



# QUANTOCK DEER

## Management & Conservation Group

### To all deer count helpers, landholders and members of QDM&CG

The annual Quantock Hills 'deer' count took place early morning on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> March. This was the 35<sup>th</sup> annual count. A few comments after having been made as to who and how many counts different people have done, I wondered 'Has anyone actually done all 35?' There's certainly some that have undertaken a lot of these! It's great that we have many new 'counters' too. So, a big thank you to everyone who was up early and out their doors before first light heading for their allocated areas.

The weather conditions weren't great, but it did stay dry with a cold breeze. The southern end had fog from the start, at the northern end the fog or low cloud dropped around 8am, so there was good visibility soon after start and anyone on lower ground may not have been affected. Interestingly several people used their thermal spotters. They are now more accessible and as the drone survey in 2024 showed, very useful in picking out deer that are generally so well camouflaged in the heather, dead bracken and gorse.

#### Quantock Deer Count - Summary total of ALL deer counted 1st March 2026

| Red Deer | Hinds& calves | Prickets | Young Stags | Stags 4+ years | Roe Deer | Fallow deer | Muntjac deer | Sika |
|----------|---------------|----------|-------------|----------------|----------|-------------|--------------|------|
| 355      | 307           | 20       | 14          | 14             | 156      | 0           | 0            | 0    |

Overall the Red Deer numbers seen were low - very low in comparison to recent years! Only 355 reds were counted on the day, the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest of the 35 counts. Hind numbers seen are down from 711 to 307, the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest in the 35 counts. Stag numbers are down to their 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest number, at 48. Very few reds were counted in the southern end of the hills, the majority of then in the northern hills.

### Breakdown of RED DEER seen by region and comparison with average over previous four years

Was this significant reduction all down to the less favourable weather? Has more been culled than reported? Has culling itself or the pressure of culling pushed the deer to different or new areas? The breakdown of North, Central and South doesn't suggest the northern deer have headed south.

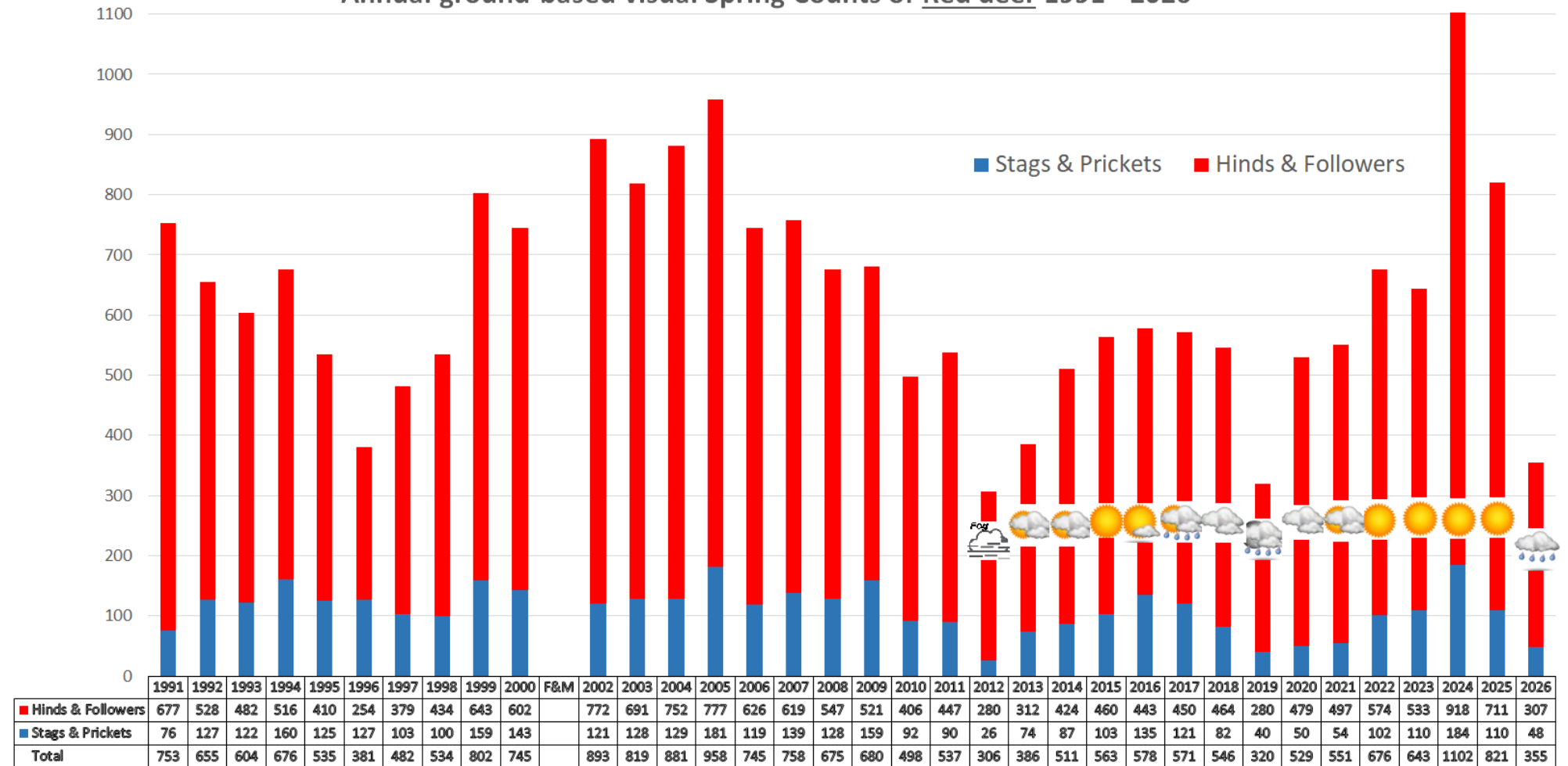
The cull report forms, which will be circulated more widely this year, should be really useful to help match numbers and trends. The more landholders / mangers who can provide (in confidence) info on how many deer culled on their land (Aug 2025 to April 2026) the better, which will be used only to compile overall figures for North / Central/ and South areas.

| Year 2026                                                          |                   |                  | 4-yr Average 2022 - 2025 |                   |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Total                                                              | Hinds & Followers | Prickets & Stags | Total                    | Hinds & Followers | Prickets & Stags |
| 355                                                                | 307               | 48               | 811                      | 609               | 111              |
| <b>A: North</b> (all count blocks lying north of the Crowcombe to  |                   |                  |                          |                   |                  |
| 281                                                                | 255               | 26               | 607                      | 516               | 91               |
| <b>B: Central:</b> (South of Crowcombe to Overstowey Road to       |                   |                  |                          |                   |                  |
| 55                                                                 | 43                | 12               | 160                      | 133               | 27               |
| <b>C: South-East</b> (all areas south-east of Lydeard Hill – incl. |                   |                  |                          |                   |                  |
| 19                                                                 | 9                 | 10               | 44                       | 35                | 9                |

Roe deer numbers seen were relatively high. The mix of small woods, hedgerows, arable farming on the lower lying areas especially suits them. Once again, no muntjac were counted although sightings have increased at other times of the year in number as well as distribution. I'm often amazed that a group of red deer can somehow vanish, but to spot the muntjac is still a much harder job all round, usually fleeting glimpses crossing roads, tracks or open ground.

Matt Peaster (Chairman)

# Quantock Deer Management & Conservation Group Annual ground-based visual Spring Counts of Red deer 1991 - 2026



(for all past Quantock Deer counts reports since 2012 see [Quantock Deer Management and Conservation Group](#) web-site)