

Traps time-line: How the UK got caught

1954		UK Pests Act prohibits use of leg-hold traps (gin traps) and allows only spring traps that have been approved by the appropriate Ministry (then MAFF, now Defra). Four-year transition period allowed, coming into effect July 1958. Gin-traps remain lawful in Scotland until April 1973.
1957		Fenn traps Mk I, II and III approved via Spring Traps Approval Order
1961		Eley Game Advisory Station (fore-runner of GWCT) trial Fenn traps on a wild-partridge shoot
1970		Fenn Mk IV approved via Spring Traps Approval Order
1982		Fenn Mk VI approved via Spring Traps Approval Order
1985		Fur Institute of Canada begins to coordinate provincial and federal work on trapping standards and trap testing
1988		As a result of lobbying by animal rights groups, European Parliament calls for a labelling regime for furs from countries that allow the use of leg-hold traps.
1991		European Council Regulation 3254/91EU bans importation of furs from countries where leg-hold traps are permitted, with effect from Jan 1995. Imports will be allowed only from countries where traps meet internationally agreed humaneness standards.
1991		International Standards Organisation (ISO) establishes Technical Committee TC191 to draw up internationally agreed humaneness standards for both live-catch and kill traps. Committee includes animal rights representatives, who at first seek unrealistic 'instant kill' targets, then totally obstruct the primary aim of the ISO process by arguing that no trap can ever be humane.
1994		Because the EC Regulation 3254/91EU is a unilateral ban on trade, USA and Canada threaten to take the dispute to the World Trade Organisation. To avoid this, Commission Regulation (EC) No 1771/94 postpones effect of fur import ban (originally Jan 1995), stating that adequate progress is being made.
1997		GWCT Review includes article by Jonathan Reynolds warning how international humaneness standards will impact on pest and predator control in the UK.
		European Community concludes an agreement with Russia and Canada on humane trapping standards (AIHTS). This adopts the emerging ISO trap-testing methods, but also establishes minimum humaneness standards (e.g. time to death, proportion of animals killed within this time) reflecting state-of-the art trap performance. These standards are to be reviewed at intervals, the first occasion

		to be 3 years after implementation. The agreement applies only to the 19 species whose fur is commonly traded with Canada, Russia and the USA. Of these, 5 occur in the UK*, though only the stoat may be caught without a licence.
1998		European Commission Decision 98/596/EC lists countries from which furs of named species may now be traded into EU.
		An Agreed Minute between the EU and the USA in effect commits both signatories to AIHTS standards.
1999		EC ratifies AIHTS (Council Decision 98/142/EC)
		ISO TC191 achieves agreed standards on methods of testing traps, though not performance standards. The word 'humane' does not appear in the title.
2001		Canada ratifies AIHTS
		Strong shift of emphasis in (Labour) government as Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) is merged with part of Department of the Environment, Transport, and the Regions (DETR) to become Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Relationship with agricultural industry weakens.
2004		European Commission proposes a draft Directive (2004/0183/COD) to ensure that traps used <u>within</u> the EU conform to the standards agreed in the AIHTS. It is rejected by the European Parliament, essentially because it isn't considered strict enough.
2005		In New Zealand, Fenn traps fail humaneness testing to NAWAC standards (similar to AIHTS), but DOC traps pass. At this stage, this is reported only in LandCare Research Contract Report LC0405/109.
2006		To ensure that at least some approved tunnel trap will be available after AIHTS is implemented, GWCT submits DOC traps 150, 200 and 250 for approval by Defra. Though not ideal in terms of cost in the UK or ease of handling, these traps were endorsed by the New Zealand Department of Conservation (DOC) and were already known to pass AIHTS standards for stoats. Approval by Defra for stoats and mink is based on New Zealand test results (on stoat and ferret) and physical comparison with traps already approved in the UK, rather than on further animal testing.
2007		DOC traps added to Spring Traps Approval Order
		GWCT training courses now include DOC traps and updates on the AIHTS process.
2008		Russia ratifies AIHTS, allowing schedule of implementation to begin in all signatory countries.

		With ratification complete, all traps used for the 19 listed species must be tested and certified within 5 years (i.e. July 2013). Within another 3 years (i.e. July 2016) all non-approved traps must be prohibited.
		New Zealand test results indicating that Fenn Mk IV and Mk VI will fail to meet AIHTS standards for stoat are published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.
2009		Fur Institute of Canada has by now evaluated 450 trap models, an investment of \$18 million in research.
2011		Defra quietly adopts AIHTS testing methods for all new spring trap models. Nevertheless, some new trap models are approved because they are no less powerful than models already allowed, rather than because they meet AIHTS standard. Already-approved traps are not re-tested.
2012		European Commission announces that it now has no intention of revising its draft Directive, and that it is up to member countries to ensure their regulation of traps and trapping is in line with the AIHTS. This leaves one year for traps to be tested and approved to AIHTS standards.
2013		AIHTS deadline for testing current traps passes with no action in UK.
2015		Fur Institute of Canada list of approved kill traps now includes 20 models tested and certified to AIHTS standards for 'weasel' (same species we call stoat, though physically smaller in Canada).
		Defra calls stakeholder meeting during pre-election 'purdah', and proposes consultation on how best to implement AIHTS in the UK. There are just 15 months to go before non-compliant traps must be banned. Defra is confident that legislation to prohibit non-compliant traps will be in place by July 2016, but no stoat traps have yet been tested and approved to AIHTS standards in the UK, so it is unknown what will be lawful after the deadline and whether supplies could be available in time. Trap manufacturers and suppliers have not yet been involved in the process, although sales of some traps could cease abruptly in July 2016, making stock and whole product lines worthless.

- European Community (AIHTS)
- UK government, MAFF, Defra
- Canada
- International Standards Organisation (ISO)
- New Zealand
- Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT)

* AIHTS species occurring in the UK: stoat, badger, otter, pine marten, beaver. In continental Europe, also (native) lynx and wolf; and (non-native) raccoon, raccoon dog, muskrat.