

Animal rights campaigner Brian May allowed deer to be culled on his estate

Brian May, the Queen guitarist and animal rights campaigner, has admitted that he allowed deer to be culled on his estate.



Brian May

Mr May employed a deer stalker who killed 23 of the "mainly young, healthy animals" on his 139-acre plot of land in Dorset.

The revelation will prove embarrassing for Mr May, who led a high-profile campaign against the Government's planned badger cull.

He said he had inherited the tradition of deer culling when he bought the land and was advised to continue the practice as it would discourage poachers and "improve the health of the deer population".

He stopped the culling last year, according to the Sunday Times.

Mr May, who runs Save Me, an animal rights charity which opposes hunting, wrote on his Facebook page: "I inherited culling of deer on the land I bought in Dorset a few years ago, and was initially advised that I ought to keep it up because having a gamekeeper discouraged poachers. I had my doubts, but I was new to forest management, and realised I had much to learn.

"I decided to let it continue for a short period, observe for a while, and then take what action I felt was right. A couple of years ago, having studied the effects, I decided to stop the culling."

A contract issued on May's behalf by UPM Tilhill, the company that manages his Middlemarsh estate, licensed a stalker to shoot wild deer. The company said it issued a 12-month licence from March 2010, seven months after Mr May acquired the land.

The 65 year-old musician is credited with helping halt the Government's planned cull of badgers in trials in Somerset and Gloucestershire to help reduce the spread of tuberculosis in cattle.

Jane Rowe, a dairy farmer in Gloucestershire who is director of GlaxCon, the company set up to organise the badger cull, told the Sunday Times Mr May was being "utterly hypocritical".

"On the one hand he is understanding the need to manage species that are overpopulated but not applying the same principle to badgers which in my parts of the country are significantly overpopulated – one of the reasons why they are carrying TB at such high levels," she said.

However, the RSPCA said: "There is a strong scientific evidence that deer culling is humane and effective in certain circumstances. The recently postponed cull of badgers does not accord with these circumstances."