

Creating the ultimate... woodland ride



Austin Weldon is our advisor for central England and has in-depth knowledge of gamekeeping, deer-stalking and wildlife habitat management.

Rides are a very important component of a woodland, but they often get neglected. Most species, including gamebirds, prefer the outer 50 metres of the woodland because it provides more food and habitat variety. Research in the 1980s demonstrated that butterflies were much more likely to be found in woodlands managed for pheasants, which had wide rides and a variety of shrub species. This is a classic example of the importance of good game management for other wildlife species and is something we can be rightfully proud of.

Woodland rides are very much part of a changing environment, so once established they will need maintaining. This is best done on a little and often basis by cutting on alternate sides every few years to ensure new growth and a good dense ride edge.

Rides are great places to stand guns on your woodland pheasant drives. Driving the birds over tall trees will make them higher and more of a challenge, so position rides with shooting in mind.

For more advice please contact us on 01425 651013

Cutting glades

in woodland can help breeding warblers as well as giving better flushing and holding habitat for pheasants.

Light is key to woodland rides and the ride should be at least as wide as the trees are tall to allow light to reach the woodland floor. Ideally it should be much wider than this and don't be afraid of ending up with a ride that's up to 40 metres wide, provided the woodland itself is big enough to support this. Take into consideration the position of the sun, and efforts should be made to ensure that the ride receives the sun from the south.



Retaining tall trees and thick cover on the northern side of the wood will keep the woodland warmer and benefit more wildlife.

Having rides which face east, west and south is a great way of giving wildlife more options to choose from.



Once you've allowed light in, you should start to see an increase in plant species which have been dormant in the soil. Allowing these to set-seed is important for their long-term survival so avoid mowing rides until late summer.



Native shrubby species should be encouraged along the edge to provide nesting cover, warmth and hold more game. To improve straight rides scallop the woodland edge to provide more niches for game and wildlife to use.

This is simple to achieve by making semi-circles on opposite sides of the ride in a staggered formation.

