



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT

The Director-General

Brussels,
DG ENV /DCC/lp

Mr Jochen Flasbarth
State of Secretary at the Federal
Ministry for the Environment,
Nature Conservation,
Building and Nuclear Safety
Stresemannstrabe 128-130
10117 Berlin
Germany

Dear Secretary of State,

Subject: Use of soft catch traps for wolf conservation purpose

I thank you for your letter dated 29 January 2018 on the issue in subject.

In your letter, you ask whether Regulation 3254/91 on Leg-Hold traps¹ can be interpreted in a way that excludes so-called soft catch traps from the scope of the prohibition of this Regulation. These soft catch traps, which you consider the best available means to live-catch wolves for monitoring the status of wolf populations and improve their conservation status, have rubber padded jaws (instead of steel teeth) in order to minimize the risk that animals are injured when being trapped.

Let me first stress that the European Commission takes the protection of the wolf very seriously as this species is protected pursuant to Article 12 of the Habitat Directive in Germany. Moreover, the use of leg-hold traps is in principle forbidden by the Leg-hold Trap Regulation mentioned here above.

¹ Council Regulation (EEC) No 3254/91 of 4 November 1991 prohibiting the use of leghold traps in the Community and the introduction into the Community of pelts and manufactured goods of certain wild animal species originating in countries which catch them by means of leghold traps or trapping methods which do not meet international humane trapping standards OJ L 308, 9.11.1991, p. 1–4

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/DE/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:31991R3254&from=DE>

Nevertheless, this Regulation pursues a conservation objective, which should also inform the interpretation of the scope of the Regulation. Therefore, if soft catch traps prove to be necessary for scientific research or monitoring that aims at improving the conservation status of the relevant species, it would run counter the conservation objective of the Regulation to include such traps within the scope of the prohibition by the Regulation.

As a consequence, the use of soft-catch traps could be envisaged for conservation purpose only, provided that, firstly, there is no satisfactory alternative; secondly, that there is no negative impact on the favourable conservation status of the species; and, thirdly, that all the precautions are taken to not harm the animal and to reduce its stress to the minimum.

Practically, such soft catch traps shall be equipped with a transmitter informing immediately the responsible authorities when an animal is caught; in which case, the responsible authorities shall intervene within maximum 30 minutes so that the stress period for the animal is reduced as much as possible and self-inflicted damage are avoided. The animal shall be asleep by a professional veterinarian, shall be equipped with a transmitter and then immediately released into the wild.

In the event that you decide to use soft catch traps in accordance with the elements described above, I invite you to inform the public, via appropriate means (e.g. online information) about the use of this trap for conservation purpose, as part of your wolf monitoring policy.

I hope that this clarifies our position.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel CALLEJA