

## HARE PRESERVATION TRUST

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### **Opposition to snare ban continues**

The Scottish government has maintained its opposition to a complete ban on snares. Ministers claim an effective method to control predators, such as foxes, was vital. The Scottish Parliament's petitions committee is considering a banning call submitted in March 2008 by the League Against Cruel Sports and Advocates for Animals supported by the Hare Preservation Trust, Hesselhead Wildlife Rescue Trust, the International Otter Survival Fund, Scottish Badgers the Scottish Wildcat Association and almost 11,000 signatures. Supporters of a ban say animals such as badgers and mountain hares suffer appalling injuries and death after being caught in snares. Ministers say the control of predators through snares, helps to maintain Scotland's world-famous shooting (*killing for fun*) industry, boosts conservation and helps farmers to protect their animals.

Like all animals at the top of their food chain, the fox, which is the main target of snaring, self-regulates its numbers according to the food supply and available territory. So it is no surprise that fox numbers are at un-naturally high levels around shooting estates. But killing foxes simply results in increased numbers of fertile vixens and larger litter sizes. It also creates vacant territory for foxes to move into from outside. While it is not unknown for a fox to take a healthy lamb the vast majority are already dead or moribund. Foxes are inveterate scavengers and are mainly in lambing fields looking for afterbirths. Thus they provide a service to farmers by removing potentially diseased material. Foxes are also extremely efficient predators of grass eating field voles and a single fox can save up to 100 tons of grazing grass per year.

### **More coursing convictions**

Three men from north Cumbria have admitted taking part in hare coursing – in one case because the man involved said he liked hare stew! The trio were caught by police near Annan. One was caught at Cummertrees, near Annan, after police spotted his van going slowly, then speeding up, and they followed it. As the police car reversed, officers found a trail of seven dead hares on the roadway which had not been there just previously. A father and son, from Farmoss, Northside, stood together in the dock and admitted deliberately hunting two hares with two lurcher type dogs on land near Cummertrees in November. The father also pleaded guilty to attempting to pervert the course of justice in being the driver of a van which accelerated off on seeing a marked police car in an attempt to dispose of evidence against him. The third man admitted a similar charge of throwing seven dead hares from the rear of the van in an attempt to dispose of the evidence.

***'Future generations will look back on some things in disbelief, just as we look back in disbelief at cock fighting, bear baiting and, more recently, badger digging. One of the things on which they will look back in disbelief is that at the beginning of the third millennium we were still debating in this Chamber whether it was right and proper to allow people to chase an animal to exhaustion, with its killers closing in on it, causing it the most unspeakable fear before its death, and all in the name of tradition.'***

***Ann Widdecombe MP (Conservative) in House of Commons 2002***

### **Waitrose update**

Waitrose continues to ignore our queries on several issues arising from their sale of hare meat, including any use of snares and lead shot on the estates from which the hares are sourced.

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