

# Prohibiting glue traps

By Rob Espin & Francesca Nicholls, Wild Animal Law Working Group, UK Centre for Animal Law

*"We will also look to restrict the use of glue traps as a means of pest control to help make sure rodents are despatched in a humane manner. Glue traps can cause immense suffering to rodents and other animals that inadvertently fall victim to their use."*

*- DEFRA Action Plan for Animal Welfare, p.18*

Glue traps are an inhumane and indiscriminate way of addressing issues caused by unwanted wildlife and should not form a part of modern wildlife management techniques. Our recent reform [report](#) supports calls for this Government to act on its claims that the UK is a world leader in animal welfare standards by completely prohibiting the sale and use of glue traps, in order to prevent unnecessary suffering to British wildlife.

Glue traps (also known by names including sticky boards, glue boards and adhesive traps) may take several forms but in essence constitute a piece of card or board one side of which is coated in an industrial strength non-setting adhesive. The traps are designed to catch unwanted wildlife (most commonly rodents) and immobilise them by sticking them to the board.

Unfortunately glue traps cause trapped animals immense suffering as the animals become fully entrapped by the adhesive, including their feet, body and head becoming stuck as they attempt to break free. Independent scientific evaluations have demonstrated that even animals' mouths can become glued shut as they attempt to chew themselves free from the traps. As stuck animals desperately fight to break free of the adhesive they frequently collapse exhausted, commonly vocalising pain and/or panic. Trapped animals may die due to broken bones or torn fur from

their attempts to escape, causing severe external and internal bleeding, whilst some animals perish due to suffocation caused by the adhesive blocking airways. Research shows that 85% of mice caught in glue traps remain alive and experience suffering for over 24 hours.

The suffering endured by animals caught in glue traps has led to the British Veterinary Association (the "BVA") issuing a policy statement finding that the welfare implications of glue traps render them inherently inhumane.

Whilst the intention behind glue traps may be to exclusively target and trap rodents, the traps themselves do not discriminate as to which animals they trap. The adhesive used in glue traps will cause many different types of animal to be caught in the trap and suffer the same suffering and sometimes death as rodents. Pets and wildlife sanctuaries have reported members of the public coming to them with birds, cats and even endangered snakes which have become stuck in glue traps. Whilst the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (the "RSPCA") received over 200 reports of animals not considered to be pests stuck in glue traps in the last 5 years, it is very likely that many more animals have been trapped by glue traps and simply have not been found or saved by members of the public therefore their suffering goes unreported.

Our report supports calls for the Government to follow in the footsteps of those other jurisdictions which have legislated to outlaw the sale and use of glue traps by both consumers and industry stakeholders. These jurisdictions set a clear precedent that glue traps should be prohibited due to the extraordinary suffering they cause to animals and that such a prohibition should not be undermined by any form of derogations. Whilst the text of the Glue Traps (Offences) Bill introduced to Parliament by Jane Stevenson MP is not available to us at present, we hope that this bill will act to address these issues or some of them.

A point wider than trapping which this government should carefully explore, is the ethics of the use of the label "pest" to describe rodents. The Scottish Animal Welfare Commission has already disproved the use of the term, stating:



*"The labelling of target species as 'pests' in this context should be discouraged in the future. It is important to recognise that 'pest' animals have the potential to suffer to the same extent as other sentient 'non-pest' species. In considering all 'pest' control methods, the Commission would like to see these ethical considerations higher up the agenda and explicitly addressed in all future discussions".*

The opinion of the Commission is only strengthened by the current passage through Parliament of the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill, which explicitly recognises the welfare of all animals as sentient beings. This includes rodents targeted by glue traps. This Government should therefore carefully scrutinise the ability for terms such as "pests" to be used in a commercial and official context.

**Read the Wild Animal Law Working Group's recent report, 'Glue Traps and the Case for Reform', [here](#).**