

COMBATTING HARE COURSING

THE CLA'S ACTION PLAN

SEPT 2020

Hare coursing is an organised criminal activity which continues to blight the lives of farmers and landowners who regularly have to deal with unsavoury individuals who trespass on their land to participate in the 'sport'. It is not simply an incident of unlawful poaching but a conduit to high-stakes illegal betting. Criminal damage occurs as gates and fences are broken to gain access to land, and crops are destroyed by the pursuit which is often filmed from a vehicle moving across the land. The powers to prosecute those involved exist but need to be strengthened.

The CLA has developed the following action plan for farmers, landowners, the police and Government to work together to bring those involved to justice.

THE CLA'S ACTION PLAN TO COMBAT HARE COURSING

- 1. Introduce specific sentencing guidelines for hare coursing** – currently sentences for hare coursing are issued using guidelines which are not specifically linked to hare coursing. Guidelines specific to hare coursing would mean sentences being tailored to have maximum impact on hare coursers such as vehicle seizures and ensuring compensation is paid to the landowner for any damage caused.
- 2. Provide resources** – the National Wildlife Crime Unit must have sufficient resources to be able to treat hare coursing as a priority and fulfil its mission statement to provide "a centralised capacity for intelligence collection".
- 3. Strengthen legislation** – amend legislation to increase the powers of the police and courts, including increasing the fines that can be imposed for poaching offences. This needs to include the ability for police forces to reclaim the cost of kennelling confiscated dogs if a conviction is secured.
- 4. Make additional training available for 101 call handlers** – ensuring those tasked with recording incidents fully understand the crime will help police prioritise investigations.
- 5. Register convicted hare coursers and the dogs involved on the Police National Computer (PNC)** – ensuring police forces are aware of previous hare coursing activity will mean those convicted multiple times receive stronger punishments and dogs repeatedly involved in hare coursing can be confiscated.

LANDOWNERS' VIEWS

"We live in fear of being targeted as we know how vicious the people that take part in hare coursing can be. We've got the scars to show for it."

CLA East member

"Hare coursers cause thousands of pounds worth of damage to land and crops. This leads to losses within our business and we have no mechanism of recovery. More needs to be done to tackle this criminal form of vandalism."

CLA East Yorkshire member

REPORTING INCIDENTS

Landowners and the public should report any hare coursing incidents from a safe location to the police by calling 101 (or 999 if a crime is in progress). Signs to encourage the reporting of hare coursing are available to CLA members via their regional office.



Farmers and landowners who challenge hare coursers can face violence from those involved.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information, please contact the CLA.

Andrew Gillett
Chief Legal Adviser

andrew.gillett@cla.org.uk

Eleanor Wood
Public Affairs Manager

eleanor.wood@cla.org.uk

 @clatweets