

Grazing and access

The information sheet on heathland management explains the history of heathlands and how they are managed today. While heathlands have probably always been used for recreation, this has changed and developed over time, and many heathland sites are now enjoyed by large numbers of visitors and their pets. This includes accessing the area on foot, horseback or cycles as well as for wildlife watching, picnicking, orienteering and other similar activities. This sheet gives information on how grazing management and recreation successfully work together on other sites.

What are the concerns?

On sites where grazing livestock have been absent for many years, there may be understandable concerns about their reintroduction and issues that need addressing. These include:

- A. Concerns about being around livestock (especially with dogs)
- B. The impact of fencing on open landscapes and common land
- C. Concerns about grazing and perimeter fencing affecting visitors' ability to access and use the area for recreation
- D. Concerns about diseases that can be transmitted by livestock

How have concerns been resolved on other sites?

Across the UK, there are a great number of sites where visitors and livestock happily co-exist. Here are some of the key ways in which this has been achieved:

A. Worries about stock

- Ensuring that there are livestock-free areas at all times and that people know where these are
- Running "meet the livestock" events where people can learn more about them and their role. Providing information (leaflets, posters, website) with tips for walking with livestock (how to behave, what to do if livestock are in the way of a gate etc.)
- Using cattle (sheep are less suitable for sites with dogs) with a calm temperament, and no young calves or bulls
- Planning fencing carefully to avoid "pinch points" where livestock can become cornered
- Recruiting volunteer livestock lookers, who help check the stock and can also talk to visitors
- Ensuring appropriate contact details are available (e.g. on gates) for the grazier/ appropriate person

B & C. Concerns about fencing and gates

- Siting fencing carefully so that it is concealed by trees or scrub and avoids crossing open heathland
- Only using perimeter fencing and installing suitable gates at all points where paths cross the boundary
- Consulting users and following current advice on the best type of gate to use for horse-riders and visitors using wheelchairs or mobility scooters (see over)
- Using "invisible fencing" so that access is not restricted and open landscapes can be protected (see over)

D. Disease

- Ensuring that a thorough risk assessment of grazing is carried out and that all practical measures to reduce risk to an acceptable level are undertaken
- Ensuring that any signs about livestock explain that livestock (and their dung) should not be touched



Invisible fencing

Invisible fencing contains livestock by using a wire that emits a radio signal which animals are trained to respond to. A transmitter box sends a coded radio signal to a wire that runs around the perimeter of the grazing area and is either buried or laid on the ground. Each animal wears a collar fitted with an AM or FM receiver. This emits an audible signal as the animal moves towards the wire. If the animal continues towards the wire, the receiver unit issues a pulse the animal can feel. All animals are trained using visual stimuli (e.g. a visible fence) so that the



British Whites at Burnham Beeches ©City of London

animal therefore has something to hear, something to see and ultimately something to feel. Once trained, animals respond to the audible signal alone. Sites where invisible fencing is currently used include [Woolacombe Dunes](#)¹ in Devon, at [Epping Forest](#)² and Burnham Beeches near London, on The Lizard, at [Ashdown Forest](#)³, on [Chorleywood Common](#)⁴ in Hertfordshire and on The Roaches and Wetley Moor in Staffordshire. This [video](#)⁵ explains how invisible fencing works at Epping Forest.

Case study: Invisible fencing at The Roaches

In 2013, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust decided to use cattle grazing to improve the moorland habitats at The Roaches. This very popular recreation site is renowned for its fantastic views, so SWT decided to use invisible fencing to enclose the livestock without the need for standard fencing. Cattle are now successfully grazing the site.



Thanks to Jon Rowe,
Staffordshire Wildlife
Trust

Cc by sa/2.0 Rock outcrop on
The Roaches by Graham
Hogg. Geographic.org.uk/
p/5080247

Top tips for walking with livestock

It may be helpful to provide tips for visitors who are not used to being around livestock. Here is an example used by the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust. Each point was fully explained in the text.

- Do not feed or touch the animals
- Make sure that the animals know that you are there
- If an animal is startled do not run!
- Avoid getting between cows and their calves and/or splitting the herd
- Keep small children close to you
- Do not leave bags or pushchairs unattended
- Keep dogs under control

Case Study: Introducing Highland cattle to Blacka Moor

When cattle were brought to a busy site near Sheffield, the local Wildlife Trust took specific measures to ensure peoples' concerns were met. Several years on, there are no problems and visitors are quite used to the cattle. Measures included:

- Creating compartments so that there are livestock-free areas at all times
- Clearly publicising where livestock are on site and how long they will be there (posters, leaflets)
- Running "meet the cattle" events for walkers and riders to increase familiarity with livestock and learn how to shoo them away, e.g. from a gate, if needed.
- Ensuring that the cattle were already used to dogs when they were first brought on site
- Clearing sight-lines for riders and walkers so they could see if there were livestock ahead
- Doing a recreation and grazing risk assessment to ensure safety issues were thoroughly thought through and addressed.

Thanks to Nabil Abbas at Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust

Bridle gates

It is important that gates are appropriate for all users, especially those on horseback or disabled. Natural England and the British Horse Society recently carried out some research on best type of self-closing gate to use, and their results can be found [here](#)⁶. Their guidance will be carefully followed at Cannock Chase if any gates are to be installed.

¹ www.nationaltrust.org.uk/woolacombe/features/cows-in-woolacombe-dunes

² www.oss.org.uk/getting-the-buzz/

³ www.ashdownforest.org/wild/InvisibleFencingSystem.php

⁴ beefandlamb.ahdb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/GC-case-study-September-170914.pdf

⁵ www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hul-1N-wwtI

⁶ www.bhs.org.uk/~media/bhs/files/pdf-documents/access-leaflets/jp018-a-trial-of-self-closing-bridlegates-edition-1.ashx?la=en