# THE PEST MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE

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## PEST MANAGEMENT ALLIANCE - CODE OF BEST PRACTICE
## HUMANE USE OF BREAK-BACK TRAPS

This Code of Practice refers to spring traps known as 'break-back' or 'snap' traps used for the control of rats and mice. These traps employ a treadle activated, spring-loaded striking bar designed to kill the target by crushing the spinal column. Although the Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958 exempts these types of trap from approval, it is essential that the size and killing capability of the trap used is appropriate for the target species and that it is correctly set to ensure that the animal is killed swiftly.
The following principles should be followed to ensure the highest animal welfare:

1. The best results are achieved by using traps with a treadle rather than the type with a prong to hold bait. Where the trap has a bait receptacle below the treadle (rather than a prong) to hold bait, care must be taken to avoid paste bait contacting the treadle where it may harden and prevent activation.

2. The resistance of the spring when setting must be sufficiently strong to ensure the trap will deliver a lethal blow.

3. The treadle on some earlier traps can be adjusted to either a heavy or light setting. Recent designs incorporate a self-set mechanism which automatically sets the trap to the required sensitivity. Traps should be checked for damage as this may affect the weight required to activate the trap.

4. Traps must only be placed in locations and in circumstances where they present a minimal risk to non-target species.

5. The size of the trap employed must be appropriate for the target species. Traps used to control rats require a considerably stronger spring than those used against mice.

6. To achieve the best results traps should be placed on runs and in such a manner that the target can only cross the treadle and not the rear of the trap. This is best achieved by placing traps in purpose built boxes or narrow run-through tunnels which channel the animal onto the treadle where a kill is ensured. When used in narrow run-through tunnels a trap is required at each entrance with the treadle facing the target animal.

7. The placement of traps in the open is to be avoided as there is no guarantee that the target species will enter the trap across the treadle. There is also a greater risk of non-target capture.

8. Despite the absence of a statutory inspection interval for break-back traps, they need to be inspected regularly to comply with legislation such as the Animal Welfare Act 2006. To reduce the risk of causing unnecessary suffering traps should be placed in purpose built boxes or narrow run-through tunnels. Records must be updated after all inspections. A contingency plan must be in place so that in the event of an emergency, a second appropriately trained person can be called upon to inspect the traps and deal with any captures or safely remove the traps. Where it is known that it will not be possible to inspect traps at appropriate intervals, they must be taken up (even if only temporarily).

9. Records, including location plans, need to be kept ensuring that traps are checked at appropriate intervals. This is particularly important where traps are not fixed in place and there is a risk that they can be dragged from the original location.

10. Any rodents trapped but not killed must be dispatched quickly and humanely by technicians with appropriate training. Placing the trap in a transparent plastic bag and dealing the rodent a sharp blow to the head with a blunt instrument would be an appropriate method of dispatch. Drowning is not an acceptable method of dispatch.

11. All traps must be accounted for. Unless part of an ongoing program, traps must be removed by the technician and the records endorsed accordingly at the end of the trapping program.

The humane use of break-back traps is the legal responsibility of the pest controller, and cannot be delegated to untrained people. All technicians must be suitably trained and competent in trap application, maintenance, removal and the humane dispatch of any target species that is not killed outright. This Code of Best Practice was produced after consultation with Defra and Natural England.

The Pest Management Alliance consists of the British Pest Control Association, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, and the National Pest Technicians Association.

NATURAL ENGLAND