

Grazing Regime Evaluation Case Study:

Site 6 - North York Moors

- 1141 ha of dry dwarf shrub heath and some wet heath
- Managed grouse moor with low sheep only grazing regime



Background

The site is located in the North York Moors National Park. It is under private ownership and there are grazing and shooting tenants.

The site has not been heavily grazed with maximum stocking density of 0.149 lu ha⁻¹ when the ewes, lambs and hogs are out for two months in the summer. This decreases to 0.116 lu ha⁻¹ when the hogs are removed in September. In mid-October the ewes are brought in for tupping until Christmas when the gate is also open to the moor. In addition, 250 hogs are put out from Christmas but gathered in daily until April 20th.

The site is managed under the English Nature Sheep and Wildlife Enhancement Scheme.

Habitat condition assessment

The dry dwarf shrub heath is in a favourable condition regarding most criteria for plant species composition, with 75% of the vegetation cover made up of indicator species at all sample points. At 70% of the sample points there are at least two dwarf shrub indicator species. It is also in a favourable condition regarding browsing levels, disturbance and invasive species. There is less than 1% vegetation cover of non-native species, and less than 20% cover of non-native trees and scrub. However, there are patches of bracken at 10% of sample points. The site is in unfavourable condition as a result of burning, there being signs of burning in sensitive areas, at 30% of the sample points and lower plants only present at 30%. In addition, pioneer regrowth made up 25-50% cover at only 40% of the sample points.

Farm business and livestock

Current grazing regime:

Sheep @ 0.149 lu ha⁻¹ (Summer)

Sheep @ 0.116 lu ha⁻¹ (Sep/October)

Sheep @ 0.033 lu ha⁻¹ (January-April)

Sheep are Swaledales, and lambs are either sold as stores or retained for replacements.

Current area based payments are Wildlife Enhancement Scheme and Hill Farming Allowance. Eligible headage payments to January 2005 are Sheep Annual Premium Scheme and Beef Special Premium. The farming tenant also has a herd of 40 suckler cows kept on in-bye land (102 ha).

Other Management

Sheep are managed as part of the Wildlife Enhancement scheme.

Bracken control and heather management are carried out. A veterinary routine was introduced for controlling ticks and louping ill.

Shooting, recreation and landscape

There is shooting and associated management carried out on the site. A heather burning programme is carried out for game conservation.

There is public access used in moderation with no obvious trampling or erosion.

Landscape is relatively uniform in appearance, but is more heterogeneous on slopes. The boundaries and walls are in good condition and intact. Flowering *Calluna* is dominant and visually striking.