British Pest Control Association Code of Best Practice for Live Capture 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 the law itself.

However, were a member to act outside of the norms outlined in the COBP, they may be subject to disciplinary action 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.

Live capture traps can be an essential control measure for pest management professionals. 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) and Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985** state it is illegal to:

- “Set in position any trap calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild animal in schedule 6”
- “Intentionally (or recklessly) kill, injure or take any wild animal included in Schedule 5”
- For birds - general, individual and class licenses are available (some need applying for) and describe the conditions of live capturing certain birds - you must make yourself familiar with these.

**Animal Welfare Act 2006 (England and Wales)** states:

- “An animal is a ‘protected animal’ for the purposes of this Act if - it is under control of man whether on a permanent or temporary basis.”
- “A captured animal must not suffer and should be provided with appropriate shelter, water and food”.

**Species not resident in the United Kingdom**

The **Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996** states it is illegal to:

- “mutilate, kick, beat, nail, impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drag, drown or asphyxiate any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering”

A person shall not be guilty of an offence under this Act by reason of:

- the attempted killing of any such wild mammal as an act of mercy if he shows that the mammal had been so seriously disabled otherwise than by his unlawful act that there was no reasonable chance of its recovering;
- the killing in a reasonably swift and humane manner of any such wild mammal if he shows that the wild mammal had been injured or taken in the course of either lawful shooting, hunting, coursing or pest control activity.

Under Schedule 9 of the WCA, it is illegal to release a grey squirrel into the wild, or allow one to escape. This means if you trap one, you are obliged to humanely dispatch it. You must not let it go as this act would be illegal.

Anyone who carries out, or knowingly causes or permits any of the above acts to occur could be committing an offence.

**Live Capture Traps**

1. The cage should be in good condition and large enough to accommodate the target species.

2. Traps must not be set in a position where the captured animal will be exposed to extremes of temperature, open to predation or the risk of flooding.

3. Appropriate food and water must be provided, to prevent unnecessary suffering.

4. It may be advantageous to leave the cage un-set for a period of time, to allow the target animal to feel safe around the cage and hence increase the chance of success.
Cages should be inspected at least once every day, once set. There are some remote monitoring devices that could be used in some situations, however, you need to be confident in their reliability and your legal responsibility to ensure traps are inspected as per legislation.

Target species must be humanely dispatched as soon as possible after capture and responsibly disposed of.

Non target species must be released unharmed as soon as possible.

Visit frequency
The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 places no legal requirement on the pest controller to check live capture traps, in terms of timescale. However, the Animal Welfare Act 2006, Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) 2006 and Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 place a duty of care on the person who sets the trap and captures the animal. For Scotland, there is an important extra condition: users must place, on each trap, a sign that gives the operator’s ID number and the number of the local police station or the Wildlife Crime Officer for the area.

Domestic animals and pets
Non-poisonous bait can be used to attract pest species into cage traps. However, care should be taken to avoid attracting domestic animals, as injury to a domestic species can result in prosecution under The Criminal Damage Act 1971.

Where domestic cats can be shown to be feral (1st generation born wild) live capture trapping followed by humane dispatch, preferably by a veterinary professional, is an appropriate control measure if the animals are posing a risk to health or to native species. However, cat owners cannot be held liable for their animal’s action, and every effort should be made to determine if the cat is a pet by, for example, allowing a vet to check for the presence of a microchip. If you have any concerns, consider another method of control.

Further reading
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Animal Welfare Act 2006
- BASC Trapping Pest Mammals Code of Practice
- Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011