

**PE1124/FF**

**Petition 1124**

**Response from petitioners – June 2012**

The petitioners would like to thank the Committee for again taking the time to discuss our petition and for seeking further evidence following the publication of the DEFRA report 'Determining the extent of use and humaneness of snares in England and Wales'. We do have reservations about the report. While the evidence-gathering was robust, it is examined in the light of standards (Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards) established for species of animals that are not included in the report. Additionally, the report avoids making assumptions about the humaneness of snaring, even when considering the welfare of animals that suffered partial or irreversible strangulation.

Nonetheless the evidence gathered for the report strongly reinforces the concern about non-target captures in snares, even under supposed 'best practice'.

We have raised the concerns about welfare and non-target capture highlighted in the report with the Minister for Environment, but he informed us that he was confident that the snaring provisions introduced under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 (WANE Act) would address these. Unfortunately, for the reasons given below, we are unable to agree.

### **Scottish SPCA – non-target capture and animal suffering**

The response to the Committee from the Scottish SPCA notes that 'There is clear evidence in the report that is similar to the current situation in Scotland.' This position supports the view of the petitioners as stated in our previous response that we believe had the study been carried out in Scotland the problems would have been similar.

The Scottish SPCA highlights two clear areas for concern which are:

- The indiscriminate nature of snares and the relatively high capture on non-target species and;
- The high burden of welfare issues causing both injury and death.

Again these are both concerns which have been repeatedly raised by the petitioner. To further highlight these points the Scottish SPCA has provided data showing the number of snare incidents reported to it between the period of 31st March 2011 and 25th April 2012. The figures show an alarmingly high number of non-targets which amounts to 46 (70%) of the 65 incidents reported and breaks down by species as follows:

Badger	13
Cat	15
Deer	5
Dog	4
Bird	2
Hare	2
Otter	2
Pine Marten	1
Rabbit	2

Finally the Scottish SPCA concludes by stating that while recognising the efforts made by the Scottish Government to reduce the welfare impact of snares **'we still believe that both target and non-target species will suffer given the indiscriminate nature of snares'**.

### **Scottish Government**

As stated above, we are disappointed that the Scottish Government will not be taking any action as a result of the publication of the DEFRA report. In its response it states 'We believe that many of the issues identified in the report have already been addressed in Scotland' yet there is extensive evidence showing these problems are widespread in Scotland. It also mentions the Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 which it believes improves the situation. However, the data provided by the Scottish SPCA was recorded after the Order was imposed and clearly shows that high non target capture is still a significant problem.

### **Snaring training**

Among the new provisions of the WANE Act 2011 is a requirement for those wishing to use snares from January 2013 to be trained. We have strong reservations about the likelihood of this training preventing ongoing animal welfare problems. So far, it has been delivered by the industry rather than by an independent party, and it appears to focus on ensuring that operators can avoid complaints from the public or the authorities, rather than providing any veterinary or animal welfare information about the risks of snares.

The Rural Affairs Committee will shortly consider two Orders providing for this training. The Snares (Training) (Scotland) Order 2012 provides that industry bodies and four colleges are approved to deliver training, and the Snares Identification Number and Tagging (Scotland) Order 2012 will make provisions about identification numbers, tagging and record-keeping.

### **Recommendations**

While the current regulations in Scotland may be more detailed than in the rest of the UK, the problems are still there and until further action is taken will remain the same.

We would respectfully ask the Committee to consider writing to the Rural Affairs Committee, as it prepares to consider the new Snares Orders, and recommend that it supports an early review of snaring in Scotland. We believe the problems and suffering are continuing despite measures taken to improve snaring practice and allowing these to persist until December 2016 (as currently provided in the WANE Act) is not an acceptable option.