

Sharon Phipps

From: [REDACTED]@scottishspca.org>
Sent: 15 May 2019 07:51
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fwd: SSPCA beavers
Attachments: doc00669820190514113444.pdf

Good morning [REDACTED]

Please see attached letter which includes concerns, proposed assistance and feedback on the lethal control workshop.

Once you have had time to consider I would be keen to meet and discuss.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Regards
[REDACTED]

Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA)

Tel: 03000 999 999

www.scottishspca.org/join

www.scottishspca.org/rehoming

Scottish Charity No. SC 006467

This message is confidential. If you are not the intended recipient, please inform us and then delete it. If the content of this message does not relate to the business of the Scottish SPCA then it is neither from nor sanctioned by the Society.

If you wish to report an incident involving an injured or distressed animal you must telephone our Animal Helpline on 03000 999 999. Please do not email the incident details as our Animal Helpline staff will have key questions to ask you.



10th May 2019

The welfare of beavers, reintroduction and lethal control advice.

The Scottish SPCA are writing with concerns regarding the reintroduction of beavers in Scotland and subsequent protection status that has been granted as of the 1st of May 2019. Following a telephone conversation with [REDACTED] (Scottish Natural Heritage) Head of beaver reintroduction project on the 1st of May and attending the lethal control workshop on the 2nd May at Murthly Village Hall, Perthshire) the Scottish SPCA does have concerns when it comes to the control of the resident beaver population. We have detailed our concerns and potential proposals to address these in this letter and would be happy to meet with SNH to discuss further.

[REDACTED]

1. Shooting of beavers

The Scottish SPCA has concerns regarding the advice given of shooting beavers whilst they are in the water. These concerns are as follows.

- There is an increased risk of injury due to the shot or bullet being redirected by water or by movement of the beaver itself. There is also an increase the risk of a shot being attempted when the beaver is partially or wholly submerged or indeed another animal such as an otter being targeted.
- Risk of misidentification of target species as stated above. The risk is increased if shot a night, with lamp or thermal imaging. It was noted that this issue was addressed at the workshop on the 2nd of May.

Proposals:

- 1.1 Beavers are trapped and despatched humanly on land. Consideration needs to be taken into account as how the beavers are fed or baited and shot on land.
- 1.2 To reduce the chance of injury shot guns should only be permitted for use when animals are on land.



2. Removal of family groups

The Scottish SPCA has concerns regarding the advice given with regards to removal of family groups of beavers. Current advice includes that all attempts should be made to remove the entire family group and avoid lethal control during kit dependency period. Advice includes entering lodges and burrows including in some circumstances during kit dependency period. If this action is taken SNH should be notified within seven days of the events. The Scottish SPCA has the following concerns regarding this advice:

- These actions present serious welfare concerns in particular the entering and killing of kits during dependency period. Kits are likely to leave the natal lodge via entrances that are underwater making observation and control extremely difficult. Risk of kits becoming abandoned and suffering due to the removal parents and natal lodge.
- Reluctance to consider translocation to approved sites where the presence of beavers could have positive environmental effects in conjunction with the ability to use lethal control could result in unauthorised relocations potentially into areas which are unsuitable or where conflict is likely.
- During the initial stages of licencing and in particular implementation of lethal control, it was confirmed that carcasses will be retrieved for x ray and post mortems but this would be a random sample and not every carcass will be retrieved.

Proposals:

- 2.1 All requests to carry out lethal control during kit dependency period can only be done so after impact assessment and consultation with SNH.
- 2.2 Reconsider translocation and identify areas suitable for release i.e. support from landowners, suitable habitat and positive environmental impacts. Scottish SPCA using skills, experience and resources to assist with transport and translocations.
- 2.3 Scottish SPCA can assist with retrieval and transportation of carcasses so that all can be traced. The Scottish SPCA can conduct radiography and onward transport for post mortem analysis. This will allow for welfare to be safeguarded and populations to be assessed whilst promoting transparency and compliance.



3. Feedback from attending the beaver lethal control workshop on 2nd May Murthly Village Hall, Perthshire

The Scottish SPCA would like to thank SNH for the invitation to attend the workshop under the spirit of joint working and acknowledgement of welfare considerations. We found that the structure of the workshop was clear and defined by being broken down into three sections.

3.1 Ecology

The information on beaver ecology was informative and gave a good introduction and awareness of behaviour. It was pitched at level for people who have basic knowledge of beavers and ecology.

3.2 Management

Overall the information regarding management was clear, practical and made frequent reference to the importance of welfare. Given that lethal control should only be used as a last resort more time could have been spent explaining the potential environmental benefits and mitigation measures including where mitigation has been positive.

3.3 Lethal control practicalities

Lethal control advice was practical and delivered from experienced and showed obvious expertise in shooting, in particular deer. It is accepted that in part attempts were being made to build rapport and cultivate trust however some comments suggested a culture of breach of regulation and it appeared this was known and acceptable.

Stating that beavers were good to eat and could be used for taxidermy could promote killing for reasons other than serious damage.

4. General comments

Given the complexity and very short time beavers have been present in Scotland allowing people to conduct lethal control and destroy burrows and lodges without expert advice could result in compromised welfare of the beavers themselves. This would bring beavers in line with other species i.e. badgers.



Proposal:

- 4.1 Expert surveys to be conducted prior to lethal control and in consultation with SNH. Thereafter only accredited persons to carry out lethal control.

Going forwards the Scottish SPCA would like to request a stakeholder place at any further beaver consultation meetings. We would also like to have a meeting to discuss the above observations and proposals and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Chief Inspector Special Investigations Unit
[Redacted]@scottishspca.org



SSPCA beaver Welfare 10th May 2019

SSPCA proposal	RESPONSE
1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ricochet element is a risk but can be a risk for stoney ground/ being in a trap. Is about managing that risk and is an issue that is mitigated for with other species. In terms of removing family groups trapping has been discounted currently. Will continue to keep under review
1.2	Shotgun at short range is likely to be more effective especially where beaver are working in narrow drainage ditch. The minimum shot size and limit on bore size are to take account of the different lethality elements
2.1	Effectively a policy position. To note that licensing already tightens this aspect up and compare this with the killing of female deer
2.2	From a welfare perspective do we have the knowledge on the impact of translocation where not all in family group are moved en bloc. Is also the policy position of where to put them
2.3	Policy position but will be a trust issue
3.3	A shared approach to wildlife management principles looks to ensure added value where wildlife management is implemented. The decision to control can only be licensed under the framework as described. Cant recall the specific comment in terms of culture of breach SSPCA will be more than aware that securing convictions in wildlife crime is very difficult. It is important that the audience knows that we know it goes on and that we will be looking out for it. If it was in relation to the use of thermal/IR it was a very pointed remark to some individuals in the audience.
4.1	Would suggest that proposal is already being implemented.

20 June 2019