

Covid-19 – no access signs and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in the Borders

Description



Following on from Dave Morris post on 13-May, [Right to roam and Covid – 19](#), down here in the Scottish Borders we're increasingly seeing "no access" signs erected on gates along popular walking routes. Having walked these routes for thirty years, and never seen them before, I can only assume they are to discourage all those folk now increasingly using them as a result of the crisis. This phenomenon was discussed in an parkswatch post ([see here](#)), but seeing such blatant signage was still quite a shock to the author. In the example above the sign simply states "no access – lambing in progress". This is clearly *not* a field full of pregnant sheep, but a path along the top of open hillside!

In the photo (taken last weekend) and a short distance from Peebles, there are no sheep to be seen on the hill side. That's because they're mostly down in fields by the estate farm in the valley. This is a popular "drovers way" that spans the Borders – the sign in the photo is highlighting this. When not being persuaded to avoid it, it is used by walkers, horse riders and hill cyclists (we don't have mountains in the borders)..



Looking in the other direction you can really see how the “fields” are actually down in the valley bottom, and the hillsides are not full of pregnant sheep or lambs. Actually, the shepherds quite rightly keep the sheep close to their farms in the valley at this time of year – you can just see two sheep in the distance but they’re not pregnant, and there are no lambs with them.

I have seen a number of people put off continuing by such signs. They really do deter.

What needs to happen

Responsible behaviour by the public

The Access Code says:

You can avoid disturbing sheep close to lambing time, or young animals such as calves going into a neighbouring field or onto adjacent land. If this is not possible, keep as far from take dogs into fields where there are young animals present.

Additional information

Specific advice for dog walkers can be found in the Practical Guide for All on the [dog w](#)

Responsible behaviour by land managers

The Access Code says:

Where possible, avoid putting sheep close to lambing in fields where there is a well-used could indicate a reasonable alternative route.

It may be useful to put up a sign advising the public that pregnant ewes have been put in they are aware and can take precautions. These warnings over particular activities need and to be kept to the minimum area and duration required.

Extract Scottish Outdoor Access Code

In an ideal world the Borders Council access team will be consulting with the National Farmers Union how their members can respond more positively and observe the Scottish Outdoor Access Code ([see here](#)). For example, by highlighting that lambing *may* be in progress because there are pregnant sheep around and, if it is not possible to avoid, then dogs should be kept under control, and cyclists should dismount. “*Dogs under control*” may need further explanation as many owners seem to take quite a loose interpretation to “control”. For example the landowner could expand on this with “*You should consider keeping your dog on a lead near pregnant sheep*”.

Category

1. Access rights

Tags

1. access rights
2. Covid-19
3. farming

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