

Countryside Calendar - October



Field with Bales with Autumnal Trees © Lorne Gill SNH

Livestock

Autumn calving is under way in some beef herds. If you see fields with cows and young calves – look for different routes where possible, don't take dogs into fields with young animals and pay attention to any local signage. In some areas, dairy cows are taken in for the winter.

Sheep will remain outside: ewes remain on the hill for approximately 36 weeks on average each year.

Male sheep or rams (tups) may be put in fields so that they can sire next year's lambs. These tups can be dangerous and unpredictable. Deer in enclosed fields are most likely to turn aggressive during the rutting season.

Depending on the weather, livestock may be taken in for the winter, so watch out for farm vehicles taking them feed.

Crops

Harvesting of oats is under way in crofting areas. Farm vehicles will be working on the land to prepare the ground for planting next year's crops. Most winter wheat is now sown and the potato harvest will be finished in most areas.

Look out for herbicides being applied to many cereal crops before they start to grow.

Conservation

Pheasant and partridge shooting takes place during the autumn and winter around woods and forests. Take extra care and follow signs and notices where shooting is taking place. Help to minimise disturbance by being alert to possible shooting on grouse moors (the grouse shooting season continues until 10 December), and take account of advice on alternative routes. Wildfowl shooting takes place close to water during the autumn and winter usually around dawn and dusk.

Muirburn is controlled burning of moorland to help regenerate heather. It can take place between 1 October and 15 April inclusive.

Follow local advice to avoid a particular route or not to do a particular activity for safety reasons.

The intensive management of grass crops for cattle has led to increases in the number of geese that overwinter in Scotland. Some lowland wet grassland areas close to the coast are managed for these visitors when they arrive in October. Large inland lochs also provide a seasonal home.