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Ms Christine Grahame MSP  
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*Dear Christine,*

Thank you for your email of 7 February 2017 regarding the use of stink pits in relation to the setting of fox snares.

The use of stink pits are legal and as you point out, the use of farm livestock in stink pits is prohibited under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement)(Scotland) Regulations 2013. However, it is perfectly legal to use other dead animals such as rabbits, deer, foxes, hares etc and birds that have been legally killed.

The Scottish Government (SG) fully recognises the concerns that have been expressed by League Against Cruel Sports and others regarding the continued use of snares in Scotland. This is a particularly emotive issue which has been much debated in the Scottish Parliament in previous sessions.

The SG recognises that it is necessary to control foxes and rabbits to protect livestock and crops and in some circumstances snaring is the most effective way of doing this. The SG is, however, determined to improve standards in the operation of snares, and in particular, to improve the welfare of wildlife caught in snares.

The Scottish Parliament debated the issue of snaring as recently as 2011, prior to the last Scottish Parliament elections, and concluded that it should be retained subject to further changes to the legislation that aim to improve the animal welfare aspects of this pest control method. As such, the SG does not intend to ban snaring at this present time.

The legislation changes included the Snares (Scotland) Order 2010 which requires the fitting of effective stops on snares to prevent the noose closing too far; the action of the snare must be checked every 24 hours to ensure that it is free running; the setting of snares near features that could cause unnecessary suffering are prohibited; and all snares must be securely anchored so that it cannot be dragged away by any animal caught in it.



Further improvements to snaring, to improve animal welfare and to make snaring practitioners more accountable, were introduced in the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011( or WANE), including that all snaring operators must have successfully completed a training course and obtained their unique identification number from their local police force. All set snares must now be fitted with an identification tag containing the snaring operator's identification number, which will identify the person who set the snare, and the target species.

Snaring operators must also keep records of all the snares they have set, including the location of the snare, when it was set, and any animal caught in it. Each snare must be checked at least once a day at intervals of no more than 24 hours to see whether any animal has been caught in it, and whether the snare is free running.

Scottish Natural Heritage have now carried out a review on the previously mentioned legislative changes that have been made to snaring in Scotland on behalf of the SG and a copy of the Snaring Review Report will be laid before the Scottish Parliament shortly. We will introduce further changes if the measures introduced through the WANE Act prove ineffective in improving welfare associated with the use of snares.

*Yours*

*Roseanna*

**Roseanna Cunningham**