

**Let's halt illegal poisoning now : save our wildlife / Dept. of the Environment.**

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Great Britain. Department of the Environment.

**Publication/Creation**

[S.l.] : Dept. of the Environment, [1991]

**Persistent URL**

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# LET'S HALT ILLEGAL POISONING NOW

Save our  
wildlife

## THE PROBLEM

Farmers, gamekeepers and landowners need to control pests. There are many legal forms of pest control, such as humane trapping, shooting or using pesticides. Pesticides are legal – provided they are used in the correct way and for their proper purpose.

Deliberate abuse of pesticides, usually to kill wild birds or animals suspected of attacking game, farm animals or crops, is illegal. So is their careless use, handling or storage.

Most pesticide users are conscientious and law abiding. The problem is caused by a small minority who must be stopped.

Illegal poisoning is cruel, dangerous, damaging to wildlife and unnecessary.

### CRUELTY

Victims of poisoning often die a slow and agonising death. In many cases this takes place unseen, and the carcass then poses a continued threat to other animals. Other victims, such as family pets, die in front of their shocked owners.

### DANGER

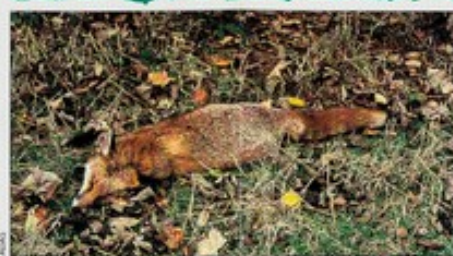
Simply handling poisons or poisoned baits is dangerous, both for the culprit and innocent passers-by.

### DAMAGE TO WILDLIFE

Many protected species of bird and animal are at risk from poisoned baits. Rare birds of prey such as owls, kites, and eagles are particularly vulnerable.

Thoughtless poisoning of wild animals like foxes and badgers leaves an impoverished countryside.

## WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?



Above: foxes are frequent targets. Many incidents also involve domestic dogs and cats. Nearly two thirds of all animal poisonings reported involve these three animals.



Above: rabbit, lamb or pigeon carcasses are often used as bait. The body may be slit open or skinned, and pegged down to prevent removal. The poison may be in the form of granules, pellets, powder or liquid – sometimes injected.

When people find dead animals and birds in the countryside there are a number of possible explanations – including predators and disease.

Poisoning can be suspected if baited carcasses are found, when several dead birds or animals occur together, or if apparently healthy creatures seem to have died suddenly.

Also watch for **hens' eggs** in unusual places, perhaps with a warning mark on them. These may have been injected with poison using a syringe.

Family pets or children taken for a country walk may pick up carcasses or baits, so you should **always** be vigilant.



Below: a child picks up an egg baited with poison. Many baits do not have to be eaten to be dangerous, they can be absorbed through the skin.



Above: almost fifty percent of the birds reported as killed by illegal poisoning are birds of prey such as kites, buzzards and kestrels, or scavengers like crows, rooks and magpies.

## WHAT IS LEGAL?

It is important not to interfere with legal pest control methods, even if you find some of them distressing. To be approved by the Government they must be humane, selective and safe.

Tampering with them will only encourage resort to illegal methods, which are far more dangerous.

- ◆ **Cage traps** can be used for members of the crow family. Decoy birds can be used in the trap but must not be injured. Captured birds must be humanely killed, and non-target species released. Traps must be inspected daily.
- ◆ **Rooks and crows** can be **shot** (though this is not very efficient). Nests and eggs can also be **destroyed**.
- ◆ **Foxes** can be **shot**, or **snared** with a humane free running type of snare provided it is checked daily.
- ◆ **Pesticides** used according to regulations can be set for rodents such as rats, mice and moles, but must **not** be accessible to other animals.



Above: a new-born lamb attacked by rooks or crows. Farmers need to protect their stock by controlling birds with traps like those below.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If you discover a possible poisoning incident:

- ◆ Note the **exact location** on a map and record as many details as you can, the species involved and **any evidence** such as suspected bait. If possible take **photographs** or **draw diagrams** of the scene.
- ◆ **Warn people** to stay away.
- ◆ **Do not touch** the carcass or bait. Poisons can be absorbed through the skin, and amounts used in illegal poisoning are often very large.
- ◆ If you can do so without disturbing the evidence, **cover it to make it safe**.

- ◆ Report the incident as quickly as you can on **0800 321 600** – calls are free – so that a Government investigator can visit the site.
- ◆ If other animals show **signs of poisoning** (eg. poor coordination, convulsions or breathing difficulties) consult a vet **urgently**.

*There is no excuse for breaking the law. If everyone actively fights illegal poisoning by reporting suspected incidents our countryside will become a safer and more enjoyable place.*

When a Government investigator has visited the scene and collected evidence, vets will carry out a post mortem on the dead bird or animal. If this and further investigation reveals illegal poisoning the perpetrators will be prosecuted wherever possible.

If convicted they can be fined up to £5000 for each victim and in some cases they can go to prison.



**LEGAL PEST CONTROL: YES**  
**ILLEGAL POISONING: NO**

**If you suspect poison abuse call immediately on 0800 321 600**  
**CALLS ARE FREE**

