

The Editor
The Scotsman
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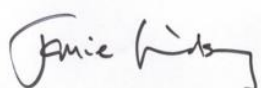
Dear Sir,

Asulam for Bracken Control

Scotland's Moorland Forum has considered the decision made on 20 September by a European committee that will ban the selective herbicide *Asulam* that is used for the control of bracken. The majority view of the Forum is one of dismay. The concern stems from the vital role that this targeted treatment plays in the control of bracken in areas where access is difficult. Without the ability to apply *Asulam*, which is the only product authorised for application from a helicopter, it is likely that the area occupied by bracken will continue to expand. This will damage moorland species diversity, and reduce the conservation status and agricultural value of many iconic and remote rural areas of Scotland.

Members of the Forum are working with the Scottish Government in their efforts to alleviate this situation and will support the manufacturers of *Asulam* in any application that will lead to the reinstatement of *Asulam*, as early as possible. In the meantime, members of the Forum urge DEFRA, who act for the whole of UK on this issue, to search for a short-term solution to this problem.

Yours faithfully,



Lord Lindsay
Chairman

Encl: Background information

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Asulam for Bracken Control

Background Information

- 1 Asulam is the only selective herbicide available for bracken control, and it is the only herbicide licensed for aerial application.
- 2 Other control products, or mechanical processes, are of limited efficacy, or are not selective, and are therefore more likely to cause damage to non-target species.
- 3 Dense bracken covers large swathes of our lower hills, often forming an impenetrable barrier for farmed livestock and hill walkers, as well as providing an ideal location for sheep ticks, which spread grouse and sheep diseases and are linked to human health problems. A reduction in the control effort that will result from the banning of Asulam is likely to lead to an increase in the area covered by bracken.
- 4 Many of the areas that will be affected are Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or areas of national archaeological interest. Removal of the most important weapon in the battle against encroaching bracken will make it difficult or impossible to achieve and maintain favourable condition status in these areas.
- 5 The uplands are being increasingly recognised as a provider of ecosystem services and this emphasises the importance of keeping these iconic areas in good condition. To achieve this requires the ability to control invasive species, such as bracken.