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Hi,

On page 8 of the 26<sup>th</sup> November edition of the new Scottish newspaper The National, Animal Concern is quoted in an article by Rob Edwards which exposes the extent to which landowners persecute our native wildlife. A bird watcher found 2,000 – yes two thousand – dead moles strung along a barbed wire fence on land near a grouse moor on the Lammermuir Hills in East Lothian.

Hanging dead animals (crows, foxes, moles, squirrels, stoat, weasel etc) on fences is an old tradition by which gamekeepers could show their landowner bosses that they were working hard and earning their meagre wages and tied cottages. Earlier this year I was asked to comment on a string of dead foxes hung out on a fence in Argyll.

I've tried to find out why moles are killed by land owners. Moles break up and aerate the soil as they hunt for worms. Some lawn obsessed gardeners and golf course green keepers don't like moles because they make lawns and putting greens look untidy. But why do gamekeepers and farmers have such hatred for moles?

I don't think it can be about sheep or cattle tripping in mole holes as cattle trample the soil anyway and sheep are used to living on rough terrain. If farmers were worried about lame sheep they would do a lot more to prevent and treat foot rot in their sheep.

Some people think that by bringing soil to the surface moles increase the risk of grazing animals picking up soil borne diseases such as listeria. I can find nothing to suggest this is a serious problem. It is also argued that moles bring stones to the surface and these can damage cutting equipment. I don't think a wee mole is going to start exposing boulders big enough to damage a combine harvester. Besides, from pics I've seen of the dead moles, in this case the land involved does not look as though it is subject to grass cutting or ploughing.

I think there might be another reason moles are being massacred. Moles are an important part of the moorland food chain and are eaten by foxes, owls, harriers and other birds and animals which might eat a grouse egg or chick. By wiping out huge numbers of moles numpties might think you reduce the number of predators which prey on grouse. Someone should tell these numpties that if you take moles off the menu you make it more likely that predators will turn to grouse for sustenance.

While on the subject of grouse moors I've just seen a news report that the Scottish Government is going to scrap Tory laws which give shooting estate owners exemption from business rates. Brilliant news.

If you are a subscriber to The National you will find the story about the massacre of the moles on page 8 of the 26<sup>th</sup> November edition. From later today you will also be able to read it for free on the link below.

<http://www.robedwards.com/>

Cheers 4 now,

John

PS When I wrote to you two days ago the circus poll in the Daily Record stood at 73% in favour of keeping wild animals in circuses with only 27% wanting wild animal acts banned. The poll closed earlier today with the result being 74% in favour of a ban on using wild animals and just 26% wanting to retain wild animal acts. Now that's what I call a turn around. Thanks!!