

PE1762/B

Petitioner submission of 2 September 2020

OneKind would like to thank the Public Petitions Committee for the opportunity to supply a further written submission.

The Scottish Government submission to our petition does not actually address the first point in our petition text, questioning the ethics and sustainability of routine and repeated killing of the same species in the same locations. This practice is in complete opposition to the principles of ethical wildlife control, which require control measures to have clear and achievable outcome-based objectives. It also must be questioned whether, regardless of reason or outcome, devices that cause such severe suffering are now ethically acceptable to be used in our countryside.

The Scottish Government submission to this petition begins by commenting that the use of traps and snares is an (our emphasis) '*emotive issue*' and adds that these practices are necessary for the '*control*' of certain species to protect livestock, crops and wild birds. It is OneKind's contention that there is little evidence that trapping and snaring does actually perform the function as described. There is little science on this matter due to a lack of record keeping, and research into their efficacy is near impossible. The Scottish Government states that sometimes these devices offer the '*least worst alternative solutions*' (sic), but do not give any justification for this claim nor detail which methods are being compared.

In the case of driven red grouse shooting and the rear and release of pheasants and red legged partridge, these birds live on land heavily managed for shooting activities with management including heather burning, medication, trapping, snaring and the shooting of predatory wildlife (often classified as vermin by land managers.) The grouse are managed to be shot at population levels that would be unsustainable without intensive human intervention. The use of traps, snares and the shooting of stoats, weasels, foxes and various bird species occurs with little consideration of welfare implications, nor any scientific validity. The level of suffering inflicted on these wild animals, that will often die slow agonising deaths, is completely unacceptable and would be illegal if inflicted on our pets.

If wild animals must be killed for 'management purposes' we recommend that any decisions taken should follow the international consensus principles for ethical wildlife control¹.

Snaring

The Scottish Government state a desire to "*in particular, to improve the welfare of wildlife caught in snares.*" While we appreciate this sentiment, the problem is that snares are inherently harmful, and there are no further measures that can be taken that would prevent animals caught in them from suffering. The 2016 review of snaring carried out by Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) failed to ask the fundamental question of whether this practice should be carried out at all. No formal

¹ <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/cobi.12896>

public consultation was conducted to seek the views and evidence of stakeholders and the review failed to adequately assess animal welfare.

Crow traps

As with the review of snaring, the SNH commissioned review of corvid cage traps failed to adequately assess welfare impacts. The bodies involved in carrying out the research make it unlikely that it was fully impartial. The report states: *“While trapping clearly induces stress in captured birds, there is a paucity of literature dealing with the degree and the effects of that stress and its implications for the birds.”*

The welfare section of the report details multiple examples of aggression within cages, escape attempts, repetitive and/or stereotypic behaviour, and juveniles outside the cage soliciting food from those within. It is unacceptable to dismiss these behaviours which are clearly cause for concern.

Spring traps

The details of the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) on the Scottish Government statement do not fully address the concerns with the use of spring traps in general. We still have a highly permissive regime that allows wholesale killing of sentient wild mammals, at any time of year, without any requirement for record-keeping, monitoring or accountability. The trapping and killing wild animals in the UK, and an overhaul of the whole trapping regulation system in the UK, are long overdue. Unintended victims include hedgehogs, domestic cats, and birds such as dippers or wagtails. These traps litter our countryside, posing a grave danger to many different species.

Werritty review

We note that the Scottish Government statement mentions that it is intended that all traps will be tagged with an operator ID, as is currently the case with snares. This recommendation is insufficient, as described previously in this paper. It should also be noted that animal welfare was not part of the remit for the Werritty Review.

Conclusion: OneKind continues to call on the Scottish Parliament to conduct a full and systematic review of the animal welfare impacts of the use of traps and snares on grouse moors and elsewhere in Scotland.