



Wednesday 19 October 2005

Cruelty-free Claim Not Backed Up By Hard Evidence

A new report¹ has recommended the continued use of snares – despite a failure to produce hard evidence to justify claims that snares are humane.

Snares are illegal in most EU countries but still legal in the UK, although they can kill or maim the animals they catch.

‘Snares are both cruel and utterly indiscriminate about what they catch,’ says RSPCA senior scientific officer Colin Booty. ‘As many as 69% of animals caught in snares are not the intended targets. The report admits that – even with good practice – that number is unlikely to drop below 40%.’

The report acknowledges that snares can cause extremely severe welfare problems. However, the RSPCA does not believe that these instances are confined to snares used ‘carelessly or irresponsibly’². In addition to the suffering caused to the foxes for which the snares are set, the RSPCA gets reports of cats, badgers and deer caught and injured in snares. And these are just the ones found and reported by members of the public – many other incidents may go unreported because most snares are set on private land away from public view.

‘The RSPCA is opposed to the use of all snares and any trap which causes suffering,’ Colin Booty explains. ‘This report highlights the lack of scientific research about the animal welfare consequences of snares and yet recommends continuing their use and postponing a review for a further three years. In the meantime, the suffering continues.’

-ends-

Notes to Editors

1. The *Report of the Independent Working Group on Snares* was published by Defra today (19th October 2005) and can be viewed on the Defra website at www.defra.gov.uk.
2. The RSPCA was originally represented on the working group but subsequently withdrew.
3. Photos illustrating the problems which can arise from the use of snares – and the range of non-target animals which can suffer – are available from the RSPCA Press Office. The photos are of injuries caused by snares to a lamb, a cat, an otter and a badger.

¹ The *Report of the Independent Working Group on Snares*, published by Defra.

² *Report of the Independent Working Group on Snares*, p. 7.