**Petition Number:** PE1124

**Main Petitioner:** Louise Robertson on behalf of the League Against Cruel Sports, Advocates for Animals, the International Otter Survival Fund and Hessilhead Wildlife Rescue

**Subject:** Calls for the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 to introduce provisions to ban the manufacture, sale, possession and use of all snares.

**Background**

The use of certain devices, including self-locking snares, to kill or take wild animals is prohibited under s11 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. However, free-running snares are a legal means of capturing a number of animals, such as foxes and rabbits. Snares are not intended for, and should not intentionally be used, to kill animals. They are required to be checked every 24 hours so that target species can be despatched humanely and any non-target species can be released. Further measures to improve the safeguards against potential malpractice and misuse of snares were put in place by The Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.

During Stage 3 of the Parliamentary consideration of the Nature Conservation Act Ministers indicated that they would bring forward proposals for additional provisions on the use of snares. A consultation seeking views on options for further regulating the technical specifications of permitted snares and whether all use of snares should be banned was carried out between November 2006 and February 2007.

A total of 247 responses were received. Of these, 71 were against a ban and 172 were for the outright banning of snares. The remaining 4 were in favour of limited snaring within a licensing system.

**Recent Scottish Government Action**

On 20 February 2008, in a ministerial statement to Parliament, the Minister for the Environment announced a package of regulations under s11 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. These are:

- the compulsory fitting of crimped safety stops to prevent the noose closing too far and inflicting damage
- the compulsory fitting of ID tags on snares which will allow identification of their owner by the authorities
- specification that the action of a snare must be checked before it is set
- clarification that any snare which is not staked in place must be fixed with an anchor that cannot be dragged away
• prohibition of the setting of snares on posts, over water courses, on planks or fences
• specification that areas where snaring is taking place are clearly marked with signs

The Minister also announced, when possible, primary legislation to create a new offence of tampering with a lawfully set snare, and to give legal status to a new land management industry accreditation scheme.

Scottish Parliament Action

During the passage of the Nature Conservation Act the Environment and Rural Development Committee examined the issue of snaring, and took evidence from both the League Against Cruel Sports and game management interests.

In its Stage 1 Report, the Committee acknowledged that a number of groups had very strongly held views on this matter, and stated:

Whilst a number of alternative methods of pest control are available, the Committee notes the reservations of land management practitioners regarding the effectiveness of these methods. The Committee therefore believes that free-running snares should continue to be available as a method of pest control, provided that the provisions allowing use of snares are sufficiently tightly drafted and adequately enforced.

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Senior Research Specialist
20 February 2008

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