



NEWS RELEASE

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Balance needed between crofting and wildlife says Crofting Federation

The Scottish Crofting Federation has recently carried out an online survey about conflicts between wildlife and crofting, which demonstrates that there are some wildlife species whose numbers are threatening crofting incomes and livestock welfare.

Scottish Crofting Federation's agriculture spokesman, Russell Smith, commented, "We have had a lot of feedback from members recently on the effects of the increasing numbers of geese, of incursions by deer and of predation by sea eagles, so we launched a survey to get at the facts.

"Of the 255 who responded, 30% were significantly affected by deer eating grass, trees and feed, 16% were significantly affected by sea eagles taking lambs and even ewes, and 36% were significantly affected by geese eating grass, standing crops and fouling the land. We also asked about any other wildlife species and 40% of respondents said that they were significantly affected. There were 26 separate species mentioned but the biggest categories were corvids and foxes. A number of crofters have given up keeping poultry because of losses to foxes, pine martens, mink and otters despite their efforts to protect the birds."

Mr Smith went on to say, "We knew that this was a problem but the very high proportion of respondents, more than two out of three, who said that their crofting was significantly affected by at least one conflict and more than one in three who were affected by more than one conflict, is extremely worrying.

"We are certainly not against wildlife flourishing," Mr Smith continued, "indeed, the extensive agriculture system used by crofters produces good quality food while protecting the environment, and is responsible for much of the preservation of wildlife in the Highlands & Islands. However, there is a balance to be struck between the right of crofters to make a living; the right of domestic animals to live free from pain, injury, distress and fear; and the right of wildlife to thrive in the natural environment."

Mr Smith concluded, "We intend to work with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Government to make sure this point of balance doesn't disadvantage crofters who, after all, are the ones managing the environment for the benefit of all."

END

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Notes to editors

- A picture can be found at: <http://www.crofting.org>