

E-MAIL FROM: John F. Robins, Company Secretary and Campaigns Consultant, Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel. 01389-841-639, Mobile: 07721-605521.

E-MAIL: animals@jfrobin.force9.co.uk website: <http://www.animalconcern.org/>

Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company (Co. No. SC109126) incorporated in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd.

Animal Concern incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

Ms Clare Henderson
Customer Information Manager
Heritage Lottery Fund
7 Holbein Place
London SW1W 8NR

Dear Ms Henderson,

I have copied in the Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund and I ask you to copy this e-mail to all involved in deciding to award a grant to the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan.

One of our supporters, Becky Wood, recently wrote to you concerning Heritage Lottery Fund support of the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan. In your reply to Ms Wood you said; "The Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting a project run by leading conservation organisations to raise awareness of how the public can help endangered wildcat species though identifying, neutering and vaccinating feral cats. This is done in a humane way and does not involve the killing of any animal. It is not for us to comment on elements of the wildcat action plan that are not covered by National Lottery funding."

The organisation I work for, Animal Concern, welcomed the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan because, like you, we believed it was going to be done in a humane way and would not involve the killing of any animal. I have reviewed all the information published by the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan and it does indeed stress that the project will achieve its aims through identifying, neutering and vaccinating feral cats and Wildcat/domestic cat crossbreeds. There is no mention in the literature of anything which would indicate that any animals will be killed as part of the project.

I was shocked when another Scottish Wildcat conservation group, Wildcat Haven, used the Freedom of Information Act to obtain and publish a copy of the trapping Licence Application made

by one of the main participants in the project, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), to another main participant, the Scottish Government agency Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

You will find that License Application on this link:

<http://www.wildcathaven.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/rzsslicence25pages.pdf>

However on page 12 of the RZSS application to SNH for a licence to trap cats it clearly states:

“Any individuals which are obviously feral domestic cats will be dispatched according to standard predator control practices, by the land manager, with appropriate firearm in one shot with minimal time to death. The Wildcat Project Officer will be notified about such individuals and cadavers will be collected for genetic and veterinary screening, within 3 days. To minimise stress and ensure high standards of welfare are in place for individuals assessed as feral domestic cats, dispatch should occur within the traps as soon as the assessment is made. Feral domestic cats should not be removed from traps and transported as this may result in unnecessary stress and compromised welfare.”

Later in the application form the RZSS is more specific about how the cats will be killed:

“Dispatch with a 12 bore shotgun using number three shot (lead shot not to be used over foreshore (sic) or wetlands), positioned 5m from the trap, aiming at the head and front of shoulder, is recommended”.

I have taken advice from someone with over 25 years’ experience of trapping, neutering and releasing feral cats and in her experience trapped feral cats are extremely agitated and very mobile within the traps and it would be almost impossible, even at point blank range, to ensure that a first shot hits the animal in the head killing it instantly. It is more likely that a first shot will wound and immobilise the cat with a second shot required to kill it. Under Scots Law failure to render a captive animal insentient with the first shot would leave the person killing the animal open to charges of cruelty to animals.

In your e-mail to Ms Wood you stated “It is not for us to comment on elements of the wildcat action plan that are not covered by National Lottery funding.” Can you tell me what part of this project you are funding and how that part of the project can be separated from the killing of trapped cats as clearly described in the RZSS License Application? Can you also tell me if the Heritage Lottery Fund was aware that cats would be killed during the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan project when you were considering the funding application from the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan?

As Secretary of Animal Concern I request that the Heritage Lottery Fund immediately suspend and review any funding of the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan. If your review reveals that you had not been made aware during the grant application process that the project would involve killing cats, we ask that you refuse any further funding of the project and request a refund of any money already donated.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Animal Concern