

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity  
Ministear an Àiteachais agus Ceangal  
Jim Fairlie MSP  
Jim Fairlie BPA



T: 0300 244 4000  
E: [scottish.ministers@gov.scot](mailto:scottish.ministers@gov.scot)

Finlay Carson  
Convener  
Rural Affairs and Islands Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
EH99 1SP  
By email: [Rural.Committee@parliament.scot](mailto:Rural.Committee@parliament.scot)

28 January 2025

Dear Convener,

This morning, I answered a written Parliamentary Question setting out my intention to not make any changes to the close season for female deer.

You may recall that the Scottish Government had previously committed to undertaking further consultation with land managers and other relevant stakeholders before making any decision about changes to close seasons for female deer. Having now done that, through our public consultation *Managing deer for climate and nature*, which ran from January to March 2024, and through my meetings with stakeholders, I have listened to the concerns of those managing deer on the ground.

I have taken careful note of the many stalkers who spoke of the potential distress caused to them by being required routinely to shoot heavily pregnant female deer. I have also noted that many stakeholders have advised that they expect to be able to carry out necessary culling within the current open season for female deer. This includes those who are managing for conservation objectives as well as those managing for sporting objectives. I have concluded therefore that it is not necessary to change the female close season. Those who need to cull female deer in the close season for a particular reason may still apply to NatureScot for an authorisation.

I know this is a matter in which the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee has an interest.

Yours sincerely,

**JIM FAIRLIE**

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)

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