

8. Natal movements of a harvested mammal: mountain hare leverets in Scotland

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Dispersal links subpopulations in fragmented landscapes and can play an important role in population dynamics and persistence. Dispersal can be density dependent, making it particularly important for the sustainable management of harvested species. The mountain hare (*Lepus timidus*) is a traditional game species, has been harvested on Scottish heather moorland for centuries, and is increasingly culled to control sheep ticks and tick bourn diseases. Despite its importance, dispersal and the linkage of populations, and factors affecting them, remain poorly understood in mountain hares. Here we present results of a study exploring natal dispersal and exploratory movements of mountain hare leverets in Scotland. Movement patterns made by leverets in the first six months of life are described, and the effect harvesting has on these patterns is investigated for the first time through comparison of harvested and non-harvested populations.