

## Traps and Snares

### Pest and Predator Control

Pest and predator control is an essential part of farming and game management and sometimes appropriate in the conservation of species at risk, in particular ground-nesting birds.

A very limited list of birds can be taken or killed for this purpose and a number of animals are specially protected, so cannot be taken or killed.

Lethal control is only permitted under a general licence if the person contemplating such action is satisfied that appropriate non-lethal methods of control are either ineffective or impracticable. It is advisable to check with DEFRA for advice on dealing with 'pest' species.

All methods are controlled by law and while most of those practising pest control stay within the law, there are still abuses through ignorance or intent.

It is important for the general public to understand that no bird is classified as 'vermin' to be killed at will. Pigeons, for example, may only be taken or killed under the terms of the general licence and may not be shot for sport or just because they are sometimes unpopular with people. The general licence conditions must be met in every case or such actions will be illegal. All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected - see separate page on Birds.

### Spring Traps

All spring traps must be approved under the Spring [Traps Approval Order 1995](#), which specifies the target species and how each trap must be used, for example set in natural or artificial tunnels or in some cases a rabbit burrow. The tunnel entrance should be restricted to avoid the capture of non-target species.

- It is illegal to set spring traps in the open or on top of a post.
- It is illegal to use a gin trap or to possess it for an unlawful purpose.

### Cage Traps

It is legal under an annual general licence for authorised persons to use a cage trap to control members of the crow family in certain specified circumstances (except ravens and choughs, which are protected; jays may only be taken in restricted circumstances), great

and lesser black-backed gulls, herring gulls, feral pigeons, wood pigeons and collared doves.

Note: House Sparrows, which used to be listed on the general licence are now protected and may no longer be taken or killed.

When in use, the cage trap must be checked daily and the birds caught must be removed from it and humanely despatched. Protected birds caught inadvertently must be released unharmed. **When these traps are not in use, they must be rendered incapable of catching or holding birds.**

**Larsen Traps** are a small, portable version of the cage trap. If a decoy bird is used, it must be a crow, jackdaw, rook or magpie, and must have adequate food, shelter and a perch. The decoy must be removed when the trap is not in use.

**Mammal Cage Traps** come in various sizes and are used to catch feral cats, foxes, mink or grey squirrels. They are basically of the same design, with bait inside the trap to tempt the animal in, and a non-return door to contain the animal. The animals are caught unharmed. Pest species must be humanely despatched and non-target species released unharmed. Checking intervals are not specified but failing to check a trap regularly could be an offence under the [Animal Welfare Act 2006](#) or the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960.

### **Snares**

These are commonly set for foxes and rabbits but should only be set by trained and experienced people. They must not be set where they are likely to catch non-target species, such as badgers, deer or otters (which are specially protected) and must be checked daily. Snares can cause dreadful injuries to animals as they struggle to release themselves.

If snares are used unlawfully those responsible are very likely to face prosecution in the criminal courts. **Self-locking snares are illegal.**

**Please respect legal use of traps and snares.** Interference with legally set traps or snares is an offence. Do not touch them. If you are absolutely certain that an offence is being committed, photograph the trap or snare and spring it so that it cannot catch anything. If you are suspicious but unsure, photograph it and advise a police Wildlife Crime Officer as soon as possible.