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**Second Clerk,
Economy, Trade
and Rural Affairs
Committee
Welsh Parliament**



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www.antisnaring.org.uk

Summary of key points to support oral evidence for 9th Nov. 2022 meeting of the Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Scrutiny Committee

Agricultural (Wales) Bill: Snaring

The National Anti Snaring Campaign was started in 1992 and we created the first dedicated website when no other organisation was exposing the cruelty of snares. We have 30 years of investigating and receiving snaring reports from around the UK. In 2016 we attended the Senedd in Cardiff to give oral evidence to the Environment Committee on snaring. Since then, we have presented the Senedd members with contemporary examples of snaring abuses (see material at end of summary) and cruelty taking place in Wales where the Code of Practice has failed.

Call for Evidence:

DEFRA announced last year that they would have a “Call for evidence on snaring” which they would launch this year. In anticipation of this, we commissioned Professor Stephen Harris to write ‘A Review of The Use of Snares In the UK’ and this was published in April 2022. This has analysed all the available data on snaring in the UK.

Breakaway snare laboratory tests:

The shooting lobby have recognised that snares are harmful and indiscriminate so their fall-back position has been to promote a ‘breakaway snare’ designed to allow a badger to escape from a fox snare. We found such a snare impossible to break even with gloved hands due to the force required and pain involved, so in early 2022 we commissioned TTI Laboratories to test the two current breakaway snares that are marketed. When replicating the circumference of a badger’s neck and doing direct pull there was a force of 74kg to

break the weak link on one type, and just under 70kg on another. That is approximately 11 stone of force when a badger weighs about 2 stone, and all falling on 2mm of wire width around the animal's neck, chest or abdomen. The cheese wire effect naturally causes injury and untold pain. Other dynamic forces and twisting are also at work, often bypassing any stop so the snare can lock whether a fox or badger is struggling.

Key facts of Professor Harris's snaring review are:

Fox numbers have declined by 44% since 1996, largely due to decline of rabbits by 64% as a result of viral hemorrhagic disease, but also due to sarcoptic mange

97% of snare use is carried out using fox snares, with the majority done by gamekeepers for preservation of game-birds for shooting sports. Around 70% of animal captures in fox snares are non-target species, mainly badgers but including significant numbers of brown hares, some deer, but also domestic pets and feral cats. The use of breakaway snares to circumvent the issue of non-target badger capture only leads to approximately 30% escaping, and there is no data on what happens to those who have had to use extreme force to escape. However, there is data to show that those not escaping do suffer traumatic injury even when the snares are set and inspected to the letter of the code of practice. The data also shows mortality and injury of non-target hares as well as predation – the latter being a cause of great terror and pain prior to death.

An example in the DEFRA funded report of 2012 using a Game and Wildlife Conservation employee gives an example of what the best snare setters can achieve. Less skilled operators will have a worse outcome:

Page 37 RHC/page 38 LHC of Snare Review

. 'The Defra-funded study used a technician fully competent in the use of snares because this focuses on the device as operated according to best practice (because it is difficult and unethical to emulate bad practice). In 211 snare nights in familiar areas, this technician caught 18 animals: 3 foxes, 13 hares, and 2 badgers. Five hares, 2 badgers and 1 fox escaped: 1 fox and 1 badger escaped with the snare attached. Three hares were severely injured/dead and 2 hares were predated. Both foxes that were held had haemorrhages on their necks extending into the deeper muscle [1]. Although the snares were placed so as to avoid entanglement with fences or woody shrubs, three of the snares were entangled with non-woody vegetation [1]. Assuming that the animals that escaped with the snare attached suffered significant adverse welfare impacts, 7/18 captures (39%) were severely injured, dead or predated; just 2 target species (11% of captures) were held and killed [1]. Since this operator was highly experienced, and the snares were operated according to best practice, it is reasonable to assume that the general level of operator competence is lower;'

The most comprehensive assessment to date was by an international panel of 20 experts: they summarised the principles for ethical wildlife control in 7 questions which should be asked in sequence when making decisions about human-wildlife conflict:

- Can the problem be mitigated by changing human behaviour?
- Are the harms serious enough to warrant wildlife control?
- Is the desired outcome clear and achievable, and will it be monitored?
- Does the proposed method carry the least animal welfare cost and to the fewest animals?
- Have community values been considered alongside scientific, technical, and practical information?
- Is the control action part of a systematic, long-term management program?
- Are the decisions warranted by the specifics of the situation rather than negative labels applied to the animals?

Snaring does not meet any of these ethical principles

Alternatives to snares:

The decline in fox numbers comes at a time when night vision use by gamekeepers has improved making humane control of foxes much easier. The key risk for game bird preservation is when the poults are in the release pen, and the use of double strand electric fencing correctly installed minimises any risk. The use of fox snares is at very best a minor component of fox 'control' techniques.

Rabbits

Largely due to viral hemorrhagic disease rabbit numbers declined in England by 64% since 1996.

There are significant welfare issues associated with snaring rabbits: a high proportion of captured rabbits are strangled. Studies on rabbits placed in snares by the Central Science laboratory show that, despite a protracted death and a range of behavioural issues indicative of high levels of stress, physical assessment of any injuries are inadequate to assess the welfare issues associated with the use of snares.

Predators prey on rabbits captured in snares; the distress calls made by snared rabbits attract predators.

Professional rabbit snarers when surveyed for the DEFRA study published in 2012 reported expecting to find 30% mortality of rabbits in snares.

Due to setting of rabbit snares in fields adjoining urban areas, a disproportionate number of non-target cats get caught, often leading to death or injury.

In the UK only about 3% of snaring is for rabbits and of those land holding doing rabbit control, only about 3% are using snares. Therefore, shooting or small cage traps form the vast majority of control methods.

Professor Harris draws a conclusion that:

'The use of snares in the UK does not meet acceptable standards of animal welfare or any of the principles for ethical wildlife control established by a committee of international experts. Some methods used to kill wild animals have such extreme effects on their welfare that, regardless of the potential benefits, their use is never justified: snaring is such a method. All the available data show that the only way to stop extremely high levels of non-target capture, illegal use and misuse of snares, address animal welfare concerns, and recognise that wild animals are sentient beings, is to prohibit the use of snares in the UK.'

The shooting lobby are rebranding snares as 'Cable Restraints', even though they are clearly killing, not restraining devices, so any legislation needs to worded to prevent loopholes, and expressly:

Ban on the manufacture, sale or use of snares.

A snare should be defined for the purposes of legislation as:

'Any wire or other loop designed to catch an animal by its neck, foot or any other part of its body.'

Cat caught in snare in Wales, April 2019



A cat owner whose pet went missing for two days has spoken of her shock at finding the animal trapped in a wire snare normally set to catch badgers or foxes. Kate Lee, of Talsarn, said her pet cat Gem was only spared a lingering death after her distraught children came across her while carrying out a frantic search two fields away from their smallholding. "Gem had last been seen at around 5pm on the Sunday and didn't come home that night," she told the *Cambrian News*. "She then didn't turn up for breakfast the next morning which was very unusual." "When she still hadn't turned up the following day we went walking down the road to check whether she'd been run over and also looked in vehicles and outbuildings in case she'd been locked in." "We have 23 acres here and it was while going round our fields that the kids found her in the snare and we eventually got her out by using a pair of wire cutters." "Poor Gem was very dehydrated and while she let us carry her home she wouldn't let us touch her after that because she was so sore." "She also couldn't walk properly with her hind legs and didn't have anything to eat for 24 hours. Even now, a few days later, she's very tender around the middle." "While I understand why people set these traps I think they should be set more responsibly and checked every 24 hours." "When we went back to the snare four days later it was still the same as when we had released Gem which means it hadn't been checked in all that time." "I dread to think what would have happened if the kids hadn't found her – she would still be out there."

BBC Wales, March 2020 showed David Smede, snaring foxes in Pembrokeshire National Park and selling the pelts to the European fur trade



8 Jan. 2020 Fox snared near Cardiff



(note snare is old AB type)

Vale Wildlife Hospital post: RSPCA rescued a severely injured fox from a snare: *The fox had this snare wrapped around his hind limbs and abdomen – both back legs were very swollen with significant bruising and will need careful monitoring for tissue breakdown, a risk associated with this type of injury.*

Badger found heavily entangled in snare and barbed wire in Lampeter

Posted on [13/03/2018](#) by [Gillian Hillan](#)

A female badger has died after being found heavily entangled in a snare and barbed wire.

The adult female badger was found in the Lampeter area and was believed to have been trapped for a few days.



RSPCA animal collection officer (ACO) Ellie West said: “The badger was very tangled up at the bottom of some fencing. There was no way the badger could have escaped, but luckily I was able to cut all wire and take the badger immediately to an independent vets.

“The badger was sedated and during the examination the vet found that the snare had become totally embedded into her stomach. There was infection and was very swollen and sore and it is likely that the badger had been there for at least three days.

“Sadly, to prevent further suffering the vet decided that the kindest thing to do was to put the badger to sleep.

“This incident really does highlight the cruel and indiscriminate nature of snares.”

The device was not a self-locking snare, which are illegal, but it was not set in accordance with the Welsh Government’s Code of Practice regarding snare use.”

4 March 2021

A Silver Fox that must once have been a pet and had been living wild in Barry South Wales has had to have part of its leg removed after snares were set by its earth at church/building site near the Waterfront Medical Center Barry, South Wales. She was caught in the Barry, Wales at the Asda superstore

The RSPCA has removed the snares and police are also investigating. The rescuers and vet believe the injuries are the result of trying to escape from the snare which the RSPCA said was twisted with hair matching the fox



Ruabon Mountains April 21

We can reveal snares litter the mountains in north Wales, with dozens of rotting corpses to lure foxes and other wildlife.



Simon Wild

National Anti Snaring Campaign