

# ANIMAL CONCERN

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Monday, 15 January 2007

Snaring Consultation 2006,  
Species Management & Wildlife Crime,  
Landscapes and Habitats,  
SERAD,  
Area 1-J South Victoria Quay,  
Leith,  
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

## Snaring Consultation 2006

Dear Sir or Madam,

Animal Concern is totally opposed to the use of snares as a method of wildlife "management".

When I was a lot younger I lived at the foot of the Campsie Fells and I used to use snares to catch rabbits. I would set them in the evening and check them in the morning and, more often or not, the caught rabbits were still alive and I had to finish them off by breaking their necks. Then a friend got some ferrets and we would ferret for rabbits, catching them in staked nets and killing them within seconds - no suffering involved and you could release any scrawny ones or does in milk.

I once found a dead otter in a "fox" snare which was set in an area known to be inhabited by otter. I've seen snared dead foxes with their legs half chewed or their necks cut through. I once found a dead roe deer in a snare set in a hedgerow. This was despite the fact snares should be checked every day.

In 2005 a woman phoned Animal Concern Advice Line and told me her dog had been missing for a week. Her family had recently bought a country house between Milton of Campsie and Kilsyth. Nearly 40 years ago my family bought eggs and Christmas cockerels from a smallholder who rented the gatehouse to that estate. He used to set fox snares along the north and west boundaries of his property and would get a five bob bounty per brush from the keeper. I advised the woman to check there and she found her dog alive but nearly strangled by a snare. A vet in Kirkintilloch had to remove the embedded snare and treat the dog's wounds.

Snares are indiscriminate and seldom kill quickly. Smallholders, farmers and people who keep outdoor pets such as rabbits need to make sure their animals are properly enclosed at night and protected by good fencing. Despite having frequent fox shoots Ladypark free range egg farm in Dumfries continued to have fox predation problems. Last August they finally installed an electric fence to keep the hens in the field and foxes out.

Foxes are **not** a major predator on sheep or lambs. During the anti fox hunt campaign The League Against Cruel Sports quoted research showing that the biggest killer of sheep and lambs was bad weather. Foxes will scavenge afterbirth and dead or abandoned sickly lambs. They will also kill lambs blinded or maimed by crows. I have seen a ewe chase off a fox in a field and I've also seen an adult urban cat chase a fox off her territory. During the fox hunting debates some pro hunters even suggested that foxes hunted in packs! Foxes do not hunt in packs and tend to stick to their own territories only coming together for breeding. A far bigger problem for sheep farmers are rogue dogs let out on their own or abandoned by bad owners.

One of the main reasons fox hunt laws still allow people to use dogs to flush foxes to waiting guns is because hunters said this was the most efficient and humane way to kill foxes. They cannot have it both ways - if snares are best why have flush and shoot clauses in both anti hunting laws?

As for not shooting near roads or populated areas it should be remembered that more foxes are killed by road traffic than any other means. Where you have populated areas the snares are more likely to kill domestic dogs and cats. Where it is unsafe to shoot foxes stock should be protected by fences and the like. Indeed stock should always be thus protected and shooting seen as a failure to properly protect stock.

If foxes have to be killed (and there would be very few occasions when there would be no other choice) the best way to do it is by lamping: night time shooting using a powerful light to spot and blind the fox.

In my experience snares are far more commonly used by keepers trying to raise artificially high numbers of pheasants for the shoot. The main targets of snares are small native predators such as stoats and weasels as well as pet, feral and the few remaining native wild cats. I used to see those in the Campsies but they and the local population of capercaillie are now long gone. The cats killed by the keepers to protect the capercaillie which were then killed by the shoots.

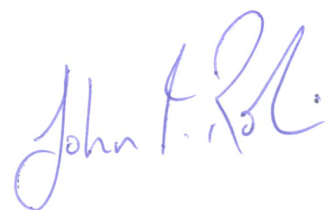
I take a lot of what the pro snaring lobby say with a large pinch of salt.

During the anti-hunting debates pro-hunt supporters in the Lords told everyone the tale of the anti-hunt hooligans who attacked a group of anglers casting their flies over the tranquil waters of the Teith at Callander. Not only did they beat the old chaps up they threw them in the River and turned them into floating voters for good measure. The anglers' waders filled up and they almost drowned.

A reporter with the Sunday Herald decided to interview the half-drowned victims of the attack but the Lord who raised the matter could not tell him exactly who was involved. Central Scotland Police had no record of such an incident. The local angling association had not heard about it, local tackle shop owners did not know about it and even local publicans had not heard this fishy tale. In short it was yet another red herring from the pro hunt brigade.

The reasons for retaining snares are as real as the mythical Teith hooligans. If snares have a place in modern Scotland it is in our history books.

Yours faithfully,



John F. Robins,  
On behalf of Animal Concern

PS A completed consultation response form is enclosed. This submission can be sent by e-mail if required.