

Wildlife crime advice - trapping and snaring?

Pest and predator control is an integral part of land management in Scotland. Just as you may wish to trap or remove mice from your kitchen, land managers frequently need to reduce the impact of pests and predators on their crops or livestock.

In addition, the removal of certain birds and mammals can be carried out to benefit the breeding success of wild birds and protect public health by preventing the spread of disease.

Shooting is a widely recognised means of managing pests and predators but trapping and snaring are also used - one of the advantages being that traps and snares work 24 hours a day, much longer than an individual can remain vigilant.

While most of the trapping and snaring that takes place in the Scottish countryside is legitimate - and undertaken by pest controllers, game keepers and farmers - others may use either traps or snares in an illegal manner or for illegal activities, such as poaching.

Legally used traps fall into two categories - those designed to catch their intended quarry alive and those designed to kill their intended quarry.

Why does it matter?

Improper or illegal use of traps and snares can compromise the welfare and conservation status of wild animals - it can also represent a threat to both livestock and pets.

Trapping birds The use of traps to catch certain species of birds alive is authorised under the Scottish General Licences. These licences permit authorised persons to use crow cage traps and Larsen traps for specific purposes, such as an aid to the conservation of wild birds and to protect crops and livestock, as long as certain conditions are observed.

Trapping mammals - Spring traps. Spring traps designed to kill mammals - such as mink, rats and stoats - can only be used if they are approved under Order.

Trapping mammals – snares. The use of snares is governed by a number of pieces of legislation.

As a general rule an offence is committed if, when using a trap or snare, an operator:

- Fails to check traps or snares as and when required.
- Sets traps or snares on land without the land manager/owner's permission.
- Sets traps or snares in a way that is likely to cause unnecessary suffering.
- Sets traps or snares in situations where protected species are likely to be caught.
- Sets traps or snares in breach of the conditions set out in the relevant legislation or licences.

What can I do?

If you come across a trap or snare and are concerned about its use:

Do



Take photographs using a mobile phone, stills camera etc or make a rough sketch if a camera is not available.



Note the location, preferably using a map grid reference or other recognisable

description of the place.



Inform the police and ask to speak to a Wildlife Crime Officer - their telephone number should be attached to all legitimately operated crow cage traps and Larsen traps.

Don't



Disturb the scene, or any restrained or trapped bird or animal, by moving items or walking around unnecessarily.



Touch any birds, animals, snares or traps - this could be dangerous. Treat all traps with caution, as they may still be set. The springs on some traps are very powerful and may cause injury.



Attempt to release a bird or animal restrained in a snare or trap. To do so could be an offence and may compromise the welfare of the bird or animal concerned.