

Briefing on proposed snaring ban

October 2023



We commend the Scottish Government for the proposal to ban the use of snares, which we strongly support for the reasons outlined in the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission report. This briefing focusses on the possibility of exceptions to the ban, as is suggested in the recently closed Scottish Government consultation and has been called for by some stakeholders.

We recommend a full ban on the use of snares and other cable restraints, with no exceptions, as the only way to fully prevent the animal welfare risks caused by snaring.

Humane cable restraints

We are very glad to see the inclusion of 'or other type of cable restraint' in the proposal, as there have been suggestions that 'humane cable restraints' are a recent development, different from snares, and should be permitted once snares are banned. On the contrary, as Matt Goodall from Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) wrote: *"The terminology 'humane cable restraint' was coined to differentiate between snares of old and the modern code-compliant snare."*¹

The design in question has been in use in Scotland, Wales and England since at least 2015, as Alex Hogg of the Scottish Gamekeepers Association confirmed in oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament. Thus, all assessments that the Scottish Government has based its decision to ban snares on, including the report by the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission, have been considering what is now being called a humane cable restraint.

If any further evidence is needed on this, one can compare the design features listed by GWCT as defining a 'humane cable restraint' with those in the snaring code of practice (COP) for Scotland, Wales, or England, and find they are the same. Further, an identical picture has been used in the Welsh and English COPs (dating from 2015 and 2016 respectively) and in a more recent GWCT briefing on 'humane cable restraints.'²

A similar narrative was used in Wales, where civil servants were very clear that this was simply a re-branding exercise. The Welsh Minister for Rural Affairs stated in writing that: *"A Code compliant snare and a humane cable restraint are identical in every way. It was GWCT who provided the description and diagram which forms part of the published Welsh Government Code of Best Practice on the use of snares in fox control. The exact same description and diagram was provided to my officials by GWCT in the humane cable restraint*

¹ [Welsh Government ignores the science in decision to ban Humane Cable Restraints - Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust \(gwct.org.uk\)](#)

² [ATISN 18700 doc 2.2_0.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

literature and was shown to officials and demonstrated in the field to them on a training course jointly run by GWCT and BASC.”³

She reiterated in the Chamber that: *“To be very clear, a so-called humane cable restraint and a code-compliant snare are identical in every way, and have been in use since 2012.”*

We urge the Scottish Parliament and Government to firmly reject claims that ‘humane cable restraints’ are new, or materially different to the snares that have been used in the UK for years.

The use of snares for research

The Scottish Government has concluded that: *“use of snares can lead to unacceptable levels of suffering for wild animals [...] they remain, by their nature, indiscriminate and as such they pose an unacceptable risk to non-target species including other wildlife and domestic species such as cats.”* This is no less true if the purpose is research than ‘control’.

The pursuit of information does not justify unethical behaviour, and invasive research may not produce accurate data. Increasingly, researchers recognise that: *“the need for non-invasive sampling methods with a minimal impact on wildlife has become paramount in complying with modern ethical standards and regulations, and to collect high-quality and unbiased data”⁴*; that *“animal welfare is a growing concern for stakeholders in wildlife research, and ethical committees, employers, journal publishers, and funding agencies increasingly require that researchers consider and address welfare implications of their research”⁵*; and that *“Sound science requires animal subjects to be physically, physiologically, and behaviorally unharmed.”⁶*

The potential for some limited instances where innovation may be required for researchers to overcome challenges posed by a snaring ban is not a good enough reason to weaken this ban, permit animal suffering, and create a potential loophole.

We are happy to answer any questions or discuss these issues further.

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³ [ATISN 18700 doc 1.6 1.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

⁴ [\(PDF\) A Review of Non-Invasive Sampling in Wildlife Disease and Health Research: What's New? \(researchgate.net\)](#)

⁵ [ANIMAL WELFARE FROM MOUSE TO MOOSE—IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES OF THE 3RS IN WILDLIFE RESEARCH | Journal of Wildlife Diseases \(allenpress.com\)](#)

⁶ [Publication reform to safeguard wildlife from researcher harm - PubMed \(nih.gov\)](#)