

## **PE1124/AA**

### **Petition 1124**

#### **Response from petitioners – January 2012**

The petitioners would like to thank the Committee for again taking the time to discuss our petition.

#### **DEFRA research**

We are grateful to the Committee for seeking up to date information about the research commissioned by DEFRA from the Food and Environment Research Agency and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust into the extent of use and humaneness of snares in England and Wales.

We note that Lord Henley wrote to a previous Convener of the Public Petitions Committee in November 2010 to say that the fieldwork was complete and the report was in the process of being written and was unlikely to be published before 2011.

In November last year Lord Taylor told the Committee that DEFRA was 'committed to publishing a full report and expect to publish it this year (2011)'.

As far as we know the research has still not been published, but OneKind has obtained some data following a Freedom of Information request to DEFRA. We would not wish to speculate too much on the meaning of these data, without having access to the relevant context, methodology and analysis from the researchers. Given that DEFRA is not accountable to the Scottish Parliament we can only share the figures made available and hope that the research will soon appear in full.

It is our understanding that the project involved:

- pen trials where 26 animals (24 rabbits and two foxes) were snared (one rabbit died and the other 25 animals were euthanized for examination); and
- field trials where 62 animals including foxes, hares, badgers, deer, pheasants and a dog were captured, with varying outcomes.

The animals captured in the field trials were:

Foxes	17
Hares	20
Badgers	16
Dog	1
Pheasant	2
Deer	3
Others	3

**Two hares** were found with severe injuries and were euthanized.

**Three hares** were found dead in the snares.

**Sixteen foxes** and **two hares** were found uninjured but were euthanized for examination.

**Sixteen badgers** (a protected species) were captured.

**One dog, three hares, five badgers** and a **pheasant** were captured and released alive.

**One fox, eleven badgers** and **ten hares escaped**, as did another **pheasant, three deer** and **three other animals** (species unknown).

It appears to us that a high proportion of the animals captured in the field trials were non-target species – either 22 or 42 out of the total of 62, depending on whether the hares were intentionally captured or not (this may vary depending on the operator although we note that three were released).

Given that the fieldwork has been completed and some results appear to be available we see no obvious reason not to publish the research and would respectfully ask the Committee to write again to DEFRA asking for a commitment as to when the information will be available.

### **Implementation of s.13 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.**

We also thank the Committee for writing to the Scottish Government. Unfortunately we are disappointed by the response from the Scottish Government in relation to the lead time for commencing the snaring section of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act. While much of s.13 is now in force, the provisions largely replicate existing regulations and therefore their potential to improve animal protection is limited.

The provisions which remain outstanding concern the identification of snares and the allied training programme for operators. While we have expressed our concern about the dearth of animal welfare content in the training programme, nonetheless there has been considerable activity by the industry to deliver training and we cannot see why a further year is required before the provisions can be brought in. These provisions at least have the potential to aid enforcement in a difficult area of wildlife protection and, until snares are banned, we feel that they should be introduced. We would be grateful if the Committee could seek further information as to why this cannot be done earlier.

### **Animal welfare**

We continue to receive reports of animals found dead, dying or injured in snares. Examples of animals captured include badger, otter, deer, cats and dogs, as well as the main target species of foxes. The toll of suffering is iniquitous and while we can only reiterate our thanks to the Committee for its commitment to our petition we are all too aware of the level of suffering which continues to happen as a result of the on going use of snares. We hope that

the Committee will be able to suggest a means of bringing this to the attention of the Parliament for review.