Animal & Plant Health Agency

Animal and Plant Health Agency
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Our Ref: ATIC3117

[redacted]
{By Email}

13 June 2023

Dear [redacted]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information about animal traps, which the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) received on 3 May 2023. Your request has been handled under the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR's) 2004.

The information you requested and the response is detailed below:

"Please provide information on the following (similar request for 3 different trap types):

1. "DOC 150, DOC 200, DOC 250 traps are approved for rats, stoats and weasels. What sample sizes of each of these species were tested (killed)? Provide details of the threshold (time limit) to irreversible loss of corneal and palpabral reflexes by species and the number of tested animals that lost sensibility within these time limits and the time taken for cessation of heart rate. Please provide details of trap strike locations determined by post mortem."

- The time thresholds used when assessing trap humaneness reflect those in the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS). For most species, successful trials are where irreversible unconsciousness occurs within 300 seconds (generally measured by observing corneal and palpebral reflexes), except the stoat for which the threshold is 45 seconds. Data held describing the cessation of circulation after the time threshold are only for unconscious animals which subsequently die without regaining consciousness; as such the information does not describe the experience of the animal, i.e. unconscious animals are not considered to suffer. Data is available to describe the following combinations of trap mechanism, deployment, and species.
- The DOC 150 has been approved for use with stoats using a single entrance configuration using evidence produced in New Zealand. The report describes trials using 11 stoats of which ten were successful and with the time taken for cessation of circulation ranging from 40s to 4m:04s; all were struck on the head

as well as receiving strikes elsewhere on the body. One unsuccessful trial was associated with a strike to the abdomen.

- The DOC 150 has been approved for use with rats using a single entrance configuration using evidence produced in New Zealand. Twelve Norway rats were used, producing 11 successful trials with cessation of circulation occurring between <10s and 3m:51s; all were struck on the head as well as elsewhere on the body. One unsuccessful trial was associated with a strike to the nose.
- The DOC 150 has been approved for use with stoats in a run-through configuration using data from trials undertaken by APHA. Ten stoats were used in 10 successful trials and the time taken for cessation of circulation ranged from 1m:03s to 3m:03s. All stoats were struck either on the head or neck as well as elsewhere on the body.
- The DOC 200 has been approved for use with stoats in a single entrance configuration using data from two sources. Ten stoats were reported to have undergone trials in New Zealand of which nine were successful, with cessation of circulation occurring between 1m:40s and 3m:23s. One unsuccessful trial was reportedly due to irreversible unconsciousness only being confirmed after 48 seconds. All stoats were struck on the head with most also struck elsewhere on the body. To comply with AIHTS testing criteria APHA undertook one additional trial on a stoat, which was successful with cessation of circulation at 2min:52s. This animal was struck on the head as well as elsewhere.
- The DOC 200 has been approved for use with stoats in a run-through configuration using data from trials undertaken by APHA. Ten stoats underwent trials, all of which were successful, and the time taken for cessation of circulation ranged from <52s to 7m:35s; all were struck on the head or neck as well as elsewhere on the body.
- The DOC 200 has been approved for use with rats in a single entrance configuration using evidence produced in New Zealand. Ten Norway rats underwent trials, all of which were successful following a strike to the head or neck with most also receiving strikes elsewhere on the body. The time taken for cessation of circulation ranged from <14s to 4m:00s.
- The DOC 250 has been approved for use with stoats using a single entrance configuration with evidence produced from New Zealand. Ten stoats were used in 10 successful trials and the time taken for cessation of circulation ranged from <40s to 3m:50s; all were struck across the head as well as elsewhere on the body.
- The DOC250 has been approved for use with rats using evidence produced in New Zealand. Eleven Norway rats were used producing 10 successful outcomes and the time taken for cessation of circulation ranged from <30s to 3m:50s; all

were struck in the head with most also struck elsewhere on the body. One trial failed with the rat struck on the nose.

2. “Tully Traps are approved for rats, stoats and weasels. What sample sizes of each of these species were tested (killed)? Provide details of the threshold (time limit) to irreversible loss of corneal and palpabral reflexes by species and the number of tested animals that lost sensibility within these time limits and the time taken for cessation of heart rate. Please provide details of trap strike locations determined by post mortem.”

- The Tully trap has been approved for use with stoats using data from trials undertaken by APHA. Eleven stoats underwent trials of which ten were successful with the time taken for cessation of circulation ranging between 55s and 3m:04s. Stoats were all struck either on the head, neck, shoulders, or chest, as well as elsewhere on the body.

3. “Fenn Vermin Trap Mark IV (Heavy Duty) are approved for Grey Squirrels. What sample sizes of each of these species were tested (killed)? Provide details of the threshold (time limit) to irreversible loss of corneal and palpabral reflexes by species and the number of tested animals that lost sensibility within these time limits and the time taken for cessation of heart rate. Please provide details of trap strike locations determined by post mortem.”

- The Fenn Vermin Trap Mark IV does not appear to have undergone any testing for grey squirrels. The approval for this trap was granted via the Spring Traps Approval (Amendment) Order 1970, prior to the implementation of the AIHTS.

4. “What steps has DEFRA taken to ensure that DOC 150, DOC 200, DOC 250, Tully Traps and Fenn Vermin Trap Mark IV (Heavy Duty) traps do not trap and kill animals by leghold?”

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) ensure that traps designed as leghold traps are not permitted for use

- The Leghold Trap and Pelt Imports (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 implement a prohibition on the use of leghold traps in the UK,
- Section 8 of the Pests Act 1954 prohibits the approval of any leghold trap, defined as “a device designed to restrain or capture an animal by means of jaws which close tightly upon one or more of the animal’s limbs, thereby preventing withdrawal of the limb or limbs from the trap” for use in England

and Wales. Similar legislation is in place for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Pests Act 1942 further states that no leghold trap may be approved by the Secretary of State for DEFRA.

- Defra have published a list of approved spring traps on The Spring Traps Approval (England) Order 2018 which include the traps discussed here. We therefore do not consider these traps to meet the definition of a leghold trap

For traps which may occasionally produce a foul strike and restrain or pin animals in their mechanism without providing a quick and irreversible unconsciousness, the Animal Welfare Act (2006) requires users of traps to ensure animals do not endure prolonged suffering. This should include regularly checking traps and euthanizing any animals which continue to suffer. An example of best practice guidance can be found at Pest Management Codes of Best Practice | pest control standards (bpca.org.uk)

Defra, by implementing the Spring Traps Approval (England) Order 2018 requires users to deploy traps in appropriate enclosures, and where specified follow the manufacturer's instructions closely. As both enclosure design and mode of use help minimise the chance of a foul strike, this requirement in regulation helps ensure the humane management of wildlife.

Please see additional publicly available information on the order and AIHTS:

Spring Trap Approval Order - http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/1190/made

AIHTS UK government info - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/humane-trapping-standards-march-2019-update

Information disclosed in response to this EIR request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the EIR and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

An Annex is attached which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ACCESS TO INFORMATION TEAM
Email: enquiries@apha.gov.uk

Annex

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Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Please click here for further contact details.