



A  
CODE  
OF  
PRACTICE



TRAPPING  
PEST MAMMALS

**BASC** 

## TRAPPING PEST MAMMALS

Pest and predator control is an integral part of conservation and wildlife management. It is necessary to reduce predation and damage to acceptable levels, particularly at vulnerable times of the year such as the nesting season. It is the responsibility of all those involved in pest and predator control to ensure that their methods are legal, humane and carried out with sensitivity and respect for other countryside users.

This code provides advice at two levels.

- For the purpose of this code the term ‘must’ indicates a legal obligation, and therefore must be adhered to.
- The term ‘should’ indicates that the guidance should be followed to ensure compliance with best practice.

### TRAPS

There are two main types of trap commonly used for the control of mammalian pests and predators: spring traps (consisting of a trigger plate and some form of smooth jaws) and cage traps (live catchers). Occasionally box traps and multi-catch drop traps are used, which are made of either wood or metal with a trapdoor to capture rabbits, stoats, weasels, rats and mice.

### TRAPPING AND THE LAW

In England, Wales and Scotland under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 11 and in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 section 12 it is illegal to:

“Set in position any trap calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild animal included in Schedule 6.”

Under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 section 9 and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 section 10 if any person:

“Intentionally [or recklessly] kills, injures or takes any wild animal included in Schedule 5 he shall be guilty of an offence.”

The species listed in Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 are shown in the table at the end of this code.

In England, Wales and Scotland under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 Section 1 it is illegal to:

“Mutilate, kick, beat, nail, impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drag, drown or asphyxiate any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.”

### INSPECTION

In England, Wales & Northern Ireland the Protection of Animals Act 1911 Section 10 states that:

“Where spring traps are used for the purpose of catching, or which are so placed as to be likely to catch, any hare or rabbit they must be inspected at reasonable intervals of time and at least once every day between sunrise and sunset. Failure to do so is an offence.”

**NOTE:** This legislation refers to rabbits and hares however there are no spring traps approved for use on hares.

## CAGE TRAPS (LIVE CATCH TRAPS)

Cage traps come in various sizes, depending on the target species. All are basically a box constructed of wire mesh with one or two open ends. The doors are triggered by a foot plate or hook from which bait may be suspended. They can be used to take any animal which is not protected e.g. fox.



Cage traps should be inspected at least once every day. Target animals should be dispatched quickly and humanely and the body disposed of responsibly. Any non-target species must be released unharmed.

**NOTE:** It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011) and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 to release or allow to escape into the wild any animal which:

- is not ordinarily resident in and is not a regular visitor to Great Britain in a wild state (or in Scotland is outside of its native range), or
- is listed in Part 1 of Schedule 9.

The species listed in Part 1 of Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 are shown in the table at the end of this code.

Under legislation such as the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 there is no legal requirement to check live capture cage traps. However, under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Animal Health & Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006 and the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) there is a duty of care for an animal caught in a cage trap. An offence is committed by a person if “an act of his, or a failure of his to act, causes a protected animal to suffer unnecessarily”. A protected animal is defined as:

- Of a kind which is commonly domesticated in the British Isles
- If it is under the control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis.
- If it is not living in a wild state.

As a result leaving an animal in a cage trap without food, water or shelter so causing it to suffer unnecessarily, may be an offence, especially if the period of time it was left untended exceeded that of any relevant licence conditions or guidelines.

In England, Wales and Scotland under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 11 and in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 section 12 if any person uses a live mammal or bird as a decoy for the purpose of killing or taking any wild animal they shall be guilty of an offence.

In England, Wales and Scotland it is an offence to use sound recording for the purpose of killing or taking any Schedule 6 animal.

In Northern Ireland using a sound recording for the purpose of taking any wild animal is an offence.

## SPRING TRAPS

In England and Wales under the Pest Act 1954, section 8, in Scotland under the Agriculture (Scotland) Act 1948, section 50, and in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, section 11, it is an offence, in respect of any animal:

- To use or permit the use of a spring trap not approved by the government agencies under the spring trap approval orders.
- To use or permit the use of an approved spring trap in unapproved circumstances (e.g. a Fenn trap placed on a pole).
- To sell, offer for sale or possess any spring trap for such an unlawful purpose.

**NOTE:** The sale or possession of unapproved traps for display purposes is not illegal.

The Pest Act 1954, section 8, Agriculture (Scotland) Act 1948, section 50, and the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, section 11, do not apply to certain traps adapted solely for the destruction of rats, mice or other small ground vermin. The Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958 has identified two such types of trap. These are spring traps known as break-back traps commonly used for rats, mice and other small ground vermin, and spring traps commonly used for catching moles in their runs.



The following is a list of traps which have been approved by the relevant government agencies in their own spring trap approval orders as amended. The orders state that any spring trap which is equivalent in all relevant respects to a spring trap approved by the order may also be used.

**This table is not a definitive list of the species which may be caught in each trap.**

| <b>TRAP</b>   | <b>SPECIES</b>   | <b>ENG</b> | <b>SCO</b> | <b>WAL</b> | <b>NI<sup>1</sup></b> |
|---|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Aldrich Spring-activated Animal Snare</b>  | Large, non-indigenous, mammalian carnivores.                   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>N</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>N</b>              |
| <b>BMI Magnum 55</b>  | Rats and mice.   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |
| <b>Fenn Vermin Trap Mk I,II, III, IV and Springer 4 Lloyd Trap, Sawyer Trap, BMI Magnum 110</b> | Grey squirrels, stoats, weasels, rats and mice.                | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |
| <b>BMI Magnum 116 Fenn Mk VI and Springer 6</b>   | Grey squirrels, mink, rabbits, stoats, weasels, rats and mice. | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |
| <b>Fenn Rabbit Mk I</b>   | Rabbits  | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |
| <b>Fuller Trap</b><br>Fitted with an artificial tunnel which is suitable for the purpose        | Grey squirrels.  | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |
| <b>Imbra Trap Mk I &amp; Mk II</b><br><b>Juby Trap</b>  | Grey squirrels, rabbits, stoats, weasels, rats and mice.       | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |
| <b>Kania Trap 2000</b><br>Fitted with an artificial tunnel which is suitable for the purpose    | Grey squirrels, mink, stoats, weasels, rats and mice.          | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>   | <b>Y</b>              |

**IMPORTANT NOTE**

With the exception of the Aldrich trap, all the above traps must be set in a natural or artificial tunnel which is suitable for the purpose.

| TRAP                                 | SPECIES   | ENG | SCO | WAL | NI <sup>1</sup>              |
|--------------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|------------------------------|
| <b>Kania Trap 2500</b>               | Grey squirrels, mink, rabbits, stoats, weasels, rats, mice and edible dormice ( <i>Glis glis</i> ) <sup>2</sup> | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y<br>(except edible dormice) |
| <b>Nooski</b>                        | Rats  | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y                            |
| <b>Nooski mouse trap</b>             | Mice  | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y                            |
| <b>Skinns Superior Squirrel Trap</b> | Grey squirrels  | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y                            |
| <b>Solway Spring Trap Mk 4</b>       | Grey squirrels, stoats, weasels, rats, mice and edible dormice <sup>2</sup>                                     | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y<br>(except edible dormice) |
| <b>Solway Spring Trap Mk 6</b>       | Grey squirrels, mink, rabbits, stoats, weasels, rats, mice, and edible dormice <sup>2</sup>                     | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y<br>(except edible dormice) |
| <b>WCS Tube Trap</b>                 | Grey squirrels, mink, stoats, weasels and rats  | Y   | Y   | Y   | Y                            |

#### IMPORTANT NOTE

All the above traps must be set in a natural or artificial tunnel which is suitable for the purpose.

|                          |  |   |                       |   |   |
|--------------------------|--|---|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>DOC 150*</b>          | Grey squirrels, rats, stoats and weasels                 | Y | Y                     | Y | Y |
| <b>DOC 200*</b>          | Grey squirrels, mink, rats, stoats and weasels           | Y | Y                     | Y | Y |
| <b>DOC 250*</b>          | Grey squirrels, mink, rabbits, stoats, weasels and rats. | Y | Y<br>(except rabbits) | Y | Y |
| <b>VS Squirrel Trap*</b> | Grey squirrels   | Y | Y                     | Y | Y |

#### \*IMPORTANT NOTE

These traps must be set in the tunnel provided by the manufacturer of the trap for use in the UK and must be used in accordance with the instructions (if any) provided by the manufacturer.

|   |      |   |   |   |   |
|---|------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Wise Trap 110, 160, 200, &amp; 250**</b> | Rats | Y | Y | Y | Y |
|---|------|---|---|---|---|

#### \*\*IMPORTANT NOTE

This trap must be set in a sewer, drainpipe or similar structure and used in accordance with the manufacturers' operating manual.

|                     |       |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|
| <b>WCS Collarum</b> | Foxes | Y | Y | Y | Y |
|---------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|

<sup>1</sup>No spring traps are specifically approved for killing or taking weasels in NI.

<sup>2</sup>Edible Dormice (*Glis glis*) - Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 section 11(2)(b) and Schedule 6 it is an offence to use any trap, whether approved or not, for the purpose of taking or killing any dormouse, except under licence as granted by the appropriate authority under section 16 of that Act.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Every effort should be made to avoid the capture of non-target species. Knowledge of the tracks, trails and signs of both target and non-target species is essential.
- The entrances to tunnel traps should be restricted to prevent the capture of non-target species.
- Traps should be firmly anchored.
- Traps should be checked at least once a day but must be checked as often as required to comply with legislation.
- The displaying of carcasses serves no useful purpose and may offend other countryside users. Carcasses should be disposed of responsibly.
- Wherever possible avoid setting traps on or near public footpaths, public rights of way, areas of common land used by persons exercising domestic animals, or in the vicinity of houses.
- Avoid setting traps on land where livestock are grazing.
- Weil's disease is a serious and sometimes fatal infection that is transmitted to humans by contact with urine from infected rats. The bacteria can get into your body through cuts and scratches. To help prevent infection BASC recommends wearing protective gloves when trapping.

## CATS AND DOGS

Domestic cats and dogs are classed as property under the Theft and Criminal Damage Acts in England, Wales and Northern Ireland or in Scotland under common law and section 78 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) act 1980. Consequently it could be an offence to set traps intentionally, or recklessly, to kill or injure these or other domestic animals and may lead to prosecution and legal action for damages should a pet come to any harm or go missing. A cat's owner cannot be held liable for its actions.

## FERAL CATS

Domestic and feral cats are one and the same animal - *Felis catus*. Feral cats are persistent killers of nesting birds. If it can be shown that they have bred or are living in the wild they may be humanely dispatched. Operatives must make maximum effort to identify any ownership of a cat causing damage before attempting to catch or kill it.

## WILD CATS

The wild cat (*Felis sylvestris*) is totally protected and must not be confused with the domestic cat (*Felis catus*).

## BAITING

Non-poisonous bait can be used in traps, but if it is placed where it attracts domestic animals, and those animals are injured or killed, the person setting the trap could be prosecuted under the Criminal Damage Act 1971 or be liable to pay compensation.

## RECOMMENDED READING

The Animal Welfare Act 2006: what it means for wildlife  
(Natural England Technical Information Note TIN072).

BASC Trapping Pest Birds Code of Practice

BASC Handbook: Pest and Predator Control

The Code of Good Shooting Practice

The BASC Handbook of Shooting –

An introduction to the sporting shotgun (sixth edition)

## LEGISLATION – SCHEDULES

This table lists only the species in the schedules which are most relevant to those trapping pest mammals.

| LEGISLATION   | SCHEDULE   | COUNTRY          | SPECIES   |
|---|------------|------------------|---|
| Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981                                     | 5          | England & Wales  | Wildcat, pine marten, otter, red squirrel and water vole                      |
|   | 6          | England & Wales  | Badger, pine marten, otter, red squirrel, wild cat, polecat and hedgehog      |
|   | 9 (Part 1) | England & Wales  | Muntjac, mink, black rat and grey squirrel                                    |
|   | 5          | Scotland         | Pine marten, red squirrel, water vole   |
| (amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011) | 6          | Scotland         | Badger, hedgehog and red squirrel   |
| Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985                                | 5          | Northern Ireland | Badger, pine marten and red squirrel  |
|   | 6          | Northern Ireland | Brown hare, Irish hare, badger, hedgehog, pine marten, otter and red squirrel |
|   | 9 (Part 1) | Northern Ireland | Brown hare, mink, black rat and grey squirrel                                 |

### IF IN DOUBT DO NOT SET A TRAP!

This code has been prepared with the assistance of the BASC game shooting and gamekeeping committee.

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The British Association for Shooting & Conservation