

# SnareWatch.org

Public reports of snaring in the UK



**OneKind**

Ending cruelty  
to Scotland's animals



Since 2011, OneKind animal protection charity has been appealing for reports about snares found by members of the public from all over the UK through our website [SnareWatch.org](https://www.snarewatch.org). This briefing summarises these reports and our key findings from five years of operating this programme.

These are:

- 1. Snaring is widespread throughout the UK**
- 2. There is an unacceptably high rate of non-target capture, including protected wildlife and pets**
- 3. Snares are having a major impact on animal welfare**
- 4. Regulations in Scotland and the rest of the UK are failing to protect the welfare of trapped animals**
- 5. Snares can cause trauma and shock to members of the public who find them**

We believe that only an outright ban on the manufacture, sale, possession and use of snares will end the suffering they cause.

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## Pet case studies

These snaring incidents were all reported to OneKind via [www.SnareWatch.org](http://www.SnareWatch.org). They are examples of a widespread practice that is causing unacceptable and large-scale suffering across the UK. Only a ban will end the suffering. Help us ban snares on [www.onekind.org](http://www.onekind.org) and report any snaring incidents to [www.SnareWatch.org](http://www.SnareWatch.org).

### Cat loses leg after being caught in illegal snare

Stripey a 4-year-old cat from Ayrshire was found by his owner in an illegal copper snare at the playing fields of a local primary school. His leg was hanging off and he was in a lot of pain. Luckily he did not have to be put down but the vet had to amputate his leg and his owner was faced with a vet bill exceeding £1000.



### Cat caught in snare for 12 days

A cat from Banbridge was rescued out of a snare 100 yards from her house after having been missing for 12 days. The cat had horrific injuries and the vet spent 2 hours removing the wire out of its skin. After that it was facing 2 full weeks of treatment and several months of twice weekly treatments thereafter.



### Dog nearly starves to death in snare

Molly a 7-year-old terrier was found in a snare in Cornwall after having been missing for 10 days. She was found with her leg trapped in a rabbit snare, was severely dehydrated and undernourished. Her leg had to eventually be amputated despite the vet trying everything he could to save it.



### Stinkpit discovered in Colne

A dog walker from Colne was shocked when his dog got trapped in a snare. Luckily he was able to release him quickly. On closer inspection of the site however he discovered a "stink pit". It was a mountain of dead animal carcasses in different stages of decay used to lure animals into the traps.



### Cat strangled by snare

A woman from Nottingham was devastated to find her healthy 2-year-old cat strangled by a snare just 300 metres from her house. On inspection her son and her friend found several more snares in the area. They were outraged by the fact that it is legal to set snares in residential areas with a number of pets.



### Spaniel hanged in snare

A much loved family dog from Norfolk was strangled by a snare set on a bridge in 2015. The spaniel was found by her shocked owner opposite her house in a quiet rural area in Ridlington. The dog must have been trapped in a snare set on a bridge. It then fell off the bridge and was gruesomely hanged.



## Snares and the law

Snares are banned or very strictly regulated in most of Europe. Their use is, however, legal in the whole of the United Kingdom. Regulations in Scotland are more stringent than the rest of the UK but still allow for their widespread use.

Across the UK, snares must be free-running, which means they theoretically stop tightening when the animal ceases to struggle. They must be checked every 24 hours and should not catch protected species including badgers, red squirrels, otters, pine martens, hedgehogs or the wild cat.

In Scotland, snares must be fitted with a stop at 23cm diameter for a fox and 13cm for any other animal, and tagged with an ID number identifying its owner. The owner must complete a training course in order to receive this number from Police Scotland. Snares also need to be anchored to the ground and not set in an area where an animal could become easily suspended or drown, such as close to a fence or water. Animals must be removed from the snare within 24 hours alive or dead and snares cannot be set without the landowner's permission.

With the Scottish snaring regulations due to be reviewed in 2016, OneKind is calling for Scotland to lead the way in the UK and to introduce an outright ban.

## Key findings

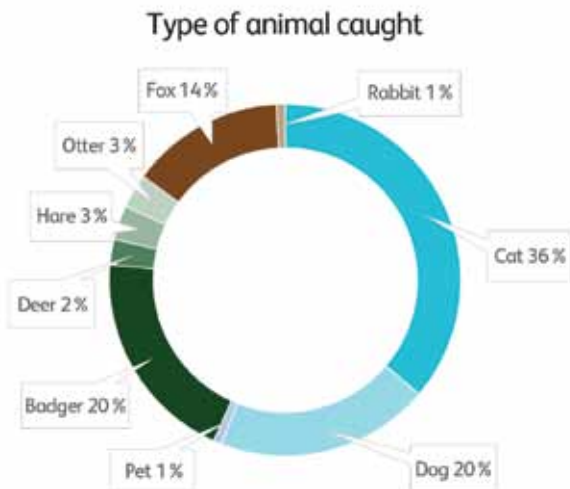
### 1 Snaring is widespread throughout the UK

Reports to SnareWatch demonstrate that snaring is a widespread practice all over the UK. We have received reports from all over the country and are not limited to isolated areas or shooting estates. Indeed, many reports came from quite densely populated areas.



## 2 There is an unacceptably high rate of non-target capture, including protected wildlife and pets

In the UK snares are generally set for foxes, and to a lesser extent, rabbits. Yet the majority (56 %) of SnareWatch reports concern trapped cats and dogs. Less than a sixth (15 %) of all animals discovered in snares and reported to SnareWatch were foxes or rabbits. Shockingly, over a quarter of all animals reported to us were protected wildlife. One in every five animals discovered in a snare and reported to us was a badger. There were also significant reports of otters and deer being victims of snaring.



## 3 Snares are having a major impact on animal welfare

Snares are widely considered to be one of the most inhumane and cruel ways to trap an animal. Trapped animals often die or suffer horrific injuries. Our reports confirm this. They show that snares do not act as a live trapping and restraining device: nearly a quarter of all snared animals reported to us were found dead in the snare. Furthermore over half of the animals discovered while they were still alive were visibly injured. 10% were injured so severely that they later died of their injury or had to be put down, while 6% had to have a limb amputated. As an example, one of the cases reported to us was of a fox trapped in a snare around its

body (pictured). As the animal struggled to free itself, the snare caused horrific cuts to its abdomen.



#### 4 Regulations in Scotland and the rest of the UK are not protecting the welfare of trapped animals

The law requires the use of free-running snares to reduce the risk of the snare wire causing flesh wounds, but reports to SnareWatch demonstrate that such snares can become self-locking if the wire becomes tangled or twisted. Even a trapped animal struggling to free itself can cause the wire to twist thus making the snare self-locking. Inadequately maintained and old or rusty snares can also become self-locking. Our reports show little difference in the condition of animals trapped in legal snares compared to illegal ones. The only significant protection is the requirement in Scotland that snares are not placed close to obstacles that could cause the struggling animal to become suspended or drowned. However, the large number of illegal snares reported to SnareWatch

(59 out of 159) demonstrate the difficulty in enforcing regulations. Stops on snares are, in theory, designed to protect animals from strangulation. However, the placement of the stop is standardised and does not account for the large variation in the size of animals within a species. This becomes a serious problem when an animal that is larger than usual is trapped, or if an animal is trapped around any part of its body other than its neck, such as the abdomen or the leg. Non-target species such as badgers or dogs are also not protected by a stop designed for a fox's neck and can suffer painful cuts and suffocation. The badger shown below was caught in a legal free running snare with a stop. It suffered horrific cuts before it was rescued by the Vale Wildlife Hospital & Rehabilitation Centre.



© SSPCA



© Vale Wildlife Centre

## 5 Snares can cause trauma and shock to members of the public who find them

Snarewatch reports demonstrate that snares are regularly set on popular dog walking paths or close to residential areas. Many people who reported trapped animals to SnareWatch were extremely upset to discover wildlife or their own pets being trapped in a snare. Some even got into conflict with gamekeepers or farmers as they went to help an injured animal in the snare. One incident (pictured below) involved a woman who freed a fox that had been caught in a snare around the abdomen and had obviously been trapped for several hours. The landowner

objected to this action and there was an argument. Conflicts can also arise between landowners and people whose cat or dog has become caught in or killed by a snare. Out of the 72 cases reported to us involving pets, 10 animals were killed in the snare or died of their injuries after being found. Another 7 cats and dogs had to have a limb amputated after becoming snare victims. We have even had 2 cases reported to us where the same pet was caught in snares several times and the owners decided to move a different area because of fear for their pet's life.



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## Wildlife case studies

These snaring incidents involving British wildlife were all reported to OneKind via [www.SnareWatch.org](http://www.SnareWatch.org). They are examples of a widespread practice that is causing unacceptable and large-scale suffering across the UK. Only a ban will end the suffering. Help us ban snares on [www.onekind.org](http://www.onekind.org) and report any snaring incidents to [www.SnareWatch.org](http://www.SnareWatch.org).

### Badger electrocuted on fence in Aberdeenshire

A snared badger died with his head caught on an electric fence. It had been electrocuted for more than 24 hours. The gamekeeper who set the snare got fined £600 for failing to inspect the snare within a 24-hour period.



### Dead fox flung into tree

A woman from Angur was appalled when she found a young fox which had obviously been killed by a snare flung into a tree. Several other snares and disturbed ground where the fox had been struggling for its life were also found at the scene.



### Deer brutally snared in Craigneuk woods

Two walkers discovered a dead deer in Craigneuk woods. The animal had died in the snare and must have been suffering tremendously before its death.



### Stinkpit discovered in Greenlaw

A man discovered a large stink pit while on a walk. A number of animal tracks were leading to the pit which contained carcasses of deer, foxes, rabbits, hares, pheasants, magpies and crows. These act as bait, luring foxes and other animals like pet dogs into snares, which were set around the stinkpit.



### Fox put down after being caught in illegal snare

A fox had to be put down after suffering horrific injuries from being trapped in an illegal snare. A member of the public discovered the animal which had been caught around the rear of its abdomen and called the Scottish SPCA. They had no option but to put the fox down.



### Badger nearly cut in half by legal snare

A man from Wales was shocked to find a dead badger which had nearly been cut in half whilst trying to struggle itself free from the snare caught around its midriff. On contacting the authorities, he was informed that no legal action could be taken as the snare was free-running and therefore legal even though the animal had clearly been left in there for several days.



### Otter dies of injuries after being caught in a snare

An otter was deliberately snared in Somerset. It was caught around the abdomen and had to be taken to a vet hospital for the snare to be removed. It seemed to be in good condition but then got considerably worse. It died within 48 hours probably of internal bleeding.



### Fox badly injured by legal snare

A man from Essex found a very distressed fox in a legal snare. It had been caught around its abdomen. The animal was struggling to free itself and had severe injuries around its waist.



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## If you find a snare

Please report any snares or snaring incidents to [SnareWatch.org](https://www.SnareWatch.org) and, if possible, get photo and video evidence.

If you find a live animal in a snare call the RSPCA in England and Wales (0300 1234 999), the SSPCA in Scotland (03000 999 999), or the USPCA in Northern Ireland (028 3025 1000). We do not advise trying to release an animal yourself as the animal could be injured and require medical attention.

If you find a snare that you suspect is illegal or a dead animal in a snare please report it to the police (101) and make sure you get an incident number.

Remember, whilst snaring is cruel, it is legal in the UK. That means that if you tamper with a legally-set snare you may be committing an offence.

[SnareWatch.org](https://www.SnareWatch.org) is run by OneKind. For more information go to [www.OneKind.org](https://www.OneKind.org)

All images submitted to [SnareWatch.org](https://www.SnareWatch.org) unless otherwise credited.

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