away or if there is any doubt whatsoever that a clean kill could be guaranteed.
- c) A safe background is of absolute importance.
- d) The animal should be shot behind the front leg (front chest cavity) and in no circumstances in the head or neck.
- e) Once shot, the ranger should observe the animal from a distance no closer than 10m for a period of five minutes.
- f) The animal should be approached from above i.e. same as for a stag.
- g) The ranger should confirm the animal is dead (touch eye) before any other action.

ii. The location should be recorded and any spoor markings or other evidence bagged and labelled.

iii. The Chief/Head Wildlife ranger is to be informed immediately.

iv. The animal is to be recovered (“as shot”) to Aberfoyle deer larder a.s.a.p. and it will then be Chief/Head Wildlife Ranger’s responsibility to arrange deep-freeze storage within 24 hrs.

v. The following will be notified a.s.a.p by Chief/Head Ranger:

- FDM
- Territorial Director
- HQ Information Branch
- Police Wildlife Liaison Officer
- SNH
- SERAD

NIALL ROWANTREE
Chief Ranger

Forest Enterprise, Cowal & Trossachs Forest District
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