

Chapter 9

This chapter contains some unpleasant subject matter.

The following morning was bright and clear again. They'd been lucky with the weather! The sun was already climbing when Will clambered out of his sleeping bag, face stubbled with a couple of day's beard growth. It was probably the smell of fresh coffee that awakened him from his slumbers. Jason had already coaxed the fire back to life and a pot of strong brew was sending pleasant aromas around the camp.



Jason looked up as Will approached. "Morning, Sleepy-head," he called. "Breakfast is on its way".

Will stretched and yawned. "I could eat a horse!" Will exclaimed.

"I wouldn't let Farmer Green hear you say that," Jason retorted. "He's quite fond of his horse."

The two men enjoyed breakfast and cleared away their utensils. Some were taken and washed in the nearby stream. "Not quite the standard of the Full English Breakfast at the White Lion," Jason said. Will nodded agreement. The two men then equipped themselves for a day in the wild and set off to survey the wood and the surrounding land for the snares the two louts from the village had set. "I'll bet they've set them to the legal standard," Jason said.

"Oh, yeah!" replied Will. "I'm sure they're always careful to stay within the law!"

The problem the men faced was that, sadly, some snares are still not illegal in this country. (See the box on snares and the law.)

Snares are wire nooses used to catch animals. There are two types; a self-locking snare, which *is illegal*, and a free-running snare which is legal. Unfortunately, many 'free-running' snares can easily become self-locking! Free-running snares are made to relax once an animal stops pulling. Unfortunately, animals caught in this way don't tend to stop pulling! They are frightened, and pulling just seems to be the thing to do.

Snares should be anchored to something, so that animals can't drag them away, where they can't be found. Snares should be checked every 24 hours, to make sure that animals aren't caught in them and suffering.

Snares should never be set on fence lines, but they often are. They can cause all sorts of problems, as animals often travel along fence lines. Nor should snares be set on bridges, where animals are likely to cross.

The sun climbed higher as the men tramped through the wood. Suddenly, Jason stopped and pointed. "Our first snare," he said. The two men walked over to where a snare was fastened to a young tree, along a very obvious animal track. Luckily, it was empty. Nothing had blundered into it during the hours of darkness. Jason approached and took the wire between his fingers. He deftly closed the noose until it was no more than a few centimeters wide. "Don't think that's likely to catch much," he grinned.

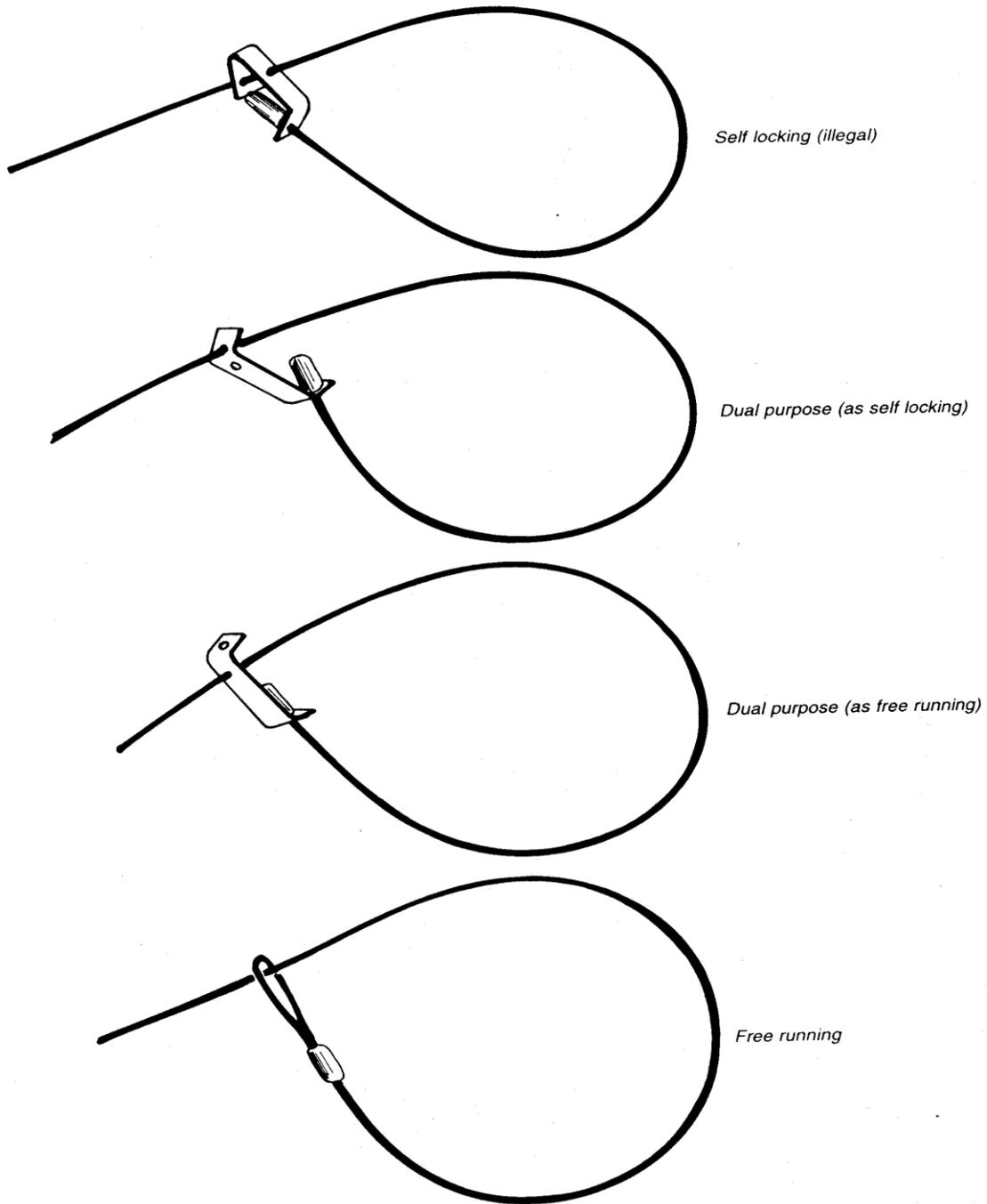
The men continued, and found a few more snares. Two already had rabbits in them, so they took out the bodies and packed them in their backpacks.

It was important that the two men obeyed the law. To break the snare could be classed as criminal damage. To take the snare away would be theft. But there was no law against just closing it and making it useless!

Look out for snares. See if they are near badger setts, or set illegally. Always carry a camera and make notes of any carnage you see.

Always contact the police and the RSPCA when you suspect an offence and also notify us.

FIG 16 TYPES OF SNARE



These are the types of snare used in Britain. Some are legal but others are not. Free-running snares are legal, but self-lockers are not. If you see a snare in the countryside, don't break it. Don't take it. Just run it down to its smallest size to make it useless. You will not have committed any offence and the snare will not harm an animal. Please report any snares you think might be illegal.

Snare Laws in England and Wales

The use of snares in Britain is regulated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Under the Act it is an offence for a person:

1. to set a self-locking snare in such a way as to be calculated to cause bodily injury to any wild animal. (Section 11(1)(a).)
2. to kill or take any wild animal using a self-locking snare. (Section 11(1)(b).)
3. to set a snare (or other article) in such a way as to be calculated to cause bodily injury to any animal listed in Schedule 6 of the Act (e.g., a badger). (Section 11(2)(a).)
4. to kill or take any animal listed in Schedule 6 of the Act (e.g., a badger) using a snare. (Section 11(2)(b).)
5. who sets a snare to fail to inspect that snare (or have someone else inspect it) at least once every day. (Section 11(3)(b).)
6. to set any type of snare unless they are an 'authorised person' under the Act (that is, the owner or occupier of the land on which the snare is set, any person authorised by the owner or occupier of the land, or a person authorised in writing by the Local Authority for the area. (Section 27(1).)
7. to possess a snare for the purpose of committing any of the above offences. (Section 18(2).)

Under the Deer Act 1991 it is an offence to use snares to kill or take deer.

To sum up, the use of self-locking snares, the setting of any type of snare in places where they are likely to catch badgers, failure to inspect snares on a daily basis, and setting snares on land without permission, are all offences under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

The two men tramped on and found another couple of empty snares before lunch time. As the sun finally reached its highest point in the sky, they sat upon a grassy knoll and unpacked their lunch. Dried meat, fruit, oat bars and chocolate would keep them going for a while. Even in the wild, they always tried to eat some of their 'five-a-day'.



After lunch, they journeyed on to the end of the woodland and across a couple of fields to the next copse. As they neared the fence, they saw a grisly sight ahead of them. There, on the fence, was the body of a beautiful fox, hanging from a snare, its coat wafting in the breeze. Their hearts sank. Who could do this sort of thing? Why? Well, of course, they knew who. Why was more difficult.

Jason took out his mobile phone and dialled in a number. "Police wildlife officer please," he

replied to the young lady who answered his call. When the call went through, he spoke to the officer at the other end. "DC Deed? I think there's something up here in the woods that you and DS Rule might like to see. Actually," he added, "you won't like to see it, but I think you need to." He explained their exact position and gave a 12 figure GPS reference, so that the wildlife officers would find them easily and quickly.

Within 15 minutes, the two officers stood with Jason and Will, surveying the corpse of the beautiful fox. Paul Deed, the young detective constable busied himself taking photos and measurements. He looked around for footprints and other evidence. Sadly, Jane Rule shook her head. "Take it down, Paul. We'll take it back to the station. You never know what we'll find. After that, I think you can pay a call on masters Asinine and Dim. No doubt, we'll get a warm welcome in those households!"



"Snare set on a fence line," commented Paul Deed. "They know the law on that."



"Do they?" Jane Rule replied. "I sometimes wonder if these sort of people know much about anything!"



After checking the rest of the snares and making them useless, the sun was beginning to go down as the two men hiked back to their camp. A meal was quickly rustled up, using the two rabbits already killed by the snares. There was little point in wasting them, and the teenagers would be disappointed to find their snares empty the following day! Then they'd settle down somewhere downwind of the sett and hopefully see the evening's entertainment. A few peanuts scattered around the woodland floor would ensure that any badgers who did come out would hang around for a while and give them a good view. Now this is the way to enjoy wildlife, thought Jason.

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