

[REDACTED] (Defra)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 March 2013 11:41
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: Snaring Briefing and a Suggestion
Attachments: Snaring Best Practice Briefing July 2012.doc

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to our chat yesterday, I have dug out the email we sent you on 20/7/12 (below and attached), which no doubt you were looking at when you rang.

It reminds me that we made a clear suggestion of giving the existing Defra Code greater status under the Animal Welfare Act and, checking back, this is indeed an approved NGO position.

If you took this line, the case might run something like this:

- The Defra Code was put together by independent experts, including welfare bodies, and is a good document that has stood the test of time.
 - Government-funded research has established that: (a) when the code is followed, welfare is improved and meets the AIHTS international standard for foxes; (b) when the code is followed, non-target captures and casualties are reduced; but that (c) not enough people follow the code.
 - Ministers have therefore decided to give the code official status by re-issuing it under the AWA 2006
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- This means that people using snares improperly, thereby causing bad welfare, will be easier to convict under the AWA.
 - The Government will re-publish the Code and make it widely available to give it renewed emphasis.
 - In accordance with a recommendation in the Code, never really enacted by the last Government, Defra will now undertake a PR campaign to promote the code.
 - Lots of training in the correct use of snares within the code is already available from NGO/GWCT/BASC etc

As I mentioned to you, the issuing under the AWA of the *Defra Code of Practice for the Welfare of Gamebirds Reared for Sporting Purposes* in 2009 was widely understood in the gamekeeping community as the moment at which following the code effectively became compulsory. I think the subtlety of what is statutory and what is not is largely lost on most people and if the PR accompanying the announcement is right, and the move is supported by the key organisations (NGO/GWCT/CA/CLA/NFU and BASC from 'our' side and, if you can get them to play ball, RSPCA from the other), I think you would get a good result in terms of code uptake.

The other aspect we raised with you last July was the continued commercial availability of snares not compliant with the Defra Code. I am not familiar with the Sale of Goods Act and its like but if you could, at the same time, come up with a means of making such supply illegal, or at least massively discouraging it, that would help matters enormously too and would be another tangible response to the research findings.

I hope this helps. Let me know I can assist in any other way.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, July 20, 2012 11:26 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Snaring Briefing and a Suggestion

Dear [REDACTED]

I know you are working on Defra's response to the snaring research published earlier this year and that there have been informal discussions with the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and representatives of the National Gamekeepers' Organisation.

GWCT and the NGO have worked closely on this subject in recent years and we thought it might therefore be helpful to provide you with a very brief summary (attached) of what we have been doing and the main things that we think a Government response to the recent research needs to address if good practice is to be ensured going forward.

In essence, we believe that more needs to be done to make sure good quality snares are available to all who need them (and that bad ones are denied), and that everyone involved with snaring follows the Defra code, supported by widely available, appropriate voluntary training.

The NGO has a further suggestion to make to you, which is that the Defra code be re-issued as a formal Government code under the Animal Welfare Act 2006. ~~The main issues that need to be addressed arising from the recent research concern welfare rather than wildlife management, and the existing Defra code is itself largely about ensuring good welfare. Giving the code additional status in this way would effectively require all snare users to follow it, for they would risk losing any court case arising from poor welfare if they did not. In that context, snare users would also be far more likely to attend one of the available voluntary training courses about snaring within the code, if only to be able to prove, via their attendance, that their intention was to comply. We think this would be a far easier way forward than making training mandatory, which would require changes to primary legislation and therefore full parliamentary debate. A re-issue of the existing code under the 2006 Animal Welfare Act would only require the code to lie before Parliament for a statutory 30 day period.~~

We all look forward to hearing Defra's plans in this area in due course and in the meantime will be delighted to help in any way we can.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

A Briefing on Fox Snaring Best Practice in England and Wales (July 2012)

Prepared by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and the National Gamekeepers' Organisation

The NGO and the GWCT were both represented on the Independent Working Group on Snares (IWGS), convened by Defra in 2004. Both organisations made substantial contributions to the *Code of Good Practice on the Use of Snares* which the IWGS drafted and which Defra endorsed.

GWCT was a contractor to Defra in conducting its recent research into fox snaring (Defra 2012) as well as undertaking its own parallel study (Short et al. 2012) into snaring best practice. The NGO assisted the research by helping to recruit participating gamekeepers.

Whereas Defra, by endorsing and publishing the IWGS code, fulfilled that part of the IWGS recommendations in 2005, it has not "helped promote the widespread voluntary uptake and use of the Code" as the IWGS also recommended and as Defra agreed to do.¹ This may be one important reason why the recent Defra/GWCT research found that awareness of and compliance with the Code, especially outside the gamekeeping community, was patchy.

For their part, the game management organisations have done a good deal to draw the Code to people's attention, providing relevant, voluntary training and encouraging commercial development of snares which, in terms of design and manufacture, meet the requirements of the Code:

Training Provision

- The GWCT's leaflet '*Fox Snares: Guidance for the User*' has been available free of charge since 1998. It has explicitly included Code recommendations since 2005.
- The GWCT has been running training courses based on the Code since it was first published in 2005.
- Each half-day course includes an individual test of the attendee's comprehension at the end. A certificate of attendance is granted to all who pass.
- The British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the many colleges which offer gamekeeper training also include snaring modules in the tuition they provide, each following the Defra Code. GWCT also offers the fox snaring training programme to several of the key gamekeeping colleges as part of its tertiary education programme.
- In total, many hundreds of people have received training in fox snaring best practice since the Defra Code was approved seven years ago.
- The NGO and the GWCT collaborated in 2010/11 to improve the existing GWCT course in the light of the recent research. This is now promoted through both the GWCT and the NGO to their members and others, via the NGO magazine, the NGO and GWCT websites and general publicity in the sporting press.
- Nine of these updated courses have been held since 1 February 2012, covering many parts of the country and bringing 149 gamekeepers, pest controllers and other attendees into contact with the best available advice.

One problem the NGO and the GWCT are experiencing with their training initiative is that would-be participants in the course have heard rumours that a compulsory training route is a possibility in the future and are asking, understandably, 'Will this course count if I do it now, or will I be required to do another Defra-sanctioned course later?' The sooner this uncertainty can be resolved, the faster we can achieve a higher take-up of training and improve working practices.

Hardware

- GWCT has published the full details of the components and construction of the snares used in its research (Short et al 2012). These go beyond what is needed to comply with the Defra code in a number of respects and their field performance is uniquely well documented.
- At the last CLA Game Fair and a number of other country shows, GWCT and NGO have both carried displays of the new snares and how to use them.
- GWCT works with manufacturers to help them develop commercial versions of the new snare. Currently two manufacturers offer snares based closely on the tested GWCT design. One of these has supplied more than a thousand snares since beginning production in January 2012.
- GWCT and NGO have both promoted the need for code-compliant snares in their members' magazines and in other publications.
- ~~The GWCT has published a detailed article on the new snare and its use in its 2011 annual review, published in June 2012.~~

Conclusion

The NGO and the GWCT see two main obstacles to good practice: the availability of snares designed and manufactured to the Defra code specification; and the proper training of all those who are likely to use snares. Working collaboratively, we have made great progress with both these issues, and we look forward to Defra clarifying future policy so that we can, together, achieve a high take up of good hardware and good practice.

References

Defra. 2012. Determining the extent of use and humaneness of snares in England and Wales. Report submitted to Defra. http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=9872_wm0315-humaneness-snares.pdf

Short MJ, Weldon AW, Richardson SM & Reynolds JC (2012) Selectivity and injury risk in an improved neck snare for live capture of foxes. Wildlife Society Bulletin, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/wsb.133/abstract>

¹ IWGS recommendation (i) from paragraph 2.11.1 of the IWGS Report.