



Code of best practice on the use of snares for fox control in England



MINISTERIAL FOREWORD...

The Government shares the public's high regard for animal welfare, and we are proud to have the highest animal welfare standards in the world. We also recognise the welfare of our wild animals can be protected even further, and more can be done to improve snaring practices.

Snaring is just one part of a range of measures that have to be used to manage some species – the control of which underpins agricultural production, farm animal husbandry, the sustainable harvesting of wild gamebirds, and the conservation of wildlife.

At crucial times of the year – particularly spring and summer – vegetative cover renders other measures very impractical, making the unique effectiveness of modern snares invaluable.

When practised to a high standard, and with adherence to the law, snaring can provide land and wildlife managers with an effective means to restrain target animals before they can be humanely managed.

There is no question though, that if used incorrectly, snares are capable of causing injuries and suffering both to the animals for which they were set and, through accidental capture, to non-target species for which snaring is entirely inappropriate.

This code is designed and owned by the sector, rather than Government. By showing leadership in this area there will undoubtedly be more success in promoting good practice with their members and changing behaviour than Government could achieve on its own.

We support measures that improve animal welfare, including this new code of practice, and it is crucial that we all take responsibility and continue to work together to ensure that best practice is recognised and followed by everyone who uses snares.



Dr Thérèse Coffey MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs



Aim of this Code

- The aim of this Code is to describe best practice when using snares for fox control. It is aimed at those who carry out fox control in the English countryside. The legal requirements are set out on pages 7 and 8 of the Code.

Do you need to snare?

- Always consider non-lethal and other lethal methods of solving the problem with foxes and use snares only if the alternatives are impractical, prohibitively expensive, or would not be effective.
- Before using fox snares, consider whether the need justifies their use, bearing in mind:
 1. The risks of catching non-target animals.
 2. The welfare implications of all captures.
 3. The practicality of alternative control methods.

IF IN DOUBT, DO NOT SET A SNARE.

The Welsh Government has produced an advisory leaflet on the options available for both non-lethal and lethal control of foxes in rural areas and this can be found at:
<http://gov.wales/wildlifemanagement>



Snaring for Foxes

- If you follow the advice in this Code you should be operating within the law regarding animal welfare and avoiding non-target species.
- The legal requirements are set out on pages 7 and 8 of the Code. However, for legal purposes direct reference should always be made to the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Deer Act 1991 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006.
- This Code is not intended to be a training manual. Snare users must be competent before using snares for fox control, therefore training is strongly recommended. For further details on training in the use of snares please contact either: the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust on 01425 651 013 email info@gwct.org.uk, the British Association for Shooting and Conservation on 01244 573 019 email game.deer@bascc.org.uk, or the National Gamekeepers Organisation on 01833 660 869 email info@nationalgamekeepers.org.uk.

Setting fox snares

- **Quality, not quantity:** the aim of any snaring programme should be to set fewer snares efficiently rather than large numbers indiscriminately. The efficiency of snaring is dependent on how well you can set a snare.
- You must not set a snare without the permission of the owner or occupier of the land.
- **To hold, not kill: snares must only be used as a restraining (holding) device.** The purpose of the snare is to hold the fox and avoid causing unnecessary suffering while

the fox is held, until it can be killed humanely. Shooting with an appropriate firearm is a recognised method of humanely dispatching foxes.

- You must only use a free-running snare which is defined, for the purpose of this Code, as a wire loop that relaxes when the fox stops pulling.
- Defra considers a self-locking snare to be a wire loop that does not relax when the fox stops pulling. You must never set a self-locking snare as this is illegal.
- Snares must be attached to a firmly fixed anchor, designed not to entangle the snare or to harm any animals caught. Drag snares must not be used.
- You must never set snares on runs where there is evidence of regular recent use by non-target species such as badgers, deer, otters, farm livestock and domestic animals, as they may be caught or injured by the snare.
- Knowledge of the tracks, trails and signs of both target and non-target species is essential. If you are not competent in identifying the tracks, trails and signs of non-target species, you must not set snares.
- Always use a Code compliant snare, as illustrated and described on pages 9 and 10.
- By law, snares must be inspected at least once every day, however, this Code recommends that snares are inspected twice daily. As most captures are made at night it is recommended that you inspect your snares as soon after sunrise as is practicable. A further inspection should be carried out later in the day to ensure that your snares are in position for the night, and that any daytime captures are dealt with promptly.



IMAGE BY NORTHEASTWILDLIFE.CO.UK

Never set snares:

1. Under or near fences or other obstructions, like saplings, hedges, walls or gates that could cause entanglement.
 2. Where livestock could be caught.
 3. In areas regularly and legitimately used for the exercise of domestic animals, near public footpaths or housing.
 4. On or near to an active badger sett, or on the runs radiating from it.
 5. On footbridges, or on fallen trees or logs spanning watercourses.
 6. In such a way that the restrained animal could become fully or partially suspended, entangled, drowned or strangled.
 7. If forecasted weather conditions are likely to cause poor welfare or prevent daily inspection. Excess heat as well as cold/wind/rain/snow, etc. must be considered.
- You must be competent and equipped to deal humanely with any foxes or other animals that can reasonably be expected to be caught.
 - Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 you are responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that the welfare needs of all animals under your control (including those caught in a snare) are met, to the extent required by good practice. In this context, that the animal is protected from pain and suffering.

IF YOU ARE UNSURE OF YOUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS DO NOT SET A SNARE.

At each inspection the following must be done:

1. Dispatch foxes quickly and humanely. Shooting with an appropriate firearm is a recognised method of humanely dispatching foxes.
2. Non-target species must be appropriately dealt with immediately on discovery. This may involve releasing the animal, or killing it on humane grounds where the animal is injured. N.B. Under section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to release or allow to escape into the wild certain non-native animals, including those listed in Part 1 of Schedule 9 to the 1981 Act.
3. As soon as is practically possible, remove and dispose of all carcasses appropriately in accordance with legislative requirements.
4. Look for any new signs of non-target animal presence.
5. Inspect the condition of the snare. Never use a frayed, kinked, rusty or damaged snare – snares in such condition must be disposed of safely.
6. Check that your snares are set and positioned as intended.
7. Render the snare inoperable if forecasted weather conditions are likely to cause poor welfare or prevent daily inspection.

Remove snares if:

1. The snare is damaged in any way, is old or has become rusty.
2. There are signs of non-target animals, including their capture.
3. They are no longer necessary.

Record Keeping

Recording the locations of your snares could help you to check your snares daily. It also means that someone else can check your snares if you are unable to do so.

Legal Requirements

The use of fox snares in England is subject to legal restrictions, principally through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Animal Welfare Act 2006 and Deer Act 1991. All the offences defined by this legislation relate to the person setting the snare. It is also an offence to knowingly cause or permit another person to commit snaring-related offences defined by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Failure to comply with legislation may lead to prosecution and penalties. These penalties may include a fine or imprisonment or both.



IMAGE BY NORTHEASTWILDLIFE.CO.UK

To summarise, the key legal points are:

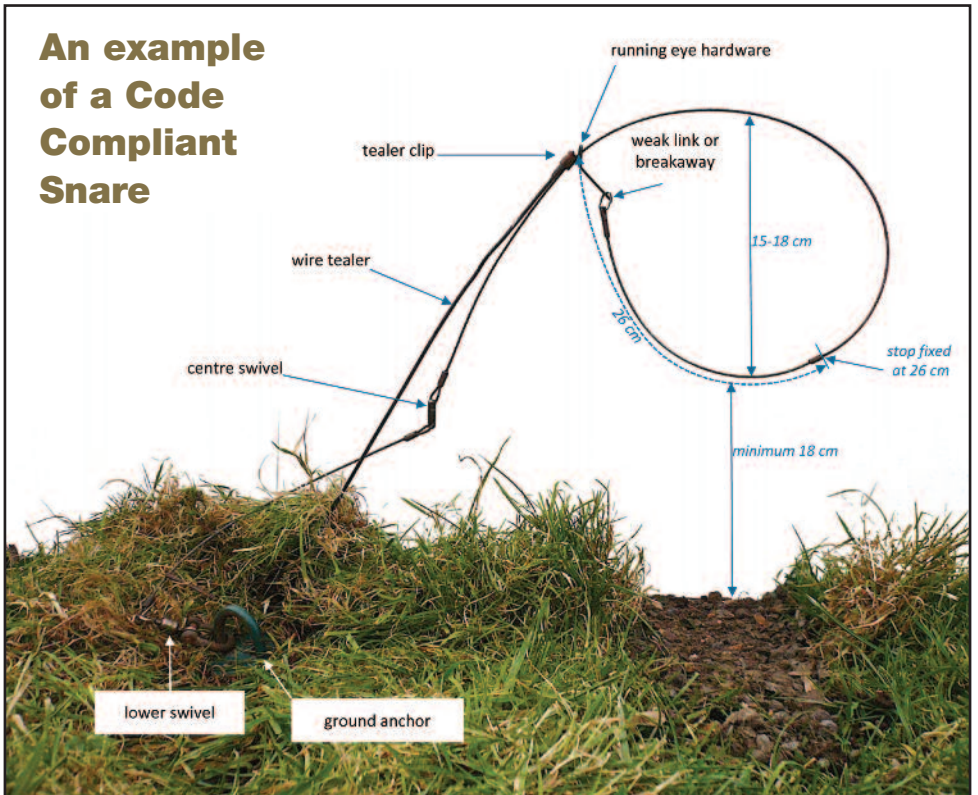
1. Snares must be inspected at least once a day while set.
2. It is illegal to use a 'self-locking' snare.
3. It is an offence for a person to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal under their control (this applies to animals while held in snares and the means by which they are killed).
4. It is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to a domestic animal.
5. It is illegal to set in position any trap or snare calculated to cause bodily injury to any deer coming into contact with it.
6. It is illegal to set in position any trap or snare calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild animal included in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (currently including badger, polecat, otter, red squirrel, hedgehog and pine marten).
7. If a species given protection under Schedule 6 of the 1981 Act is caught unintentionally and has to be killed on the grounds of humaneness because it is badly injured, it is for the person who set the trap or snare in position to justify their action.
8. Under Section 14 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to release or allow to escape into the wild any animal which is of a kind not ordinarily resident in Great Britain in a wild state or included in Part 1 of Schedule 9 to the Act. These animals, which include the grey squirrel and American mink, should be killed in a quick and humane manner.
9. You must dispose of carcasses safely, so they do not cause harm to human health or pollution of the environment.



IMAGE BY NORTHEASTWILDLIFE.CO.UK



An example of a Code Compliant Snare



You must only use snares which have all the components listed below.

- **WIRE.** The wire cable must have a breaking strain of at least 208 kg (460 lbs). Fox snares are typically made of 2 mm wire cable. The wire must not be rusty, frayed, kinked or damaged in any way.
- **NON-MOVEABLE ANCHOR.** Snares must be anchored so animals cannot escape and take the snare away with them. Anchors must be secure enough to prevent non-target animals, which may be stronger than foxes, from moving the anchor. The top of the anchor should be flush with the ground to prevent the animal winding the snare around it. Drag anchors must never be used.
- **TWO SWIVELS.** Swivels allow the wire to rotate freely along its length and prevent the threads of the wire becoming either unwound or over-wound. Wire becomes weaker when unwound/over-wound and is easier for the animal to break, damage and escape. Swivels should be present at both the anchor point and between the anchor swivel and the eye.
- **FREE-RUNNING EYE.** The running eye of the snare must move easily in both directions at the time the snare is set and must remain in this condition throughout use.
- **STOP.** The snare must have a fixed stop to limit closure of the loop. For foxes, this must be fixed 26 cm from the running eye (see picture on page 9).
- **BREAK-AWAY.** The snare must incorporate at the eye as its weakest point a 'break-away' of appropriate strength to allow the self-release of stronger non-target animals.

This Code is based on an equivalent document for Wales produced by the Welsh Government in 2015 and available online at:

<http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/150915-code-of-practice-snares-en.pdf>



IMAGE BY NORTHEASTWILDLIFE.CO.UK

USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS



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for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Defra

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British Association for Shooting and Conservation

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CLA

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Countryside Alliance

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Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

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Moorland Association

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National Gamekeepers Organisation

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Tenant Farmers Association

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