

Code of Best Practice - Spring Trapping

A BPCA Code of Best Practice is a set of written rules which explains how people working in our industry should behave in a particular situation. It encompasses relevant legislation, but is not law in itself. However, were a member to act outside of the norms outlined in the COBP, they may be subject to disciplinary action and/or be in breach of legislation. Members must abide by Codes of Best Practice in their day-to-day work. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the Association.

Spring traps consist of a trigger plate and some form of smooth jaw. They are essential control measures for professional pest controllers, allowing us to control a number of species where toxic control measures may be illegal or inappropriate. However, pest controllers must ensure that their control measures are legal, humane and are carried out with sensitivity.

Legislation

Wildlife and countryside act 1981, (England, Wales and Scotland) & Wildlife (Northern Ireland) order 1985. It is illegal to:

- “Set in position and trap calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild animal in schedule 6”. It is also illegal if any person ‘ Intentionally (or recklessly) kills, injures or takes any wild animal included in Schedule 5 he shall be guilty of an offence’

Protection of Animals Act 1911

- “Where spring traps are used for the purpose of catching, or which are so placed as to be likely to catch, any hare or rabbit they should be inspected at reasonable intervals of time and at least once every day between sunrise and sunset. (there are no spring traps approved for control of Hares)

Pest Act 1954, Agricultural (Scotland) act 1948 & Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011 (Northern Ireland)

- It is an offence to use a spring trap not approved by the government agencies under the spring trap approval orders
- It is an offence to use, or to permit the use, of a spring trap in unapproved circumstances
- It is an offence to sell, or possess any spring trap for such an unlawful purpose.

Certain traps designed for the destruction of pests such as rats, mice and other small ground vermin fall outside of the terms of the Pest Act 1954 (and associated legislation). The Small Ground Vermin Traps Order 1958 identify break back traps for small vermin and spring traps for mole control as control measures to which the rules for spring traps do not apply.

However, control measures such as break back traps should be used appropriately and checked as regularly as the pest controller's assessment dictates. Legislation such as the Animal Welfare Act may still be breached if such traps are not applied in a humane manner.

Considerations when Using Spring Traps

- Traps must always be set after consulting the manufacturer's instructions regarding pest species and trap location. If in any doubt you should not set a trap.
- Where instructed by the manufacturer, traps should be set in an artificial or natural tunnel to prevent the access of non-target species.
- Every effort should be made to avoid trapping non target species. Pest controllers who use spring traps must be able to recognize the signs and evidence of pest activity – if you cannot be assured of the species you should consider a more appropriate treatment method.
- The entrance of trap tunnels should be restricted (with sticks, for example) to prevent the entry of non-target species.
- Spring traps should be firmly anchored in the treatment area.
- Traps should be checked at least once a day, or more often where legislation requires it.
- Traps should not be set in open or accessible areas where members of the public, animals and pets can gain easy access to them.
- Always wear suitable Personal Protective Equipment when dealing with dead bodies and traps to prevent the transmission of rodent borne disease.
- You must ensure that your chosen trap is approved for use in England, Scotland, Ireland or Wales by the relevant government agency in their spring trap approval orders as amended. If in doubt consult your supplier or BPCA.
- The capture and trapping of Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*) must be done under the terms of a Class License WML-CL02. This is available from Natural England, please refer to the link.

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/edibledormice.aspx>

Further Reading

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- BASC Trapping Pest Mammals Code of Practice