

Grazing Regime Evaluation Case Study:

Site 11 - Dartmoor

- 108 ha of degraded dry dwarf shrub heath and valley bog
- Restoration by summer-only cattle and winter-only sheep grazing

Background

Before 1995, the site was heavily grazed by cattle at up to 0.85 lu ha⁻¹ from late May to early January. Sheep were present to 1976 only (apart from strays). The site was entered into the Dartmoor Environmentally Sensitive Area scheme in 1995 when cattle were grazed at 0.50 and 0.24 lu ha⁻¹ in summer and winter respectively (average 0.38). The current grazing regime was introduced in 1999. Dwarf shrub cover declined from 87 to 14 ha during 1969-1992. *Ulex gallii* also declined. The valley bog was poached by cattle moving to supplementary feed on adjacent grassland and became drier by 1994.

Some improvement in vegetation condition has been noted since 1995 but it declined again in 2001 as a result of high stocking rates during the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak.

The site has an ESA management plan and is monitored as part of the Duchy of Cornwall's Dartmoor Estate. The holding includes an adjacent 250 ha site.

Habitat condition assessment

The dry dwarf shrub heath (80 ha) has been degraded by previous management, being mainly acid grassland with adequate cover of dwarf shrubs (*Vaccinium myrtillus*, *Ulex gallii* and occasional *Calluna vulgaris*) at only 30% of sample points and no signs of pioneer regrowth. Bryophytes are present throughout and the heath is in favourable condition with respect to current browsing levels, disturbance (including burning) and invasive species.

The valley bog (25 ha) is in favourable condition with respect to plant species composition at the majority (70%) of sample points, the exception being where *Molinia caerulea* is locally frequent. It is in favourable condition with respect to invasive species,



browsing, burning, drainage, erosion and disturbance.

Farm business and livestock

Current grazing regime:

Cattle @ 0.225 lu ha⁻¹ (16 April – 31 October only)

Sheep @ 0.002 lu ha⁻¹ (1 November – 15 April only)

Cattle are Charolais cross, Galloway and Hereford spring-calving lactating cows and heifers. Calving is 80%, age at sale 6 months, sold as stores.

Current area-based payments are Dartmoor Environmentally Sensitive Area Tier 1E Moorland + winter cattle removal supplement. Eligible headage payments to January 2005 are suckler cow premium, extensification premium and slaughter premium.

Other management

Stock are shepherded away from the degraded heath. Light grazing of the valley bog is encouraged to maintain 50-70% >20 cm high and open sward areas 6-8 cm high for *Euphydryas aurinia* (marsh fritillary butterfly).

Ulex gallii is burnt on rotation but the valley bog is not burnt.

Shooting, recreation and landscape

No shooting or associated management is carried out.

There is public access used in moderation and stiles and gateways are maintained.

Landscape is heterogeneous in appearance, with intact walls (though fenced on top). *Calluna vulgaris* is too scarce to be visually striking but flowering *Eriophorum* spp., *Ulex gallii* and *Erica tetralix* will be abundant in season.