



Consultation on Agriculture (Wales) Bill

Animal Aid welcomes the Welsh government's announcement that it would bring in a ban on snares and glue traps under the 2022 Agriculture Bill to '*amend the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to ban the use of snares and glue traps*' in Wales.¹ We would like to respond to the Welsh Assembly's Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee's consultation on the Agriculture (Wales) Bill, relating to the proposed ban on the use of snares.

Animal Aid suggests that a ban on the purchase, possession, and use of snares would be a method to ensure that no animals are targeted, hurt or killed by snares.

Background on snares

According to a report for Defra, 'The estimated number of fox snares set in England in each month of the year ranged from a minimum of 62,823 fox snares set in December to a maximum of 188,283 during March. In Wales the estimated number of fox snares set was a minimum in December at 17,231 and at a maximum in March at 51,641.'²

Approximately 1.7 million animals are caught in snares every year.³

Defra-commissioned research found that as many as 68% of animals caught in snares are not the intended target.

Snares are often used on land that is managed for the mass-production and release of some 60 million pheasants and partridges, to be shot for 'sport'. Animal Aid contends that there can be no justification for the shooting industry's claim that snares are an important tool in game bird management.

Alternatives to the use of snares

There are many more effective and humane methods to deter unwanted species such as fox and rabbit, including trap-and-release, electric fencing, wire netting fences, motion sprinklers, ultrasonic devices and the use of radios or reflective discs.⁴

Opposition to snares

Several conservation organisations that are responsible for vast areas of land do not use snares. These include the RSPB, the Woodland Trust, and the Wildlife Trusts.

¹ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2021-09/agriculture-wales-bill-our-response-forward-plan.pdf>

² http://sciencesearch.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=9872_wm0315-humaneness-snares.pdf

³ <https://senedd.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld11086/cr-ld11086-e.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.animalaid.org.uk/the-issues/our-campaigns/wildlife/unwantedguests/>

The RSPB maintains 222 nature reserves covering 158,751 hectares⁵, the Woodland Trust maintains 1,000 sites covering around 29,000 hectares⁶, and the Wildlife Trusts maintain more than 2,300 nature reserves covering 98,500 hectares.⁷

The RSPB has stated: *'The RSPB does not use snares of any description on its reserves.'*⁸

The Woodland Trust has stated: *'The Woodland Trust does not support the use of snares and we endorse the call for a legal ban on snares'*⁹

The Wildlife Trusts statement reads: *'The Wildlife Trusts would never condone the use of snares, we are deeply concerned about the prolonged suffering they can inflict on wildlife. Unfortunately, the use of snares is still, in some instances, legal; and we would support banning them.'*¹⁰

Animal protection, welfare and rescue organisations from across the spectrum oppose the use of any snares, including the RSPCA, Cats Protection, Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, Badger Trust, A-LAW (UK Centre for Animal Law), Dogs Trust, Hunt Investigation Team, League Against Cruel Sports, OneKind, FOUR PAWS UK, Blue Cross, Animal Defenders International, Viva!, Christian Vegetarian Association, Mahavir Trust, National Anti Snaring Campaign, Wild Moors, Naturewatch Foundation, PETA UK, HSIUK, Off the Leash, Born Free Foundation, Freedom for Animals, Animal Interfaith Alliance, Professor Andrew Knight and Dr Helen Lambert.¹¹

The RSPCA has stated *'We're opposed to the manufacture, sale, and use of all snares and any traps which cause suffering. We see lots of wild and domestic animals who have been trapped by snares and it's heartbreaking to think of how much pain and suffering they cause'*¹²

Cats Protection: *'Snares are cruel and inhumane to cats and other domestic and wild species. @CatsProtection is calling for an outright ban of snares across the UK.'*¹³

Battersea Dogs and Cats Home: *'Snares are indiscriminate, so cats and dogs can get caught in them. That's why @Battersea_supports @AnimalAid's petition to make free-running snares illegal'*¹⁴

Conclusion

The way in which snares are used – that they are set in the countryside, mostly hidden from public view – means that they are virtually impossible to monitor. Importantly, in Scotland, where there are stricter guidelines on the use of snares, there is no evidence to show that their use is any easier to monitor.

Better regulation, improved monitoring, training or even new designs of snares would not address the core issue: that trapping animals in snares is inevitably cruel, as well as indiscriminate. Animals suffer horribly in snares, both physically and mentally, and there can be no justification for such devices being used on any sentient animal.

Animal Aid, along with many other animal protection organisations, is calling for a complete ban on the use of snares. We additionally suggest that including a ban on the purchase of and possession of snares would enable authorities to enforce the new regulations.

⁵https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/annual-report-2021/rspb-annual-report-2020-2021_digital.pdf

⁶<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/press-centre/2022/03/trees-project-promotes-nature-based-farming/>

⁷<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/about-us>

⁸ RSPB email to Ben Webster of The Times, dated 24 January 2022

⁹ Email from the Woodland Trust to Animal Aid dated 15 March 2022

¹⁰ Email from The Wildlife Trusts to Animal Aid dated 24 February 2022

¹¹ <https://www.peta.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Joint-letter-PM-Defra15397.pdf>

¹² RSPCA official Twitter page. Tweet dated 14 December 2021

¹³ Cats protection Twitter page 15 December 2021 <https://mobile.twitter.com/CPadvocacy/status/1471099341326663680>

¹⁴ Battersea Dogs & Cats Home Twitter page 8 February 2022 https://twitter.com/Battersea_PA/status/1491021757171798016