

Snaring in Scotland

A practitioners' guide

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WHO IS THIS LEAFLET FOR?

This new practitioners' guide is for all those working in the Scottish countryside who are involved in pest and predator control. This guide provides advice on using snaring methods that are humane, legal, and carried out in accordance with best practice and with respect for other countryside users.

INTRODUCTION

Fox and rabbit control in Scotland is necessary to ensure that damage to crops, livestock, trees, game and other wildlife and their habitats can be reduced to acceptable levels to maintain Scotland's unique rural biodiversity. Snaring is a vital tool to achieve these ends in Scotland due to diverse landscape and types of cover.

Snaring is subject to many legal restrictions. When conducted in accordance with this practitioners' guide, snaring is an effective and humane form of control.

This guide has been drawn up by the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT), Scottish Gamekeepers' Association (SGA) and British Association for Shooting and Conservation (Scotland) (BASC). It is endorsed by the Scottish Government and supported by the Partnership for Action against Wildlife Crime, Scottish Land & Estates, The British Deer Society, National Farmers Union Scotland, National Sheep Association, the Scottish Countryside Alliance, Heather Trust, Scottish Crofters Foundation, British Pest Control Association, Veterinary Association for Wildlife Management, NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

There are four sections to this Guide. The first two advise on general considerations and current snaring legislation. It is requested that these are carefully read and understood before reading the sections on setting fox and rabbit snares.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Remember that as a snare user YOU alone are responsible for ensuring that each snare you set is legal and humane.

When setting snares every effort must be made to avoid the capture of non-target species and protected species. Knowledge of the tracks, trails and signs of both target and non-target species is essential. (See Figure 1.) You should adapt your procedures for setting snares in the light of experience, particularly to minimise the risks to non-target species.

The use of signs to alert the public that snares are being employed may be used near to access routes.

BADGER

Always look for signs of badger activity, such as well-worn paths, badger tracks and coarse grey hairs with black tips. Do not set snares in the vicinity of badger setts or near their "dung pits", in holes through or under fence lines, gateways or hedges or on runs clearly and commonly used by badgers.

DEER

Always look for signs of deer activity, such as tracks, droppings and signs of fraying or browsing and hair. Snares should not be attached to fences, or in holes through or under fences. Wherever possible avoid setting snares along the back of fence lines, particularly through woodland, as deer often travel alongside them.

OTTERS

Always look for signs of otter activity such as tracks, food remains, droppings or spraints. Do not set snares on footbridges, trees, logs or planks over watercourses and where otters are present, avoid setting snares on tracks alongside rivers or water courses.

MOUNTAIN HARE

Mountain hare are protected and it is therefore an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take them. Snares should not be set where there is a high probability of catching mountain hares; or, where there is a known fox in an area populated by hares, only set snares which have the stop crimped at 26cm from the running eye to facilitate self-release by hares.

DOMESTIC PETS

Whenever possible, snares should not be set on or near public footpaths, rights of way, near housing and areas regularly used for the exercise of domestic animals.

FARM LIVESTOCK

Do not set snares where livestock are grazing or along the back of fence lines – cattle often lean over or push against fences to graze on the opposite side.

You should consult the farmer/landowner before setting any snares, ensuring you have his or her permission.

CAPERCAILLIE

If snares are to be used in capercaillie areas, avoid setting snares within woods known to hold capercaillie. It is recommended that snares be used at middens on farmland or moorland at least 500 metres away from woods known to hold capercaillie.

WILDCAT

Always consider the possibility of wildcats in Highland Scotland. Key features that help distinguish them from feral and domestic cats are tabby markings but no white feet; unbroken flank stripes; a thick, blunt tail with distinct aligned bands and no stripe down the tail.

AVOID SNARING WHERE YOU SEE
THESE NON-TARGET SPECIES TRACKS

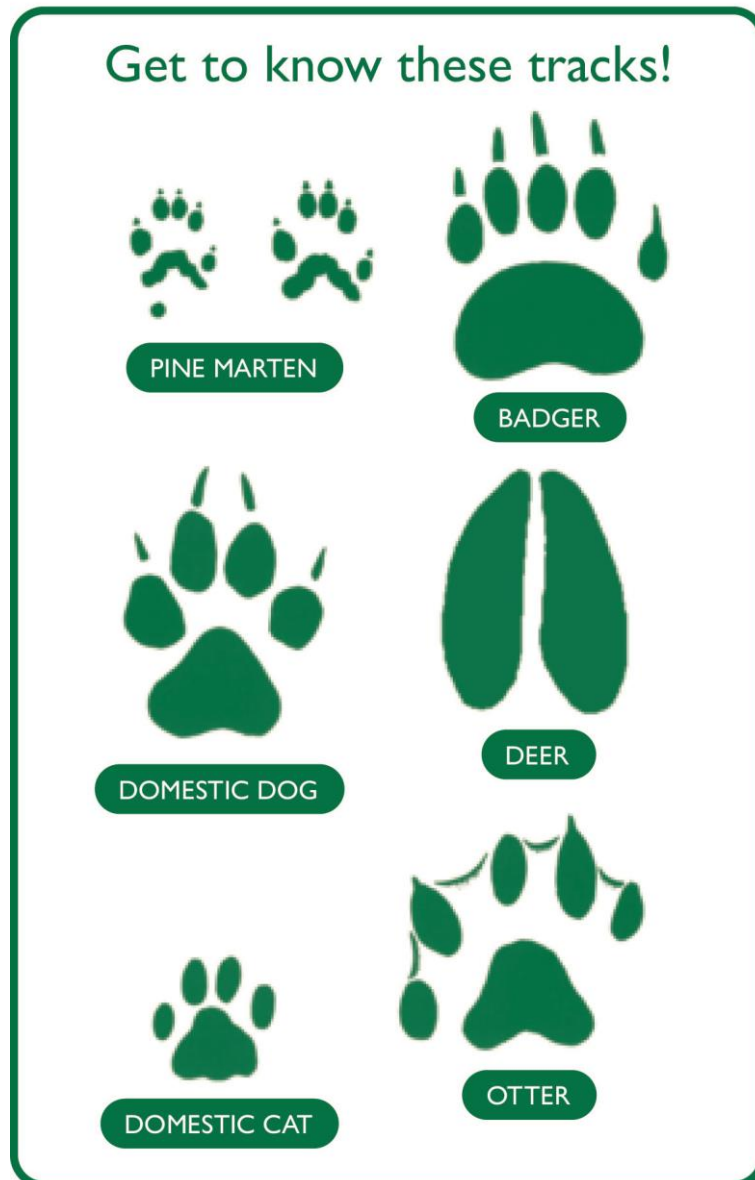


FIGURE 1

INTERFERENCE WITH SNARES

It is an offence to damage or remove snares and to disrupt a lawful activity, such as snaring. Any such incidents should be reported to your local Wildlife Crime Officer (WCO) and a case number obtained.

SNARING LEGISLATION

Under the **Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994**, as amended by the **Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2007** it is illegal to:

- Deliberately or recklessly capture, injure or kill a wild animal of a European protected species, such as wild cat and otter.

Under the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**, as amended by the **Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004**, it is illegal to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild animal in Schedule 5, such as otter, red squirrel, wild cat and mountain hare
- To kill or take a Schedule 5 animal, irrespective of method used, requires a licence from NatureScot. If a licence is issued to take or kill mountain hare by NatureScot it is unlikely that snaring will be listed as an approved method.
- Set in position or otherwise use any self-locking snare (or a snare of any other type specified in an order made by the Scottish Ministers)
- Set in position or otherwise use any other type of snare which is either of such a nature or so placed (or both) as to be **calculated** to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal coming into contact with it or knowingly cause or permit such acts to be done
- Set in position any snare **likely** to cause bodily injury to any wild animal included in Schedule 6, such as badger, pine marten, otter, red squirrel, wild cat, polecat and hedgehog
- Set in position a snare or knowingly cause or permit a snare to be so set and fail to inspect it or cause it to be inspected at least once every day at intervals of no more than 24 hours
- Fail to release or remove an animal, whether alive or dead, while carrying out such an inspection of snares
- Be in possession of, sell or offer for sale any snare capable of operating as a self-locking snare, without reasonable excuse
- Be in possession of any snare on land or to set any snare on land without the permission of the owner or occupier.

Under the **Deer (Scotland) Act 1996** it is an offence to:

- Set in position any trap or snare calculated to cause bodily injury to any deer
- Use for the purpose of taking or killing any deer any trap or snare.

Under the **Snares (Scotland) Order 2010**:

- Snares must be free running and checked to be free running at least once every day within a 24 hour period. If a snare is found not to be free running then it must be removed or repaired.
- All snares must be fitted with an effective safety stop – for foxes at least 23cm (9”) from the running end of the snare and for rabbits at least 13cm (5”) from the running end of the snare. (Following a recommendation from the 2016 Snaring Review, legislation is likely to be introduced to increase the stop position on fox snares to enlarge the noose circumference to 26cm).
- Snares must be firmly anchored, either staked to the ground or attached to an object in a manner that will prevent the snare being dragged by the animal caught by it.
- It is an offence to set snares in places where captured animals are likely to become fully or partially suspended or drown.

Under the **Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011**:

TRAINING and IDENTIFICATION

- Any person who sets a snare in position must have achieved approved accreditation and received a personal identification number from the Police. It is illegal to set any snare without an ID number after 1st April 2013. [The Snares (Identification Numbers and Tags) (Scotland) Order 2012].
- The Snares (Training) (Scotland) (No 2) Order 2012 list GWCT, SGA, BASC, Scottish Association for Countryside Sports, Scotland’s Rural College, North Highland College UHI and Borders College as approved training and accreditation bodies.
- Individuals applying for an ID number should obtain an application form from an accredited training body or their local police station, or download the Snaring Operator Identification Number application form from the Police Scotland website. Accredited

individuals applying for an ID number must apply in person at a police station in the police area within which it is intended to set snares. The applicant should present a completed application form along with original photographic identification, an original snare training certificate obtained by the applicant following successful accreditation, a recent passport size photograph clearly showing the face and shoulders of the applicant and the fee of £20. The operator may use his/her issued ID number for tags fitted on any snares which he/she sets in position in any other police area.

- The ID number must be permanently displayed on a durable metal or plastic tag and must remain legible. The target species intended for capture must also be clearly displayed on the tag as F(for fox), R (for rabbit) or BH (for brown hare).
- The tag must be attached to every fox and rabbit snare, or snare hardware (the anchor and any other part permanently attached between the snare and the anchor, excluding the tealer), in such a manner that it is not capable of being easily removed e.g. by a length of wire, cable tie or firmly crimped on. Only one ID tag may be attached to each snare when set.

RECORD KEEPING

- Any person, once issued with an ID number, **must** keep a record of the following:
 - (a) the location of every snare currently set in position
 - (b) the location of every other snare set within the past 2 years (only following issue of an ID number)
 - (c) the date on which each snare in (a) or (b) was set
 - (d) the date on which each snare mentioned in (b) was removed
 - (e) the type and date of every animal caught and found in snares identified in (a) or (b)
- Snare locations must be recorded by reference to a map, GPS or a description capable of readily identifying the location.

This comprehensive list of restrictions means that before even considering setting a snare you must ensure that everything you do is both legal and humane. This can be achieved by following this Practitioners' Guide. For further practical advice and training, contact GWCT, SGA or BASC.

When setting a defined cluster of snares, the central point need only be recorded, along with clear detail on number of snares set. Snares set along a path can have the start and end snare positions recorded with clear detail on number of snares set in between.

SETTING FOX SNARES

- You must not set any snare without the permission of the land owner or occupier.
- Fox snares should not be set where there is evidence of regular use by protected non-target species e.g. badger & mountain hare.
- The presence of foxes can be indicated by tracks, long reddish-brown hairs caught on brambles, twigs or wire, by a strong, musty smell, scats, sightings and kills.
- Snares must be free running (not self-locking) and must contain a safety stop fixed at a minimum of 26cm (10.25") from the running end of the snare. Check the action of each snare to ensure that it is free running and free of kinks. Snares that are frayed or damaged should not be used. It is a legal requirement to inspect the snare and ensure that it is free running at least once a day at intervals of no more than 24 hours. If the snare is not free running it must be removed.
- All snares should incorporate a breakaway device into the snare noose. The breakaway must form the weakest part of the snare.

- Use good quality snares that must incorporate at least two swivels (following 2016 Review), one midway along the snare and another at the anchor point. All components should withstand 208 kilos (460lbs) breaking strain.
- Snares should be held over the selected run by attachment to one or more supports known as tealers which are placed firmly in the ground. Tealers made from fence wire or wooden sticks are easy to make, set and conceal. (See Figure 2.)
- Snares should be set so that the bottom of the loop is at least 18cm (7") above the ground. Increasing the height to 25cm (10") can reduce the risk of badger and hare capture. The loop of the snare should be 15-18cm (6-7") at its deepest point.
- Snares must be firmly staked to the ground or attached to an object in a manner which will prevent the snare being dragged by an animal caught by it.
- It is an offence to set a snare where the animal is likely to become fully or partially suspended or drown. Beware of setting snares parallel or near to fences where deer are known to travel. Ensure there is no risk of a restrained animal becoming entangled or suspended. Beware of setting snares close to or amongst scrub 'clutter', in forestry, alongside water courses or on some steep banks. Anchor stakes should be driven in flush with the ground.
- Snares must be inspected at least once every day at intervals of no more than 24 hours. It is an offence to fail to release or remove an animal, whether alive or dead, from a snare during the course of the inspection. During inspection you should make a detailed note of any snares that have been damaged or removed since the last inspection. If for whatever reason you are unable to check the snare once in every 24 hour period, you should make arrangements for someone else to check them on your behalf, or lift the snare completely if this is not possible. Should the snare have to be re-set, then this must be undertaken by someone who has a snaring ID number until this position is clarified by the Scottish Government. You should inform your local WCO if you suspect an offence of interference or tampering.
- Snares not being checked daily should be uplifted completely to avoid them being illegally reset, to avoid any potential injury to an animal caught and the legal requirement for the snare not being checked once every 24 hours.
- Foxes restrained by a snare should be dispatched quickly and humanely. The body should be disposed of responsibly. Wherever possible, non-target species must be released unharmed. In the rare circumstances that a protected species is found dead or has to be humanely dispatched, your local WCO should be informed. Remember, you must ensure that the snare is still free running and free of kinks before resetting; replace if not.
- Records of snaring activity, including the date each set snare was set or removed and capture details, must be kept. Records must include an accurate location description or a map or GPS record showing the location of snares, which should be copied to the land manager where relevant. A daily diary should record the success of individual snares along with other information, such as mis-catches, problems from interference and general observations. See Snaring Legislation section.
- Snaring records should be updated at least once every 48 hours unless there is a reasonable excuse not to.
- Snare operators should keep their ID details current. They should advise Police Scotland as they change, or annually, or in response to a request from Police Scotland, and to advise them if they no longer operate snares.
- Snaring operators who snare foxes, or those who are designated to check snares on their behalf, should ensure that they have a relevant shotgun or firearms certificate and shotgun or firearm, to humanely dispatch any target species.
- Details of any dispatch of domestic dogs should be reported to police within 48 hours.

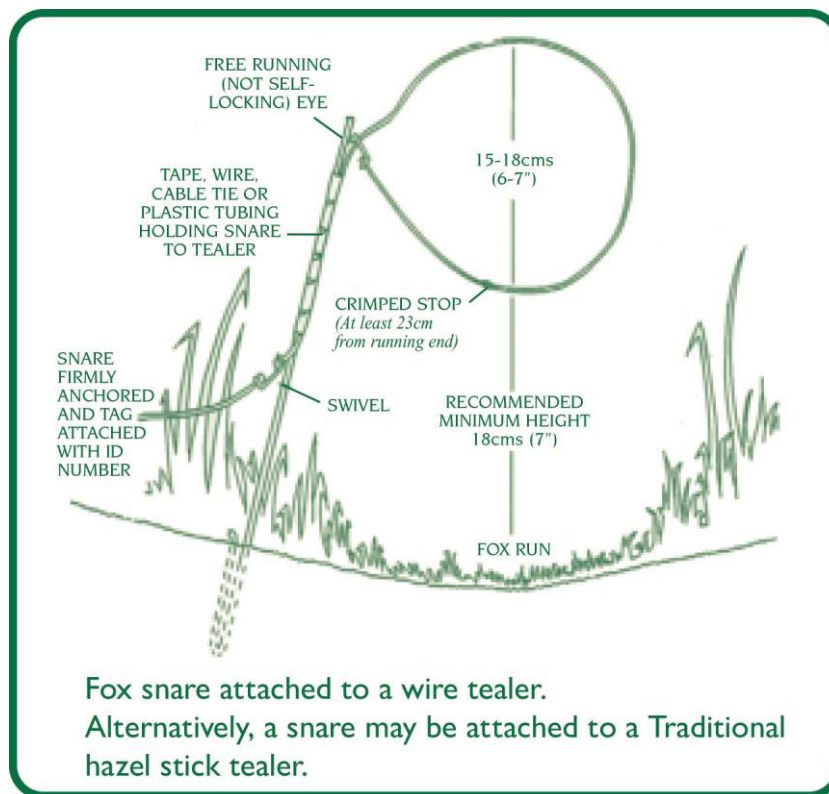


FIGURE 2

SETTING RABBIT SNARES

- You must not set any snare without the permission of the land owner or occupier.
- Rabbit snares should not be set where there is evidence of regular use by non-target species.
- Rabbit snares should be set on well-used rabbit runs, in short vegetation. They should not be set in areas cluttered with obstacles such as saplings, hedges, fences or gates.
- Snares must be free running (not self-locking) and must contain a safety stop fixed at least 13cm (5") from the running end of the snare. Snares that are frayed or damaged should not be used.
- It is a legal requirement to inspect every snare when set and ensure they are free running at least once a day at intervals of no more than 24 hours. If the snare is not free running it must be removed or repaired.
- Rabbit snares should be constructed with 3 or 4 stranded brass wire (doubled so that whilst there are 3-4 strands round the eye, there are 6-8 strands round the noose), ideally creating a loop of 18cm (7") across and 13cm (5") deep for the head of the rabbit.
- Snares should be supported by a suitable "tealer" or set-stick and set firmly in the ground. The bottom of the loop of a rabbit snare should ideally be positioned at least 8cm (3") above the ground; up to 15cm (6") can improve capture success.
- Snares should be securely tethered by a strong, rot-proof cord (e.g. baler twine) attached to a peg driven firmly into the ground.

- It is an offence to set a snare where the animal is likely to become fully or partially suspended or drown. Do not set snares under or near to fences where there is a risk of entanglement. Snares should be set away from cover and in short vegetation, where rabbits are likely to be moving relatively fast.
- It is an offence to fail to release or remove an animal, whether alive or dead, from a snare during the course of the inspection. During inspection you should make a detailed note of any snares that have been damaged or removed since the last inspection. You should inform your local WCO if you suspect an offence of interference or tampering.

Rabbits restrained by a snare should be dispatched quickly and humanely. Wherever possible non-target species must be released unharmed. In the rare circumstances that a protected species is found dead or has to be humanely dispatched, your local WCO should be informed. You must ensure that the snare is still free running and free of kinks before resetting; replace if not.

Records of snaring activity, including the date each snare was set or removed and capture details, must be kept. Records must include an accurate location description or a map or GPS record showing the location of snares, which should be copied to the land manager where relevant. A daily diary should record the success of individual snares along with other information, such as mis-catches, problems from interference and general observations. See record keeping in Snaring Legislation section. Snaring operators should also consider the use of visible markers when setting rabbit snares to ensure none are left behind when uplifting.