



## SNARE FACT SHEET

### 1 Snares - the facts

### 2 Snares – why we want them banned

### 3 Snares and the law

### 4 Case studies

### 5 How can you help?

#### 1 Snares – the facts

Snares - wire nooses set to catch wild animals - have been in use for a great many years. Typically they are used as a means of killing foxes or rabbits. They are usually placed over the entrances or rabbit burrows or fox earths, or along runs or pathways thought to be used by the target species. The aim is to catch the victims around the neck, so that they die through strangulation or by dislocation of the neck. Some snares, however, feature a mechanism which stops the noose from closing too tightly. These snares hold their victims alive until the person who set them comes back. The animals are then killed, usually by shooting.

There are several types of snare:

**Free-running.** This is the basic type of snare. The wire is threaded through a simple eyelet at one end. This allows free movement of the wire in both directions - hence the term free-running. The snare tightens when an animal caught within it struggles, but relaxes when the animal stops pulling. A variation on the free-running snare is the 'rocking eye snare'. This has an eyelet which is heavier than normal, and does not allow the noose to slacken off so easily. The idea is that this type of snare does not allow a fox to back out of the noose once caught.

**Self-locking.** This type of snare has a small metal device at one end. The wire is threaded through two holes in the metal. The effect of this is that the wire will only run one way. When an animal is caught in a self-locking snare, the noose will tighten, but does not slacken off when the victim stops struggling.

**Dual-purpose.** This type of snare has the same sort of small metal device at one end as the self-locker. When the wire is threaded through one of the two holes in the metal, the snare acts as a free-runner. However, when the wire is threaded through the other hole instead, the snare becomes a self-locker.



A dual-purpose snare set in the self locking position



A close up of the metal bracket on the same snare - note that the wire is threaded through the outermost of the two holes in the bracket



A close up of the metal bracket on another dual-purpose snare. Here, the wire is threaded through the innermost of the two holes in the bracket. This makes the snare a free-running snare

**Not quite free-running - and not quite self-locking.** This type of snare has a V-shaped metal device at one end; the wire is threaded through two holes, one on each side of the 'V'. It seems that the wire does not run as freely as in a free-runner - but neither does it lock fully. Expert opinion is divided as to whether these snares should be treated as free-running or self-locking.

## **2 Snares – why we want them banned**

### **Snares are indiscriminate**

Gamekeepers and others who set snares may take precautions to try to ensure that they will capture only the intended victims. However, it is simply not possible to set a snare in such a

way that it will only catch a rabbit or a fox and nothing else. The fact is that a great many badgers and other non-target animals are caught in snares every year. Other animals caught in snares include dogs, cats, sheep, horses, deer, and even otters. Many of these animals suffer a terrible fate.

### **Snares are barbaric**

In theory the use of free-running snares, and the daily inspection of those snares required by law, means that snared animals do not suffer. They either strangle quickly, or hold their victims for a day at most, until the animals are killed humanely by the persons who set the snares.

Well, that's the theory. In practice it is all too easy to set a free-running snare in such a way that it will cause tremendous suffering. If a snare is attached to a post (such as a fence post), the captured animal in its efforts to escape will end up wrapping the wire round and round the post until the noose is so tight that it causes serious injury. Snares have also been found positioned on the tops of walls or banks, so that when they catch their victims, the animals fall and are hung to death.

Even when a free-running snare is set properly, the wire can easily become kinked or tangled in such a way that the snare acts like a self-locker. A self-locking snare continues to tighten as its victim struggles, but does not relax when the animal stops pulling. This causes the noose to cut through the animal's skin and into its flesh, causing terrible suffering.

A slow death by strangulation - or even near decapitation in some cases - is bad enough. But snares do not only capture animals by the neck. Some animals get their legs caught in snares, and end up with the snare cutting down to the bone. Such animals may attempt to escape by gnawing off their own limbs. Other animals are caught around the body. Both badgers and foxes have been found with snares that have almost cut them in half, the snares around their bodies having tightened to around five centimetres in diameter. Some of these animals were still alive when found.

The daily checking of snares ought to prevent prolonged suffering of those animals which are caught and injured by them. However, there have been many occasions where it is clear that snares have not been checked daily - or even weekly. The discovery of long-dead corpses with snares around their necks, legs or bodies is not uncommon. These animals will have died either as a direct result of their injuries, or by infection of their wounds or even by starvation. The suffering caused to animals by snares is unimaginable - and wholly unacceptable.

### **Outlawing self-locking snares alone is not enough**

Under the law as it stands, the use of self-locking snares is illegal. However, as we have seen, even free-running snares can cause tremendous suffering. This is only part of the problem. Even if it was to be accepted that free-running snares do not on the whole cause as much suffering as self-lockers, there remains the difficulty of defining a free-running snare. Dual purpose snares can easily be converted into self lockers. And now there are newer types of snares, which are known to have maimed and killed badgers, cats, sheep, deer and hares, but which seem to defy classification as either free-running or self-locking. Different 'experts' have different opinions, and the result is a legal minefield when any attempt is made to prosecute a case where animals have been caught in these snares.

**Badger Trust wants to see an end to all the confusion, and an end to all the suffering.  
We want to see the use of ALL snares banned by law.**

### **3 Snares and the law**

The use of snares in Britain is regulated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Under this Act it is an offence for a person:

- to set a self-locking snare in such a way as to be calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild animal (Section 11(1)(a));
- to kill or take any wild animal using a self-locking snare (Section 11(1)(b));
- to set a snare (or other article) in such a way as to be calculated to cause bodily injury to any animal listed in Schedule 6 of the Act (e.g. a badger) (Section 11(2)(a));
- to kill or take any animal listed in Schedule 6 of the Act (e.g. a badger) using a snare (Section 11(2)(b));
- who sets a snare to fail to inspect that snare (or have someone else inspect it) at least once every day (Section 11(3)(b));
- to set any type of snare unless they are an 'authorised person' under the Act (that is, the owner or occupier of the land on which the snare is set, any person authorised by the owner or occupier of the land, or a person authorised in writing by the Local Authority for the area (Section 27(1)); and
- to possess a snare for the purpose of committing any of the above offences (Section 18(2)).

To sum up, the use of self-locking snares, the setting of any type of snare in places where they are likely to catch badgers, failure to inspect snares on a daily basis, and setting snares on land without permission, are all offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

#### 4 Case Studies

**WARNING:** *The following examples show distressing images.*

**1. Location:** Cheshire.

**Further information:** The badger shown in these photographs was caught around its body in a snare. The snare had cut deeply into the body. The animal was clubbed to death before being removed from the snare and dumped on the side of a road.

**Photos:** Chris Allen, Wirral & Cheshire Badger Group



**2 Location:** Gwent.

**Further information:** A snare cut through to the bones on the front leg of this badger. Despite intensive treatment the wound would not heal and the badger had to be put to sleep.

**Photo:** Steve Clark, Gwent Badger Group



**3 Location:** Derbyshire.

**Further information:** The snare that killed this badger was of the legal free-running variety. It had been set on a fence alongside a public footpath. The path had been walked the night before the badger was found, so it had been caught, and had died, overnight. In its attempts to escape from the snare, the badger had thrashed and twisted around until the snare wound up so tightly that animal's front feet could no longer touch the ground. The cheese-wire effect of the snare almost decapitated the victim.

**Photo:** Irene Brierton, Mid Derbyshire Badger Group



**4 Location:** Cheshire

**Further information:** This sow was probably caught in a light rabbit snare. Her wound was treated and she was released back into the wild.

**Photo:** Chris Allen, Wirral & Cheshire Badger Group



**5 Location:** Norfolk.

**Further information:** This badger was caught in a rabbit snare set by a farmer, and died from its injuries. Snares are indiscriminate killers - this one could just as easily have killed a fox or a domestic pet.

**Photo:** RSPCA



**6 Location:** Sussex.

**Further information:** A close up picture showing the horrific neck wound caused by a snare. The badger was found alive with its wind-pipe cut. It was also fly-blown, indicating that it had been in the snare for some days. The badger had to be put to sleep to prevent further suffering.

**Photo:** West Sussex Badger Protection Group



**7 Location:** Essex.

**Further information:** This badger was found alive but in poor condition after receiving injuries from a snare. Judy (as the badger was named) was rescued, treated, cared for, and finally released back into the wild. The photos below show Judy shortly after she had been rescued (her head covered to reduce the levels of stress she would be experiencing), and some weeks later when her wound had healed.

**Photos:** North East Essex Badger Group



## 5 How can you help?

If you find illegal self-locking snares set in position, or snares of any description set in such a way that they are likely to catch pets or protected species, please contact the RSPCA or the police Wildlife Liaison Officer covering the area. In the case of snares set on a badger path or near a badger sett, please also contact the local Badger Group. Say exactly where you have found the snares. If possible, arrange to meet with whoever attends to investigate, so that you can show them exactly where the snares are.

Please **do not trespass** in order to look for snares. Also, please **do not damage or remove any snares** - if you see a snare which you believe to be illegal, render it safe by closing the noose (with a stick for example).

If you find a live badger caught in a snare, please call the local Badger Group (find your local badger group via [www.badgertrust.org.uk](http://www.badgertrust.org.uk) or call Badger Trust on 08458 287878) or the RSPCA as soon as you can. Any other animals found alive in snares should also be reported to the RSPCA. If possible, arrange to meet with whoever attends so that you can guide them directly to the injured animal. Please do not attempt to release the animal yourself. The animal may injure you, or it may suffer further injuries itself. It may even escape with the snare still in place, and die a lingering death. Please do not interfere with the victim, leave the body exactly as you found it so that the evidence can be fully recorded.

Make sure that Badger Trust is informed about any cases of badgers caught:

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