

ANDY BARR / ASHLEY COOMBES



Glenogil is a famous grouse-shooting estate; inset, Dodd

Scotland ready to ban 'bee poison'

Jason Allardyce

A PESTICIDE said to make bees forget where to look for food could be outlawed in Scotland if British ministers decide against a UK ban.

Studies suggest that neonicotinoids, a group of chemicals used by farmers as insecticides, could be linked to the decline of bees and other insects in the countryside.

Scientists believe they interfere with bees' ability to remember where the best sources of pollen and nectar are. Environmentalists say this could hit Scotland's £100m soft-fruit industry because bees pollinate plants such as strawberries and raspberries.

The British government has so far refused to support a Europe-wide ban proposed by the EU, citing a lack of evidence to justify the move.

A ban was discussed at last month's SNP conference and Richard Lochhead, the environment secretary, has signalled that he is prepared to act after a report from the independent advisory committee on pesticides that advises ministers.

"We have just received the new advice . . . on the review of field trials on bumblebees and will be reviewing this as a matter of urgency," he said.

"If, in light of this new advice, the case for the EU's precautionary measures is strong, I would want the UK government to consider supporting this position."

Scottish government sources said a UK solution would be preferable, but a ban could be imposed in Scotland if the British government refused to act.

One source said: "We're looking at the new advice and if we need to move toward a ban, we will."

as bait, on game bags used by estate staff and in soil and plant samples.

It was discovered that the white-tailed sea eagle found dead in 2009 had been killed with an illegal pesticide known as Carbofuran.

Dodd denied any wrongdoing and said at the time he was horrified by the suggestion that the bird had been killed on his land.

The sale of the estate comes just 15 months after ministers introduced vicarious liability provisions in the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

The provisions in the act mean that landowners can now be held criminally responsible for the actions of their employees.

Data recently published by the government shows that 110 birds were poisoned in

Scotland between 2008 and 2012, including 58 buzzards, 17 red kites, 11 ravens and eight golden eagles.

According to Raptor Persecution Scotland, no prosecutions have arisen from the cases of 27 eagles listed as killed or missing since 2006.

A report published in December by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said some of the country's rarest birds of prey continue to be the victims of wildlife crimes such as the illegal use of crow traps and the setting of baits in the open which have been laced with illegal and highly toxic chemicals.

However, the vicarious liability clause in the wildlife act is thought to have reduced the number of bird poisonings in Scotland, down to 28 raptors killed in 2010, 16 in 2011 and three in 2012.

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DODD WAS STRIPPED OF £107,000 OF SUBSIDIES AFTER ILLEGAL PESTICIDES WERE FOUND