



Research Paper

16th March 2010

USE OF SNARES AND PEST CONTROL IN EUROPE

David Battye

Research Officer

This Paper Details The Use of Snares in EU Countries Outside The EU. The Countries Where Snaring Include Republic of Ireland, France, Spain, and Belgium. In Certain Circumstances, They Have Been Known To Be Used in Poland and Czech Republic. The European Union, Along With Canada and Russia are Attempting to Harmonise Trapping Methods To Be More Humane. Alternative Pest Control Methods to Snaring Include: Ferreting, Live Trapping, Shooting, Gassing, Rabbit Proof Fencing.

Research Papers are compiled for the benefit of Members of The Assembly and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

1 Countries in Europe using Snares:

United Kingdom:

The United Kingdom is one of only five countries within the European Union which permits the use of snares, the others being Republic of Ireland, France, Spain and Belgium.

Spain¹:

According to the *Euro Group for Animals*, permission for the use of snares can be granted although very few applications actually take place.

The EU accepted the wolf management plan of Castilla-Leon in January 2007 which allows wolves to be hunted south of the River Duerto to protect livestock, breaking a 20 year protection of the species in this area.

Some 200 wolves are hunted legally every year in Spain, and many more illegally, not just in Castilla-Leon but also in Asturias where 25 wolves were killed between January 2006 and March 2007 by officials after reports of sheep deaths.

France:

Hunting in France is broadly divided into three sectors:

Ordinary hunting on foot or horseback perhaps with the use of dogs: The trend is towards belonging to and using the dogs of a co-operative association (*societe de chasse*)

Deterrage – the hunting on foot or horseback of game that swells underground, principally fox or badger.

Venerie – the pursuit of game by large packs of dogs followed by mounted hunters who use no firearms. Game includes boar, hare, rabbit, red deer and roe deer.

Republic of Ireland²:

Wildlife in Ireland is protected by the Wildlife Act, 1976 as amended.

Section 34 of the Wildlife Act prohibits the use of traps or snares to hunt or capture protected wild animals. However, rabbits are not a protected species.

¹ <http://www.iberianature.com/spainblog/category/hunting/>

² <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1976/en/act/pub/0039/index.html>

2 Snaring in Certain Circumstances:

Poland³:

Poland passed the *Nature Protection Act* which bans the use of snares for 'animals under the partial species protection' and 'game animals'. The minister of environment does have the authority to allow the use of snares, but does so in most cases only for the capture of protected animals for scientific research.

Czech Republic⁴:

Czech government passed the AP Act which stipulates that the use of wire snares is prohibited. However, there is no law against any other type of snares.

3 Humane Trapping Standards – EU Proposals:

The objective of the proposal for a directive is to implement in the EU the environmental part of the *Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards* concluded by the European Community with Canada and the Russian Federation.

The proposal establishes humane trapping standards, requirements for trapping methods, technical provisions for testing trapping methods and certification of traps for capturing certain species of mammals.

It concerns the traps used to catch these animals for the purposes of wildlife management, pest control, capture of mammals for conservation and obtaining fur, skin or meat.

The proposal applies to 19 species of animal. In the UK this would apply to badgers, pine martens and otters. Rabbits are **not** included.

The traps and trapping methods used to capture the species listed must meet the standards laid down by the directive and be certified as being in conformity by the competent authorities designated by the Member States. The Member States are obliged to ensure that, as from 1st January 2009, these traps and trapping methods are in accordance with the *Humane Trapping Standards* and that as from 1st January 2012 no other trapping methods are used for the 19 species concerned.

There is to be derogations granted for traps and trapping methods that do not conform to the standards on a case-by-case basis for certain purposes such as the interests of public health and safety; protection of public and private property; research, repopulation or the protection of fauna and flora.

³ http://www.antisnaring.org.uk/campaign_news/snares_in_europe.html

⁴ http://www.antisnaring.org.uk/campaign_news/snares_in_europe.html

The standards laid down in the directive are aimed at ensuring that traps or trapping methods are effective in catching only animals of the targeted species (in order to minimise the capture of non-targeted animals). They are also aimed at providing for the welfare of animals caught in restraining traps and minimising the time elapsing before unconsciousness and insensibility for those caught in killing traps.

Prohibition of leghold traps:

Legislation laying down stricter rules on traps and trapping methods will continue to apply, in particular Council Regulation (EEC) No 3254/91 of 4 November 1991 prohibiting the use of leghold traps in the European Union.

Use of certified traps and methods:

Trappers (persons authorised by the competent authorities of the Member States to use traps to catch listed animal species) must be qualified and have the necessary knowledge or have received appropriate training.

Trap manufacturers must identify certified traps and provide instructions to ensure safe and correct use and maintenance.

4 DEFRA's Suggested Alternatives to Snares⁵:

Ferretting: Ferrets are used to bolt rabbits from their warrens into nets. Ferretting at large rabbit warrens is considered to be a less cost effective method of control than fumigation but may be more cost effective for the management of rabbit populations occupying a high proportion of small warrens, for instance those on light soils such as sand dune systems.

The rabbits can be quickly and humanely dispatched once caught. Ferretting is most successful outside of the breeding season and, having the advantage of capturing more females than males, may serve as a valuable technique for dealing with intransigent populations.

Live trapping: There are two types of live-capture traps for rabbits and both can be cost effective control methods. Cage traps are positioned above ground and are baited with food (usually carrot, apple or parsnip). Drop traps, which are multi-capture traps, are dug into the ground within a gap in a wall or fence, so that rabbits moving through the gap fall into the holding box.

The rate of capture during the first few days of trapping can be used as a practical indicator of likely overall success.

Shooting: can be a very humane killing method when appropriate firearms are used and when shots are on target causing immediate loss of consciousness and death.

Gassing: The fumigation of rabbit warrens can be a very effective method of rabbit control. Gassing can reduce rabbit populations by up to 80%.

⁵ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-pets/wildlife/management/documents/snares-iwgs-report.pdf>

Rabbit proof fencing: Fencing can be an effective method of protecting crops from rabbits but it can also be expensive to install. Fences are erected along the boundary between the field to be protected and the infested harbourage. Both traditional wire-mesh netting and electric fencing can be used to exclude rabbits.