

Dogs and Grazing and Cattle grazing scrub re-growth Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group

We had a serious dog attack on the sheep on one of our limestone sites last week. This is not the first time and is probably the same dog, but seems to occur in the evening or overnight, even though the reserve carpark is locked (it is still possible to walk in from the roadside.)

I have moved the sheep off the reserve and I am currently reluctant to return them.

I have considered various solutions (including shooting both dog and owners, if only I could find them!!)

The problems I have:

Cattle - no water supply and no main anywhere near. Estimated cost of supply £17,000, so not an option! Taking a bowser every day may not be feasible. I also wonder how effective the cattle would be at controlling bramble and hawthorn re-growth on scrub-cleared areas? Does anyone know?

Ponies: bridleway through reserve, probably cause problems with horse riders

Alpacas/donkeys to protect sheep: major complaints from public, although could be an option.

Closing the grazed areas: public footpaths run through them, would have to fence footpaths out.

If anyone has any other ideas or better solutions, I would really appreciate your input.

Cathy

Cathy Wainwright

Grazing Manager

The Wildlife Trust BCNP

Our Galloway cattle control bramble, hawthorn and Gorse regrowth pretty well if that helps.

Cheers.

Rob.

Rob Havard

Conservation Officer

Malvern Hills Conservators

Cathy,

On one of our isolated sites without water supply or electricity, we have installed a solar-powered borehole with the help of Defence Estate funding. Very effective, although total cost was still ~£6k. Still substantially cheaper than mains and more environmentally responsible.

The introduced cattle, Dexters, are slowly breaking up the scrub and bramble and are far more effective than sheep.

Justin Whitehouse

(Lizard Area Warden; NT)

Our cattle (British Whites) happily eat bramble and will make quite an impact on it without having to be pushed. Our Exmoor ponies on the other hand show little interest.

I am aware of problems associated with free living ponies and horse riders. However, we have a horse ride running through the site and I am not aware of any complaints from horse riders about our ponies and they (our ponies) have a favourite lawn next to the ride so ponies shouldn't necessarily be ruled out if you can find some that will do the job.

Mark Cleaver

Keeper

Burnham Beeches

Supplying cattle by bowser is feasible, especially if you have only a small herd. On Salisbury Plain many of the herds are supplied this way. Even herds of 200+, although this does become a big chore in summer.

Paul

wouldn't rule out ponies where there is a bridleway. I think it is a matter of choosing the right individual ponies. They still need a reasonable water supply though. Has anybody ever tried camels?

Julian

Julian Small

Restoring the Heaths of the Vale of York Project

One of our graziers, on a Breckland heath with public access, says that his Jacob sheep attack dogs, so he has no worries about loose dogs!

Nick

Nick Sibbett CEnv MLI MIEEM

Natural England

That I would like to see!

We had a phone call complaint that a dog walker had been surrounded by sheep and then attacked (presumably in a tactical attack formation and dressed as ninjas). This had led to the dog becoming a "nervous wreck" and a "shadow of his former self". She wanted to know if we could have the sheep put down for "dog worrying"Seriously!

Rob.

Rob Havard

I have been offered a couple of camels to graze a mag lime grassland with scrub encroachment, I think they would have been ideal as they love eating wooden railings, but unfortunately they need a license as they are classed as a dangerous animal!

Stephen

Stephen Comber

North East Grazing Co-ordinator
