



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

2018 Annual Report on the Welsh Government's Code of Best Practice on the Use of Snares in Fox Control

1. Background

The way our animals are treated is an important reflection of society's values and the Welsh Government is committed to improving animal welfare standards in Wales.

[The Code of Best Practice on the Use of Snares in Fox Control](#) (the 'Code') was published on 25 September 2015. The Code is aimed at those who use snares in the Welsh countryside and was developed with input from stakeholders with an interest in snares and their use. It seeks to deliver higher animal welfare standards, increase efficiency in terms of fox control and ensure fewer non-target species are caught.

On 27 September 2016, the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS) presented a petition with 1,405 signatures, to the Petitions Committee. That Committee considered written evidence from interested parties alongside the petition, including a joint letter from the Countryside Alliance, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and the National Gamekeepers Organisation disputing the figures contained in the petition text and challenging LACS's comments on the inhumaneness of snares. Relevant information can be found [here](#) on the Petition Committee's web page.

The Petitions Committee of the National Assembly for Wales referred the matter to the Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee for further consideration.

The Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee ('the Committee') decided to investigate the practice and issues around the use of snares in Wales, and consider whether further action was needed.

On 30 November 2016, oral evidence was taken from LACS, The National Anti-Snaring Campaign, The Countryside Alliance, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and The National Gamekeepers Organisation and a copy of the transcript can be found [here](#). On 14 December 2016, the Committee also heard oral evidence from the then Cabinet Secretary of Environment and Rural Affairs and a copy of the transcript can be found [here](#).

2. The report and recommendations

The Committee published the "Report on the use of snares in Wales" on 28 June 2017 and a copy of the report can be found [here](#). The report made a total of 8 recommendations, with the following three covered by this publication, all of which

were accepted by the Welsh Government. A copy of the Welsh Government's response to all 8 recommendations can be found [here](#):-

Recommendation 1 - The Welsh Government should undertake an annual review of the Code and publish a report of that review.

Recommendation 6 - The Welsh Government should report by the end of September 2018 and thereafter on an annual basis, on the extent of the use of snares in Wales. As part of that reporting process, the Welsh Government should work with stakeholders to devise a mechanism to determine the number and species of animals caught in snares.

Recommendation 8 – The Welsh Government's review of the Code should report on:

- *enforcement action in relation to the code and the number of successful prosecutions, if any;*
- *the cost and availability of code compliant snare; and*
- *the numbers of people trained to use snares in according to the code and the methods used to assess the effectiveness of that training.*

3. Stakeholder meeting

An invitation was sent to stakeholders to attend an evidence gathering session on 26 February 2018. Attendees were asked to help fill evidence gaps identified by the Welsh Government or suggest ways in which evidence is gathered and share any statistics or data that would assist the Welsh Government in the preparation of this annual report.

A wide range of stakeholders attended the event, with differing views on the use of snares. An invite was extended to the five main retailers of snares in Wales to attend but unfortunately all declined or were unable to send a representative. However, some did provide the Welsh Government with data.

4. Evidence gathered

Stakeholders confirmed the Code has been widely disseminated to their members who use snares as part of their day to day job. These stakeholders believe their members are complying with the recommendations of the Code. However, there is little empirical evidence and it is acknowledged that it is difficult to quantify or evidence good practice and compliance with the Code as the setting and using of snares mostly takes place on private land.

Since the Code was published in 2015, the Welsh Government have been made aware of 20 snaring incidents – 15 involved non-target species (cats, badgers and dogs) being caught or found dead in a snare, 2 involved foxes and 3 incidents involved the setting of snares in areas that do not comply with the Code. In the majority of these incidents we have not been able to determine whether Code compliant snares were being used as 'reporters' did not supply such information. Those provided with information involved mostly non Code compliant snares, however there was one incident where a badger was caught in a Code compliant snare and was released unharmed. Stakeholders who report these incidents to the

Welsh Government have been asked to provide in future, details of where the incident occurred, whether the snare was set in compliance with the Code, whether the snare was a Code compliant snare and what (if any) species of animal was caught in the snare. The Welsh Government are not aware of any police prosecutions taken forward as a result of these snaring incidents in Wales.

In February 2017, the then Cabinet Secretary for Energy, Planning and Rural Affairs wrote to all known retailers urging them make Code compliant snares routinely available in their stores in Wales. Code compliant snares are also available through online manufacturers/stockists and can be viewed on the British Association and Shooting Conservation website.

Whilst no representative from the five main retailers attended the stakeholder meeting, two provided the Welsh Government with data which demonstrates that only 3-5% of fox snares are purchased by farmers. However, it remains likely that the majority of snares sold are not Code compliant snares as there has been some concern from some stakeholders as to their increased cost when compared to the still legal, free running (but not Code compliant) snares. An offer has again been extended to the retailers inviting their representatives to the stakeholder event in May or a separate meeting to discuss how we can ensure that only Code compliant snares are stocked and sold in Wales.

Since the publication of the Code, the number of individuals in Wales that have been trained in the use of snares stands at 69 with the vast majority being gamekeepers. This correlates with the data demonstrating that very few snare purchases in Wales are by farmers. There have been 48,000 views of a video by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation on how to set a fox snare, although we cannot confirm how many of those were from Wales.

5. Next steps

Welsh Government officials are planning to meet with stakeholders (including organisations representing snare users and animal welfare organisations) again in May 2019. The Welsh Government acknowledges that the evidence which has been received on the use of snares in Wales since the introduction of the Code is limited for the reasons highlighted in this report. Now that the Code is a few years old the Welsh Government needs to ascertain whether the introduction of the Code is leading to better practice and raising animal welfare standards. Stakeholders will be asked at the next event to provide us with more robust and tangible evidence on snaring practice in Wales and how they might get such information from their members. This can then be used as part of the ongoing process to determine if the Code is working or not and whether further measures including legislative options need to be considered.