

# Lifestyle land management in Aberdeenshire, Scotland

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## Introduction

Recreational approaches to farming have received considerable media attention in recent years. Television programmes such as *Countryfile* (BBC1), *Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall* (*River Cottage*, *Hugh's Chicken Run*, Channel 4) and *Jimmy Doherty* (*Jimmy's Farm*, BBC2) are evidence of the recreational appeal of engaging in farming activities, as are the growing number of magazines addressing smallholding and self-provisioning (e.g. *Country Smallholding*, *Smallholder*, *Country Living*, *Grow Your Own*, *Home Farmer*, *Kitchen Garden*, *Practical Poultry*, *Fancy Fowl*, *Your Chickens*). This research assessed the growth of 'lifestyle' approaches to agricultural land management in Aberdeenshire, Scotland from 2000 to 2012.

## Background to research

Lifestyle management of agricultural land in Aberdeenshire was studied as part of the FarmPath (Farming Transitions: Pathways towards regional sustainability of agriculture in Europe) project, funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Programme (2011 to 2014) and the Scottish Government. Research involved interviews with representatives of the farming industry, small holder and rare breed associations, landowner groups, lending institutions, input suppliers and estate agents. Twenty-four smallholders, crofters, hobby farmers and other small-scale land owners were interviewed. Together, these individuals were termed 'lifestyle land managers'<sup>1</sup> because their primary purpose in acquiring and managing land was to pursue personal life ambitions, rather than to profit from a farm business.

Management of agricultural land for lifestyle purposes has evolved in Aberdeenshire primarily since the 1970s.

This largely resulted from the advent of the oil and gas industry in Aberdeen, which increased local wealth and disposable income. Standards of living increased, and many people living on croft holdings no longer needed to supplement their waged income with self-provisioning. The oil and gas industry, as well as the development of financial services, privatised utilities

and a growing public sector, also brought with them a number of executives, who sought attractive residential properties.

The focus of the research was on how and why people come to manage land as a lifestyle choice, and the factors that enable this process. Through an analysis of census statistics, some estimates of the potential number and impact were able to be made for Aberdeenshire, within the context of Scotland as a whole.



One of two Highland cattle held on a lifestyle property in Aberdeenshire

<sup>1</sup> For some participants, the term 'hobby farmer' had negative connotations; others did not feel they should be considered 'farmers' given their recreational approaches.

## How many lifestyle land managers are there?

Key informants were inconsistent in their assessments of whether the number of lifestyle land managers was increasing or decreasing in North East Scotland. All saw increases during the mid 2000s, but views were mixed on whether this had continued or dropped off more recently. Whereas purchases of lifestyle-type properties have decreased, those key informants active in smallholding argued that this type of land management is still increasing, on the basis of the activity they're witnessing (more people joining web-forums, increased event attendance, higher sales of inputs and supplies). To address this question, researchers undertook a review of agricultural census statistics for Aberdeenshire region<sup>2</sup>.

Lifestyle approaches to farming can be difficult to distinguish from commercial farming, because motivations for production are not included in the census. Although people managing their land for lifestyle rather than commercial purposes tend to own small-scale properties, recent research in Aberdeenshire demonstrated that there are large, commercial sized farms being operated 'non-commercially' (e.g. to break even),

because the owner had sufficient personal wealth or off-farm employment income that commodity production was not an important source of household income (Sutherland, 2012). In contrast, very small, part-time farms can be commercially oriented, depending on the intentions of the operator. Key informants in this study also indicated that commercial and hobby farming are not mutually exclusive: some commercial farmers will also keep 'hobby' herds: for example, a flock of rare breed poultry (out of personal interest) alongside a commercial beef herd. It is thus not possible to definitively identify all of the 'lifestyle land managers' in Aberdeenshire, or Scotland, but it is possible to identify numbers of holdings with characteristics that suggest lifestyle land management.

### Registration as farm businesses

One way to identify lifestyle land managers is through holdings registered as farm businesses. However, these numbers can be misleading – while it is likely that holdings not registered as farm businesses are not commercially operated, the reverse is not true – there are tax incentives for lifestyle land managers to register as businesses. To maintain tax status as a farm business, a farm only has to generate a profit one year in five. In the other four years, the farmer can

write off farming expenses or losses against other income, reducing the income tax paid. Farm businesses are also exempt from inheritance tax and can register to have Value Added Tax on purchases refunded.

In 2011, Scotland had 52 543 agricultural holdings, 66% of which were registered as farm businesses. Those 17 823 holdings not registered as farm businesses were primarily less than 10 ha in size, but included farms of all sizes, including 150 that were over 200 ha. In total, these non-business holdings covered 6.4% of Scotland's usable agricultural land, and utilised 10.5% of reported agricultural labour. For Aberdeenshire region, the pattern is similar, with 63.5% registered as farm businesses. The 2 726 non-business holdings in Aberdeenshire occupied 4.5% of useable agricultural land, and utilised 10.0% of reported labour. The percentage of holdings registered as businesses in the under 10 ha category has remained stable at about 33% in Aberdeenshire region, although this category has increased in total number by 23.3% since 2000. This is somewhat higher than for Scotland as a whole, where holdings under 10 ha have increased by 15.7%. This suggests that existing small-scale land holders in Aberdeenshire region are increasingly registering as farm businesses and that new

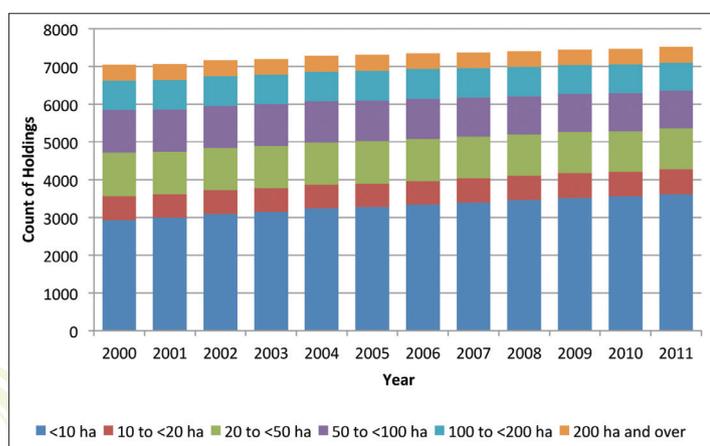


Figure 1: Change in Holding Numbers and Sizes in Aberdeenshire Region 2000–2011

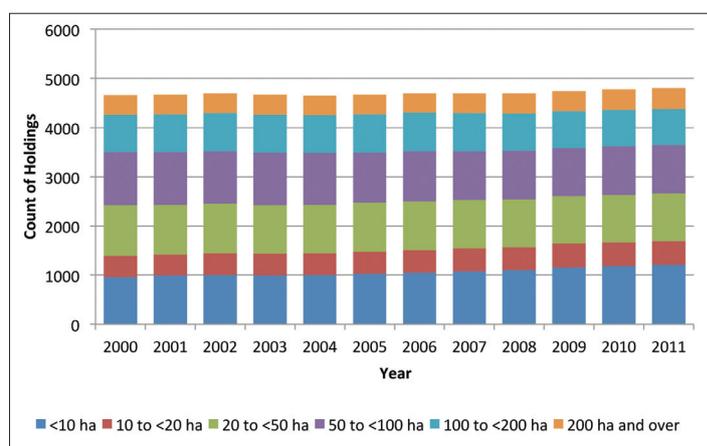


Figure 2: Change in Farm Business Numbers and Sizes in Aberdeenshire Region (2000–2011)

<sup>2</sup> The census statistics from 'Aberdeenshire region' reported here are the NUTS 3 level statistics for Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire

holdings are being created and used for non-business purposes.

## Types of 'hobby' farmer within the agricultural census

Another way to assess the number of lifestyle land managers is to look for specific characteristic types within census holdings. Key informants identified: equiculture (horses), smallholding/crofting, people who keep livestock as pets and non-users of land. All of these exist across the range of holding sizes, but are most numerous in the under 10 ha category<sup>3</sup>.

## Equestrian properties

Perhaps the most common image of lifestyle land management is that of horsiculture or 'equestrian properties', which include a house, stable and enough land for a few horses, and are operated on a part-time basis. In this study, equiculture was defined as a holding with four or fewer horses, with 0.5 or less full-time equivalents (FTEs) of reported labour.

There were 686 of those holdings in Aberdeenshire region in 2011, from 545 in 2000, representing a 25.9% increase. While this is the largest concentration of these holdings in Scotland (where 3234 were reported in total), this has increased by 32.4% for Scotland as a whole since 2000. In Aberdeenshire region, 83.5% of these are on holdings of less than 10 ha, in comparison to 80.0% for Scotland as a whole. Of these, 227 (33.1%) in Aberdeenshire region are registered as farm businesses, of 1272 (39.3%) for Scotland. This suggests that these are lifestyle properties, and that while equestrian properties are increasing considerably in Aberdeenshire region, they are increasing even more quickly in other regions.

While equestrian properties hold some 7659 horses – a number that has increased by

36.0% since 2000 – this is only 20.1% of the horses reported in the Scottish agricultural census. In Aberdeenshire region, this is 1658 horses, an increase of 30.0% since 2000, representing 26.9% of horses reported.

Horses are therefore much more likely to be held on commercial holdings. However, in terms of numbers of holdings, 46.0% of holdings with horses meet the definition of equestrian properties in Scotland, and 54.8% for Aberdeenshire region. Roughly half of holdings with horses can thus be considered 'equestrian properties' by this definition. Equestrian holdings may or may not include livestock as well as horses. In Aberdeenshire region, 445 (64.9%) equestrian properties had no other livestock, whereas this was 1899 (58.7%) for Scotland as a whole. Holdings with horses may also have livestock as pets or for small-scale production.



Horses on a lifestyle property in Aberdeenshire

## Livestock as pets

Interviews with participants at a rare breed sale demonstrated that there are a number of land managers in Scotland who raise livestock as pets. These are somewhat difficult to differentiate from small holders using census stats, as both produce small amounts of livestock. For research purposes, pet livestock holdings were defined as those with less than four livestock units (but more than zero), no horses (to distinguish these from equestrian properties), no breeding bulls or rams, and 0.5 or less FTE. There are some 2 309 of these holdings in Scotland, with 184 in Aberdeenshire region. Whereas the number of this type of holding has

increased by 8.8% in Scotland, it has gone up by 28.7% in Aberdeenshire region in the past 12 years. In Aberdeenshire region, 48.9% are registered as farm businesses, in comparison to 66.8% for Scotland as a whole.

Pet livestock holdings occupy some 23 582 ha of useable agricultural land in Scotland, but only 1444 ha within Aberdeenshire region.

In 2011, pet holdings in Aberdeenshire region reported:

- 1593 sheep (of 31 088 in Scotland)
- 1005 poultry (of 8879 in Scotland)
- 198 cattle (of 1819 in Scotland)
- 68 pigs (of 344 for Scotland)

Although these numbers are quite low in comparison to the numbers of commercial livestock held, there have been remarkable increases in some of these commodities being produced on pet holdings. Whereas cattle numbers have remained fairly static, the numbers of poultry have increased by 67.2% in Aberdeenshire region (49.5% in Scotland), and numbers of pigs have tripled in both Aberdeenshire region and Scotland. This is consistent with key informant reports of increased recreational poultry production. Pigs are more likely to be kept for home consumption alongside pet livestock. The number of sheep have stayed fairly stable in Aberdeenshire region, but declined by about 13.8% in Scotland as a whole. This is most notable in holdings under 10 ha in this category, which have seen a loss of 21.2% of sheep across Scotland as a whole, but sheep on under 10 ha holdings have increased slightly in Aberdeenshire region. This suggests that some of these holdings are crofts or smallholdings, which have seen dramatic losses of sheep in highland regions. These are described next.

<sup>3</sup> Just over half of all holdings reported in the census are less than 10 ha in size.

## Smallholding and crofting

Traditionally, crofts involve the production of livestock on a part-time basis, to supplement off-farm income. Historically, these are located in former counties: Argyll, Caithness, Inverness, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland, Orkney, and Shetland, with seven new counties added in 2010 (Arran, Bute Greater and Little Cumbrae and Moray)<sup>4</sup>. Although 238 holdings in Aberdeenshire region were reported in the 2011 census as having croft land, because Aberdeenshire region is not legally a crofting county, this most likely reflects the historical use of the term 'croft' for small-scale holdings in Aberdeenshire region. Some holdings may also include land outside Aberdeenshire region.

For the purposes of this research, 'smallholding' was defined as those holdings with 4 to 10 livestock units (including horses), with 0,5 FTE or less. There are 207 of these in Aberdeenshire region, an 8.4% decline since 2000 (2658 of these in Scotland, a 19.3% decline from 2000). In both Aberdeenshire region (89.9%) and Scotland (90.1%), the vast majority of these are registered as farm businesses. This suggests that many of these may be part-time commercial businesses; however, some may also be lifestyle properties registered as businesses for tax purposes.

The amount of land occupied by smallholding in Aberdeenshire region has more than doubled in the past 12 years, with 8745 ha identified in 2012. Land in this category has increased more modestly for Scotland as a whole, up 10.5% to 93 043 ha in 2012. In terms of commodities produced on these holdings, in Aberdeenshire region in

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Rural/crofting-policy/new-crofting-areas>



The food hall at the first Scottish Smallholder and Grower Festival at Forfar Mart 30 September 2012

2011, the following were reported:

- 10 166 sheep (of 216 056 in Scotland)
- 1944 cattle (of 12110 in Scotland)
- 1362 poultry (of 8830 in Scotland)
- 36 pigs (of 263 in Scotland)

Within these numbers, there has been a remarkable decline in sheep production – a reduction of some 98 973 sheep produced on these holdings in Scotland (a 31.2% reduction from 2000 to 2011). In Aberdeenshire region, this has represented 2779 sheep (a 21.5% reduction). Poultry on these holdings have increased by 123% in Aberdeenshire region, and 21.5% for Scotland as a whole. Cattle on smallholding have declined slightly for Aberdeenshire region (-6.8%), but increased (5.8%) for Scotland as a whole. Key informants suggested that there has been a shift from sheep to cattle production in highland areas, in order to reduce labour requirements. However, the increase in cattle numbers on these holdings is minor in comparison to the loss of sheep.

### Non managers of land

There are also a number of land managers who do not appear to be actively managing their land. As further discussed in the next section, there are a cohort of land managers who purchased their properties primarily to have a house in an attractive rural location; the land included with the house is a source of privacy and visual amenity, and not managed for livestock or horses. Land may be rented out on an informal basis, cropped occasionally for hay or left fallow. Numerous

respondents also identified the existence of 'slipper farmers' – former commercial farmers who have discontinued livestock production but continued to receive agricultural subsidies based on historic payment entitlements.

This category of land manager is perhaps the most difficult to identify in the agricultural census, as they are characterised by what they are not doing. For this research, these holdings were defined as those categorised as specialist forage and grass (i.e. grazing land) but which had no livestock or horses, and 0.5 or less FTE. There were some 2221 of these holdings reported in Aberdeenshire region in 2011, an increase of 29.7% from 2000. This is consistent with the 18 502 holdings reported in Scotland in 2011, which have increased by 26.8% since 2000. These increases have been steady from 2000 to 2011, suggesting that these are not a new cohort of 'slipper farmers' following CAP reform in the mid 2000s. However, about a third of this category reported receiving the Single Farm Payment (30.3% in Aberdeenshire region, 35.6% in Scotland) and a considerable minority are registered as farm businesses (38.4% were farm businesses in Aberdeenshire region, 45.2% for Scotland). This category is thus likely to include holdings which have become less intensively managed (e.g. land is rented out or left fallow), potentially through retirement of a formerly active holder.

In Aberdeenshire region, 'non-managers' of land held 51 538 ha in 2011, an increase of 284% from 2000. Most of this gain is on holding of more than 200 ha, a category which fluctuates considerably, so these totals must be taken with caution. However, land held in holdings of this type of with less than 200ha has steadily increased throughout the 2000 – 2011 period, almost doubling to reach 15 520 ha. For Scotland as a whole, this category represented 708 836 ha in 2011, a 127% increase from 2000. These numbers are more consistent across the size categories, with holdings under 200 ha increasing by 76.4%.

For holdings of less than 10 ha – i.e. those most likely to be primarily residential – some 1942 ha were held in 2011 (18 527 ha for Scotland), an increase of 57.7% (74.3% for Scotland). This represents 466 holdings (52.3% increase) in Aberdeenshire region, and 5029 (72.6% increase) in Scotland as a whole. Both Aberdeenshire region and Scotland appear to have an increasing number of holdings where land is not actively managed, both in terms of residential and former agricultural use.

## Why do people become lifestyle land managers?

The approaches of lifestyle land managers are highly varied. Respondents could be divided into two main categories: those who purchased land for the purpose of raising livestock or having horses, and those who move to the country primarily because they like to have space around them and/or a nice view. The latter chose their property primarily on the basis of the house and its location; the amount of land they acquire depends on that amount that happens to be included with the house. Two of the respondents in the study reported learning how much land they had acquired land in addition to their houses only after they had already purchased it. Their decisions on how

to manage the land were thus somewhat ad hoc, largely responding to requests from neighbours for short-term rental, or the development of their own interests.

For those who actively sought land in order to have animals, motivations included: addressing concerns about food safety, food provenance and food miles, enjoyment of the process nurturing and growing things (e.g. birthing and raising young stock), enjoying interacting with the public (e.g. people who come and buy eggs and stay to admire the hens) as well as the view of the surrounding countryside. Some lifestyle land managers also enjoy the showing at livestock shows (and winning prizes), being environmentally friendly, the physical work of caring for livestock, seasonal changes to their work, the sense of being in touch with nature, and being part of a community (of like-minded people, on-line through web-forums or directly through face-to-face interactions). Many lifestyle land managers believe it is a better life for children to be raised around animals (e.g. to learn responsibility through caring for livestock), and there are a subset who are focused on subsistence (relying as little as possible on the rest of society for energy, food, housing etc). Lifestyle land management can be the fulfilment of childhood (or adult) dreams. One respondent stated: "as a kid growing up most people around me were farmers and had animals – I was from a council house – it was a dream", another that he "always dreamed of having a pond with ducks on it". Lifestyle land managers are often "eco" in the words of one key informant, who suggested an interest in the environment is also common.

Although there are clear tax advantages to being registered as a farm business, the key informants did not consider this to be an important motivator for becoming a lifestyle land manager, simply a factor that makes it more affordable for those already

involved. Key informants also stated that although regulations on keeping livestock have noticeably increased in recent years, this has not deterred very many people from participating.

Many lifestyle land managers had some form of connection to agriculture, either through growing up on a farm or a rural area, or working in the agricultural service industry. All required sufficient personal financing to be able to afford a lifestyle holding, so had typically worked outside of agriculture for a period of time prior to purchasing their holdings. Key informants indicated that lifestyle properties tend to be taken on by couples or families, ranging from young couples in their 30s setting up a family home to couples in their 50s and 60s who are looking to semi-retire. Owing to the amount of work required to maintain land and what is usually a medium to large house, lifestyle land managers tend to downsize in their 70s.

## Trends and tendencies of lifestyle land managers

### Land markets

- Both estate agents described a 'boom' in the sale of lifestyle holdings in Aberdeenshire from 2003-2007. This corresponded to a general increase in the selling prices of most housing in the UK. This then rapidly declined with the onset of the recession, as families shifted from purchasing 'dream properties' to those that met their immediate family needs. During the boom period it was common, when farms came on the market, for estate agents to divide the property into units, one of which was a lifestyle-type property. The remaining agricultural land was then typically purchased by a commercial farmer.
- Both estate agents agreed that the market for lifestyle-scale properties had almost disappeared post 2008, and that available



land at present is largely being purchased by commercial farmers or 'smart money' (professionals such as accountants, lawyers) looking for a solid business investment. Higher commodity prices and land values have also made it easier for farmers to leverage purchase additional land in recent years. In the words of one key informant: "the farmers can now afford to pay top dollar for land and the Good Lifers can't".

- In terms of banking, lifestyle land management is actually lower 'risk' for loans than commercial farms, because there's usually a reliable income coming to the household. In effect, as long as the applicant can afford the mortgage on the basis of salary, the mortgage will get approved – the bank does not need a business plan for the agricultural land. The purchase is considered in the same way as a residential house purchase.
- There is evidence of a changing 'commuter-shed' from Aberdeen (distance people are willing to commute). This increased from 20 miles to 40 or 50 in 2003-2008, but has since been reducing back to 30 miles, owing in part to two hard winters and the price of petrol. This commuting distance tends to be somewhat longer in more attractive locations, e.g. along the coast and towards the Cairngorm mountains.

### **Production and land use**

- Lifestyle land managers also tend to make greater use of professional services, for example, calling the vet when a commercial farmer might wait. This reflects the higher level of income, lower levels of personal experience and in some cases the emotional bond with the livestock (e.g. where livestock are treated as pets). However, lifestyle land managers also may not recognise when a

situation requires a vet until it's too late. A key informant commented that a lot of the recreational livestock and horses he sees are 'over fat', owing to lack of knowledge on the part of their owners.

- There are definite trends towards keeping small amounts of poultry, which have started around 2007. Poultry is an easy way to start into recreational livestock production, which can then lead to involvement with larger livestock.
- Equestrian properties are typically purchased in order for a family member to pursue an interest in horses; while this is also true of those interested in having livestock for personal recreation or consumption, cattle and sheep are sometimes purchased primarily because they are low maintenance grazers i.e. they act as attractive 'lawnmowers' for otherwise unused land.
- Small-scale livestock producers are also more likely to produce rare breeds, although the one key informant described a shift from the production of ornamental breeds of poultry in the late 2000s, to more hardy egg producers that can provide the household with eggs or meat, and thereby provide a return on investment in feed.
- Lifestyle land managers appear more likely to undertake environmental actions on their properties than commercial farmers, particularly planting trees. They are much less likely to seek government grants for these activities. This is consistent with academic literature from Denmark, where Primdahl (1999) found that hobby farmers were both more likely to plant new hedges, and to pay for them themselves (i.e. without government support).
- There was a dramatic drop in the value of horses in 2008 (one respondent commented that this was as high as 75% in the cases of breeding stock); this has continued at this low level to the present.
- A report for the British Horse Industry Confederation and Defra (Henley Centre, 2004) identifies the role of the horse industry in the leisure economy, as part

of overall consumer spend on sport and leisure. The Henley centre found that rising affluence since the 1980s has led to a shift in proportion of spend on experiences, rather than goods and services, something they term 'the experience economy'. This appears consistent with apparent trends towards lifestyle land management, where the aim is personal fulfilment and experience of rural life and activities. The report also points to the changing demographic and working patterns in the UK. These include the increasing participation of women in the workforce, resultant higher levels of disposable income, but also less time. They suggest the latter may lead to a growth in the livery sector, whereby horse owners can ride their horses but not have to care for them. They also identified 83% of regular riders as female, a clear demographic distinction from the agricultural industry, where the 'primary' farmer is more likely to be identified as male.

### **Recognition within local (Aberdeenshire) and regional (Scottish Government) policy.**

Crofting has received considerable policy attention in the past decade, with new reforms in 2003, 2007 and 2010. The most recent legislative reforms in 2010 aimed to ensure that crofts are occupied by their owners or tenants, land is not neglected, crofts are used for useful purposes, and to curb speculation (Crofting Commission, 2012). The content of these proposed reforms suggest considerable concern by policy-makers about the potential for recreational or absentee occupation of crofting land. However, these issues are not addressed in relation to holdings which are not crofts. Lifestyle land management is largely unrecognised within agricultural policy, which emphasises commercial farms, although there is a provision within the Scottish Rural Development Program (SRDP) (subsidies under CAP Pillar 2) for preservation of rare breeds that targets holdings of less than 12 ha.

There are also measures within the SRDP which specifically encourage pluriactivity and farm diversification. However, these are targeted at former commercial farmers, not small-scale lifestyle land managers. From the census statistics, it appears that very few if any of these land managers in Aberdeenshire access these subsidies, although those registered as farm businesses are able to access them.

Lifestyle land managers are primarily impacted upon by housing policy, specifically limits placed on new housing in rural areas. Aberdeenshire council limits rural housing to expansion of existing settlements, refurbishment of existing buildings and retirement housing on a farm where there is a successor (Aberdeenshire Council, 2012). Single detached dwellings which do not meet these criteria are not usually given planning permission (to build). The refurbishment of disused farm buildings into housing has thus led to an increase in non-farming residents in the countryside.

## How 'sustainable' is lifestyle land management?

Sustainability of this type of approach to land management is difficult to assess, owing to the wide range of practices involved, and the difficulty defining what is a 'lifestyle' property. In terms of environmental sustainability, some lifestyle land managers actively seek to improve the environmental condition of their land, whereas others leave it largely un-used. Typically, following the purchase of a lifestyle property, land use becomes less intensive, the most common changes being reduction in chemical inputs, and conversion of cropping fields into grass or grazing land.

Key informants raised questions about the knowledgeability of lifestyle land managers about land and livestock management,



Three acre lifestyle property in Aberdeenshire, with wildlife pond and young trees. Part of the garage has been converted into a stable.

owing to their lack of farming experience. For example, lifestyle land managers quite often plant trees around their houses, to increase privacy and the attractiveness of their holding. Although this can have environmental benefits, this can also disturb existing ecosystems. Lifestyle land managers may over feed livestock, treating them as pets. However, lifestyle land managers (owing to their higher incomes and personal attachment to their animals) are also more likely to pay experts to provide advice on the best management of both the land and livestock.

In terms of economic sustainability, the demand for lifestyle properties contributed to increases in property prices in the mid 2000s, making it more difficult for commercial farmers to afford land. However, some of these properties would not necessarily be desirable for commercial use, in that they are often located in scenic pockets of land (close to rivers, mountains and other visual amenities). Lifestyle land managers also use their off-farm income to participate in the rural economy, paying for veterinary and other services, thus increasing the viability of those rural businesses. Some lifestyle land managers also play an important role in maintaining rare breeds and local agricultural shows.

## Key lessons learned

- Lifestyle land management is not limited to small-scale holdings, existing across the range of holding sizes.
- Lifestyle land management encompasses a wide range of approaches to agricultural land management, ranging from minimalist land management to small-scale farming. Active management can be classified into overlapping categories of 'equiculture', livestock as pets, crofting/smallholders, and non-land users.
- Lifestyle land management is not restricted to 'equestrian' properties; in Scotland as a whole it is more common for a holding to have 4 or fewer livestock units than it is to have four or fewer horses, although in Aberdeenshire region equestrian properties outnumber these 'pet' holdings by 2.5:1.
- Although crofting has received considerable policy attention, lifestyle land management is increasing largely without formal recognition.
- Lifestyle land managers undertake land uses which are of personal interest. Livestock therefore varies with the interests and age of household members. Several households bought land in order to keep horses while a daughter was at home, and then changing land use when she moved away. Lifestyle land managers also appear more flexible in

relation to what they produce, acquiring new livestock as it appeals to them and experimenting with new or rare breeds.

- Increased ease of access to rural areas has been important for the development of lifestyle land management (e.g. better roads, internet access and increased remote working).

- Acquiring land is not necessarily the primary motivation of lifestyle land owners; a subset are primarily interested in acquiring a quiet, private rural residence.
- The market for lifestyle properties reflects the overall housing market more so than agricultural commodity markets.

- Lifestyle land management is largely unrecognised within Scotland's agricultural and rural policies, and therefore largely unregulated, as many of this cohort do not qualify for agricultural subsidies, and therefore are not evaluated on their land management.

- Lifestyle land management represents an issue already identified for crofting – lifestyle purchasers compete with commercial crofts and farms for the use of agricultural land, and speculation is becoming an issue. However, lifestyle land managers appear more likely to live on their properties year round, whereas there is a concern about absentee ownership of crofts.

- Lifestyle land managers are typically 'new entrants' in the sense that they do not usually inherit their holdings. Most have some previous experience of farm or rural life, but work in an urban environment prior to or throughout their time as lifestyle land managers.

- Lifestyle land managers are typically well educated, and often of fairly high

socio-economic status, adept at accessing information through the internet and professional sources, but less connected to traditional farming knowledge systems.

- Lifestyle land managers may perform important functions for rural Scotland, such as rare breed preservation and tree planting. However, they may also remove land from agricultural use and allow it to become 'scrub'.

- Lifestyle land managers appear more likely to undertake environmental actions without government subsidies. With appropriate supports (e.g. advice), this may be a means of increasing amenity and environmental sustainability in rural areas.

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The FarmPath research involved comparison with peri-urban agriculture in Portugal and a 'back to the land' movement in Bulgaria.

For further information on these studies, or FarmPath in general, see the FarmPath web-site: [www.farmpath.eu](http://www.farmpath.eu). The FarmPath consortium is led by Lee-Ann Sutherland of the James Hutton Institute ([lee-ann.sutherland@hutton.ac.uk](mailto:lee-ann.sutherland@hutton.ac.uk)).

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24 (anonymous) lifestyle land managers from Aberdeenshire.

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#### For further information

See the FarmPath project web-site:

[www.farmpath.eu](http://www.farmpath.eu)

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