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Leaflet

56

Grey Squirrel Control

Judith J Rowe



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PLATE 1 (*front cover*) Pole-stage beech from which grey squirrels have stripped the bark. (CS 35115)

GREY SQUIRREL CONTROL

by Judith J. Rowe

Forestry Commission

SQUIRREL DAMAGE

The grey squirrel causes serious damage by stripping bark from tree trunks during the months of May, June and July. While a considerable variety of tree species of various ages may be attacked, pole-stage beech and sycamore are most often severely damaged. It is this which makes it essential to control grey squirrels annually in and around vulnerable plantations.

The animals can also damage horticultural and agricultural crops and garden produce, and on occasion they may rob birds' nests and compete with hole-nesting birds for breeding dens. Although these problems are local rather than national, their solution, like that of the major problem of bark stripping, lies in the systematic annual application of suitable control methods at the right time of year.

RANGE AND HABITS

The grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis* L.) has established itself as a British resident of mature and semi-mature broadleaved and mixed broadleaved/coniferous woodland. It can survive successfully wherever copses, shrubs and hedgerow trees provide cover — even in suburban parks and gardens. Its range now extends throughout southern Britain and most of Wales. In Scotland it is gradually spreading north-east from the lowland belt between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Female squirrels have an average of three young twice a year. The animals can migrate into an area cleared of squirrels in less than four weeks during the May to July period.

Neither diseases nor predators control overall numbers and it appears probable that the supply of staple winter foods such as beechmast and acorns mainly determines survival and subsequent breeding success. There is considerable fluctuation nationally in the number of grey squirrels over a period of years; when numbers are generally low the incidence of damage is also low. Bark-stripping appears to be stimulated primarily by the social behaviour of the animals, particularly during the mating season, and is only secondarily linked with feeding habits. It is also easier to strip thin-barked trees during this period than at other times of year.

METHODS OF PREVENTING DAMAGE

The arboreal habits of the grey squirrel make it economically impossible to prevent damage by keeping animals out of vulnerable plantations, although isolated mature trees may be individually protected. Research is therefore concentrated on methods of reducing numbers.

Control by introducing disease or increasing predators has been considered but it is unlikely that biological control can produce a complete solution to the grey squirrel problem. No dis-

ease organism specific to the grey squirrel (in the way that myxomatosis is specific to the rabbit) has yet been identified. In any case such an organism would be likely to establish a balance with the grey squirrel so that local outbreaks of severe bark-stripping would still occur. No natural predators of the grey squirrel occur in this country though dogs, foxes, stoats and cats take a certain number of animals, particularly young ones. It is unlikely that

introduced predators, such as martens or goshawks, would search for squirrels in years or at seasons in which they were less common than mice, voles, small birds or pheasants.

Campaigns aimed at exterminating the grey squirrel in Britain have failed in the past because it is impossible to organise systematic, concentrated control over its extensive range. This fact combined with the high rate of replacement which results from rapid breeding and quick dispersal makes it unlikely that any future campaign would be more successful. It is therefore essential to concentrate squirrel control in and around susceptible crops just before and during the damage period. It is a waste of effort to attempt to prevent damage to trees by killing squirrels in months other than April, May, June and July.

Investigations comparing the relative efficiencies of shooting, drey-poking, cage-trapping and tunnel-trapping have shown that cage-traps (live-trapping) or spring-traps in tunnels (kill-trapping) take considerably more animals than shooting, alone or combined with drey-poking. As cage-traps are easier to site and set than are spring-traps in tunnels, cage-

trapping is the method generally recommended. Since spring-traps need no bait, in years when there is plenty of natural food they may be more effective than cage-traps. Neither type of trap takes a high proportion of the population during the months of August to November when there is plenty of food, much of it in the tree tops, and no effective control is possible at that time.

Other methods, such as snaring, have their advocates but it is usually difficult to kill sufficient squirrels over a short enough period to reduce effectively the population shortly before damage may be expected.

Research trials of warfarin poison have shown that this is an alternative to trapping. Like cage-trapping, the method depends upon the animals responding to bait and this limits the period of year when it is practical to poison squirrels. The main drawback is the length of time (6–10 days) required before the majority of animals in a population are taking the poisoned bait. The main advantage is the reduction of labour required to carry out annual control.

CAGE-TRAPPING

Siting

Cage-traps should be set under trees known to be used by squirrels travelling between canopy and ground. Usually large trees with boughs extending well down the trunk—particularly yew trees—provide good sites. The ground should be clear of vegetation: the best site is usually on a carpet of dead leaves.

Bait

Whole-grain baits are essential for squirrels. The most acceptable, readily available bait is yellow whole maize. Squirrels tend to eat only the germ and discard the floury husk complete. If most of the maize has been eaten in this way, squirrels are visiting the site. Mice fragment and eat much of the husk as well as the germ and birds remove the entire grain. Whole-grain

wheat can be used if maize is not available. Acorns are probably the most desirable bait but the costs of collection and storage of sufficient quantities until April make their use too costly.

Pre-baiting

An essential part of operating a trap-line is the pre-bait period. This gives the squirrels a chance to find the traps and become used to feeding from them. Since only three visits in five days are needed there is less human disturbance than if the traps are set immediately and visited daily to check the catch.

On the first day the traps are put in the unset position. All but the front of the trap should be covered with leaves and dead branches. This camouflage has the double function of protecting the captives in bad weather and of reducing

Table 1
TRAPS AVAILABLE

Name	Dimensions mm (inches) Length × width × height	Manufacturer
Legg PB	610 × 610 × 115 (24 × 24 × 4½) 610 × 420 × 115 (24 × 16½ × 4½)	Fuller Engineering Ltd 83 Offington Avenue Worthing West Sussex BN14 9PR
Legg Single	370 × 190 × 210 (14½ × 7½ × 8¼)	1. Fuller Engineering Ltd 2. Gilbertson & Page Corrys Roestock Lane Colney Heath Herts AL4 0QW
Legg Midget	460 × 115 × 115 (18 × 4½ × 4½)	Fuller Engineering Ltd
Fuller Mink	610 × 180 × 165 (24 × 7 × 6½)	Fuller Engineering Ltd

human interference. Bait is broadcast liberally all round the trap and up to 20 metres or so from it. A double handful is placed inside and immediately outside the trap. Two days later, the bait in and outside the trap is replenished but need not be as widely broadcast. On the fifth day only the bait inside the trap is replenished and the trap is set.

Trap-rounds

Once the traps are set they must be visited at least once a day. Single-catch traps in high squirrel populations are worth visiting twice a day. After pre-baiting most of the squirrels are usually caught in the first two days; it is rarely worth trapping after the fourth day. When a number of areas need to be protected with a minimum of traps, it is possible to select and pre-bait sites on a second area while using traps on the first. Traps picked up on the fourth day of trapping can be transferred to the second lot of trap-sites and set after only one or two days additional pre-baiting.

The number of traps required varies considerably with the size and shape of the vulnerable crop, the nature of adjoining woodlands and

the numbers of squirrels. It is possible to work along the rides and racks in woodlands which are divided into compartments. Single-catch traps should be 75-125 metres apart and sited 10-30 metres from the ride edge. The multi-catch traps can be sited 150-200 metres apart. (If this resulted in an even distribution (which the distribution of vulnerable crops rarely allows) the trap density would be approximately one trap per hectare for single-catch traps and one trap per two hectares for multi-catch traps. This can be regarded as the minimum area per trap and 3-5 hectares per trap is more usual).

Twenty to twenty-five traps make a convenient trap-line and one man can manage four such rounds (up to 100 traps or trap-sites per day) if the distances between the trap-lines are not too great.

Extraction of Squirrels from Traps

This is most easily done by holding a sack over the mouth of the trap and allowing the squirrel to run into it. Reluctant animals sometimes respond to blowing or to the trap being tilted so

that the exit hole and sack are at the top of the incline. Once in the sack the animal can be

moved into a corner and dispatched humanely and rapidly by a sharp blow on the head.

CAGE-TRAPS

Legg PB (Legg Permanently-baited Multicapture Trap) (Plate 2)

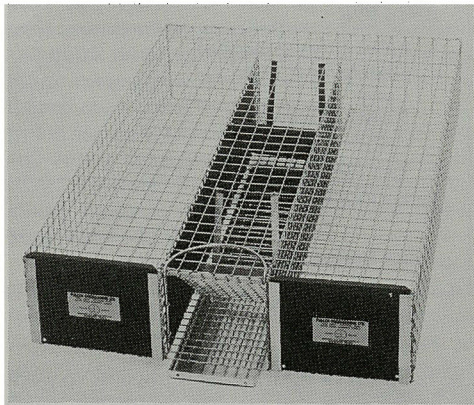


PLATE 2. Legg PB (Legg Permanently-baited Multicapture) Trap. C.4909

This is the largest cage-trap available. It is capable of catching several squirrels and the bait is protected to prevent the first-comers or mice, voles and birds from eating it all. The trap consists of an entrance tunnel, 105 mm square, leading to two large compartments which retain the captured animals. These have sliding metal doors through which the captured animals can be extracted. The catching mechanism consists of two swing doors in the entrance tunnel. These are set at an angle to open one way only and a metal baffle behind each door prevents an animal from opening the door from behind. The tunnel sides and front of the trap are of solid metal so that captive animals are unlikely to deter others from entering. A detachable metal tray for bait, placed below the wire-mesh floor of the tunnel when the trap is in use, protects the bait.

The trap is placed on a level site. The bait-filled tray is buried to make it flush with the soil surface and its front level with the trap front.

Earth can be dribbled through the roof netting to make good the trap floor. The trap should be pegged down to give it extra stability. During pre-baiting the doors of the holding compartments should be removed and the swing doors pegged open to give animals free access. The trap is then set by replacing the doors and removing the pegs.

Maintenance is relatively easy. The doors may need oiling and checking for free swing and the netting should periodically be checked as captive animals may occasionally begin gnawing holes. The traps should be placed upside down if left on the site when not in use to prevent accidental captures in unvisited traps.

Legg Midget (Plate 3)

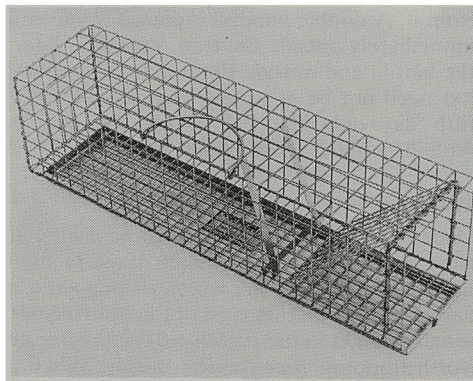


PLATE 3. Legg Midget Trap. C.4910

This trap is essentially a Legg PB modified to make it a smaller, single-catch version. It consists of one swing door with a baffle bar behind it and a small compartment to hold one squirrel (occasionally two). The bait tray runs the whole length of the trap.

It is important that the Midget is pegged

down firmly or set between heavy branches to ensure that it is not disturbed by animals. During the pre-bait period the door must be securely pegged open.

Maintenance is similar to that of the Legg PB.

Legg Single (Plate 4)

This is a drop-door single-capture design which the squirrels enter freely. When they displace a wire treadle at the rear of the trap it drops forward, releasing a wire ring from a wire peg at the back of the cage. A flexible wire links the ring and the drop-door which falls under its own weight once the ring is freed. A second sliding door at the back of the trap provides access for setting. This is done by pulling the ring on the end of the wire down over the peg

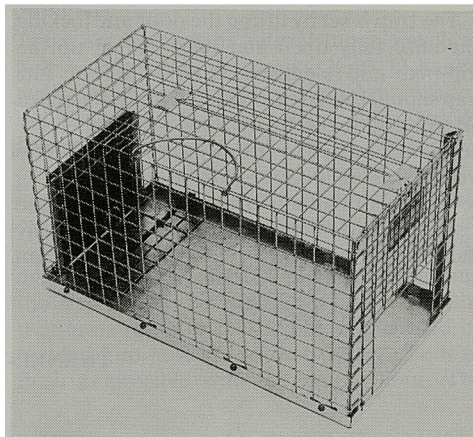


PLATE 4. Legg Single Trap. C.4911

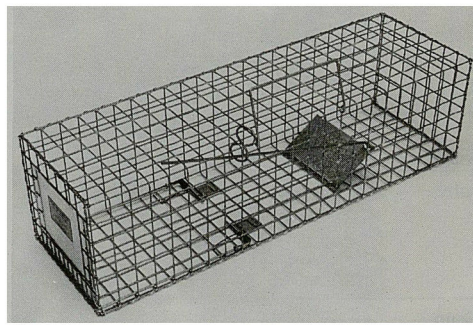
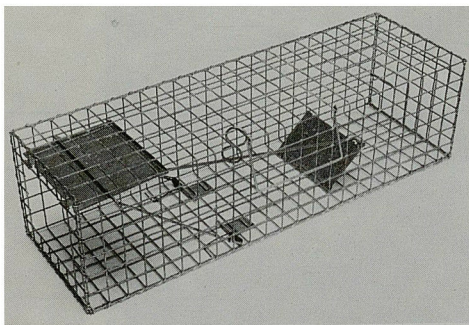


PLATE 5. Fuller Mink Trap, (left, C5040) set, (right, C5041) sprung

and bringing the rear end of the treadle down to the peg to hold the ring in place. The sensitivity of the treadle can be reduced by pressing in the lugs supporting the treadle: this reduces the chances of the trap being fired by mammals or birds lighter than squirrels.

A level site is necessary to make sure that the door can drop freely. It is advisable to peg the trap or stabilise it with logs or stones. During pre-baiting the door is removed from its guides and laid on top of the trap.

The trip wire and the netting are vulnerable as they may be gnawed by captive squirrels.

Twigs and dirt must be removed frequently from the runners which guide the door.

Fuller Mink (Plate 5)

This is a single-capture, hinged, drop-door design. It was originally developed for mink but has proved effective in grey squirrel control also. Squirrels can enter freely for bait and displace a metal trip-plate near the rear of the trap. This releases the metal rod holding the door in the open position. A spring-loaded locking bar drops simultaneously behind the door to hold it in a closed position.

The trap is set by lifting the door and locking bar until fully open and then pulling up the trip-plate and release rod to hold the door. The trap should be placed on a level site and pegged or wedged securely. During pre-baiting the door must be tied or firmly propped open. It is worth sinking a tray, with a mouse-netting cover, full of bait under the trap to reduce the loss of bait to mice, voles and birds. The tray should go under the trip-plate which can

otherwise be made inoperative if soil and twigs from small mammal excavations pile up underneath it. Where pheasants are common, the selectivity for squirrels can be improved by placing two metal pins across the entrance hole to reduce it to a 75 mm gap.

Maintenance is simple; the door and locking bar should be checked to see they are dropping freely and firmly and that the release rod is not twisted or bent.

TUNNEL-TRAPPING

Spring traps (also called humane traps or tunnel traps) are sometimes more useful than cage

traps for the experienced trapper when a rapid kill in a fairly small area is required (provided

Table 2
APPROVED SPRING TRAPS

Name	Weight g (oz.)	Supplier
Juby	990 (35)	Gilbertson & Page Corrys Roestock Lane Colney Heath Herts AL4 0QW
Fenn Mark IV	910 (32)	A A Fenn Hoopers Lane Astwood Bank Redditch Worcs
Imbra	910 (32)	Not made now
Lloyd	790 (28)	Not made now
Sawyer	340 (12)	Not made now
Fuller Garden	1530 (54)	Not made now

sufficient traps are available and they can be set in places normally investigated by the squirrels).

Legislation

Under the Pests Act 1954 and the Protection of Birds Act 1954, spring traps may only be set in some form of tunnel so that no birds or other animals are at risk. Only traps which have been approved under the Spring Traps Approval Order 1957 and subsequent Amendments (1966, 1968 and 1970) may be so used and the animals against which they may be set are specified for each trap. The spring traps currently legal for taking grey squirrels are shown in Table 2.

Siting

Traps are best set in natural tunnels such as hollow tree roots, dry drains, holes in banks, walls and hollow stumps. Artificial tunnels can be constructed from turf, logs, pipes, bricks, flat stones or boards and a useful site is often produced by driving sticks at an angle against a log or tree (Plate 6). Artificial tunnels should be camouflaged with leaves and sticks.

The tunnel should be about 600 mm (24 inches) long. Its internal dimensions around the trap should be just sufficient to give the trap-arms room to strike. The trap should be bedded into position so that the treadle is as flush as possible with the tunnel floor. The

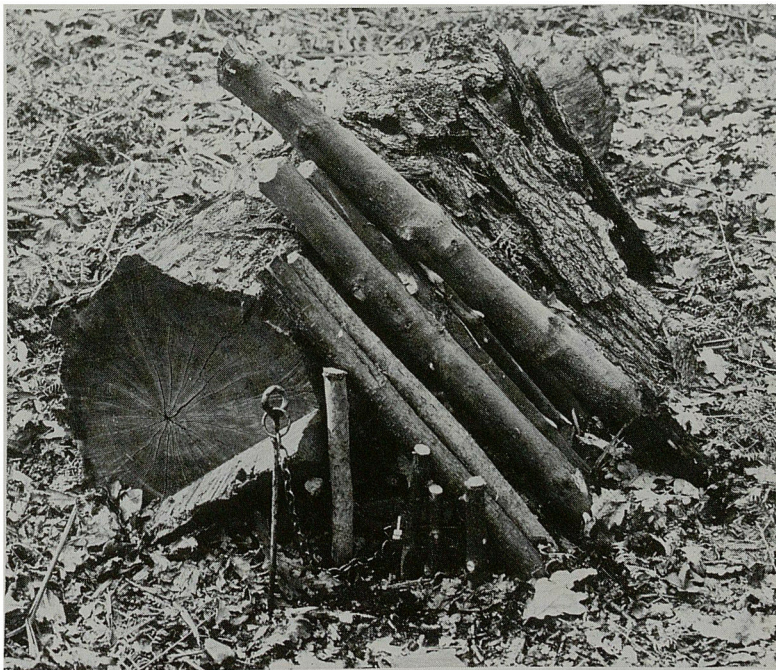


PLATE 6. An artificial tunnel, with a spring trap set within it. D.3821

entrance should be reduced to about 60-75 mm (2½-3 inches) wide with sticks driven in vertically at the sides. Baiting is unnecessary if the traps can be set on natural runs but usually a scatter of bait increases catches, particularly when food is short in late winter or early spring.

Trap-rounds

The traps must be visited daily; traps that have not caught should be sprung every 4 or 5 days to prevent rust from reducing their efficiency. All traps should be stored in a sprung position when not in use.

SPRING-TRAPS

Imbra (Plate 7)

Although this trap is out of production, both Mark II and Mark I versions may be used against the grey squirrel. The operation of the trap-arms requires that artificial tunnels are constructed in two parts either side of the trap—care must be taken that the trap is nonetheless covered. It should be firmly pegged with the chained peg attached to it.

Fenn (Plate 8)

Only the Mark IV version is available though the older models may also legally be used. A safety catch allows it to be safely bedded in the

tunnel. The position should ensure that animals pass between and not across the arms.

Juby (Plate 9)

This should be held on a firm surface to be set whereas the Imbra, Sawyer and Fenn can be set in the hand. Like the Fenn, the Juby has a safety catch which should be used while the trap is being placed in the tunnel.

Fuller (Plate 10)

The squirrel entering this trap is killed by a heavy blow on the head. The trap can only be sprung by touching the bait tray and this should

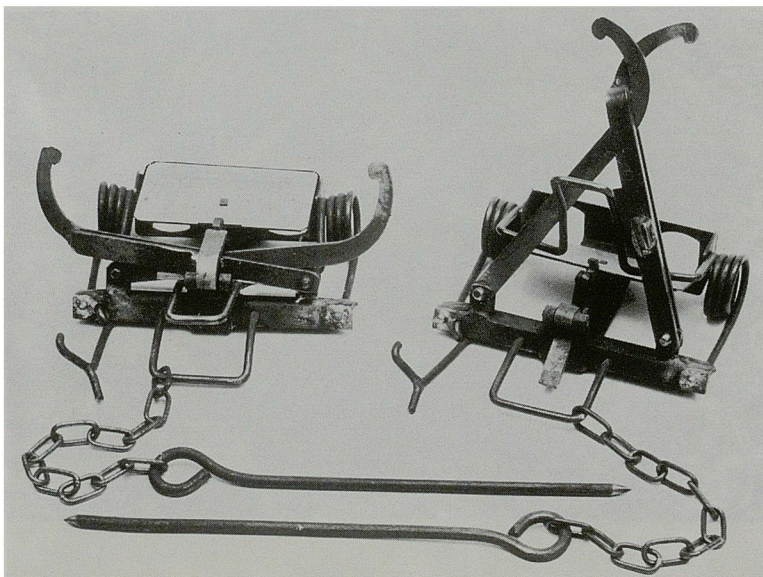


PLATE 7. Imbra trap set and sprung. C.4916

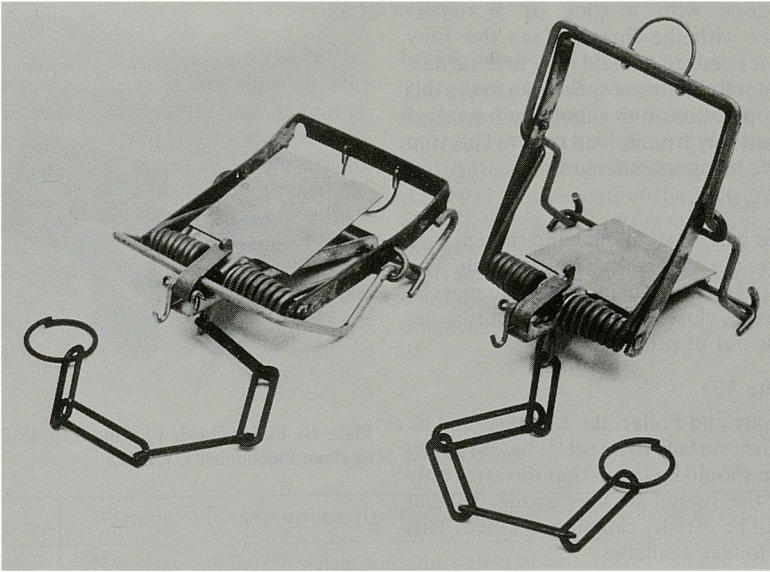


PLATE 8. Fenn trap set and sprung. C.4917

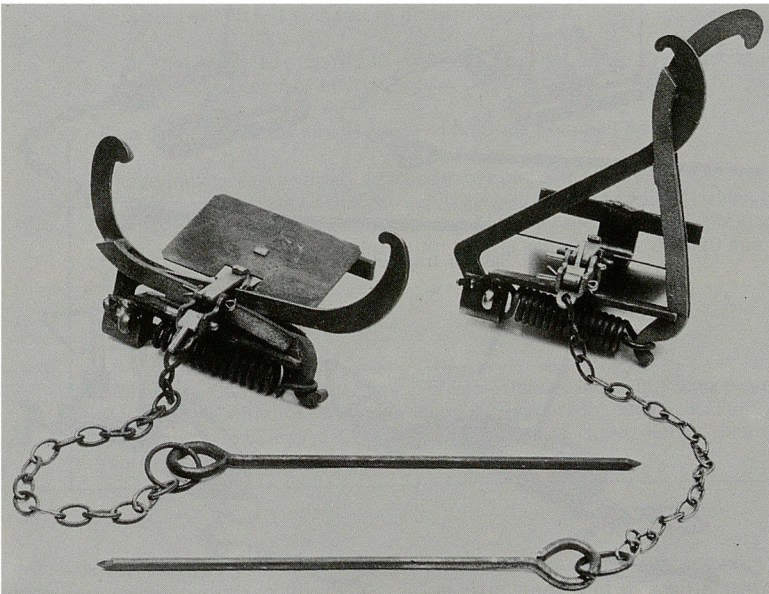


PLATE 9. Juby trap set and sprung. C.4915

only be done with a stick or a rubber hose—*never* with the fingers. Like the Juby and Lloyd it needs to be held on a firm surface while being set; the strong spring can make this a difficult operation. Bait should be funnelled on to the bait tray from folded paper. This trap is no longer being manufactured.

Sawyer (Plate 11)

The Sawyer can be set in the hand though care should be taken as it lacks a safety catch. The tunnel should be constructed to ensure that the animals pass as close as possible to the treadle. This trap is out of production.

Lloyd (Plate 12)

Like the Juby and Fuller, the Lloyd should be held on a firm surface to be set. It has no safety catch. Care should be taken that the arms only just clear the tunnel as they swing, so that animals will be cleanly caught and killed. This trap is no longer available.

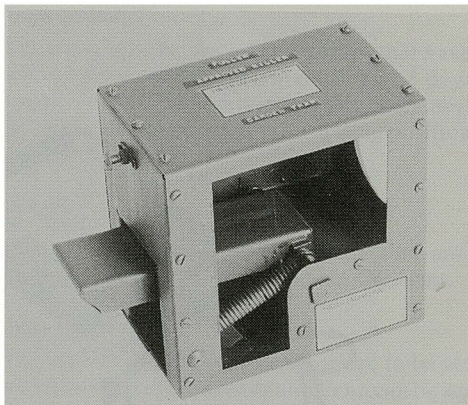


Plate 10. Fuller Garden Spring trap. (Side cut away to show mechanism). C.4913

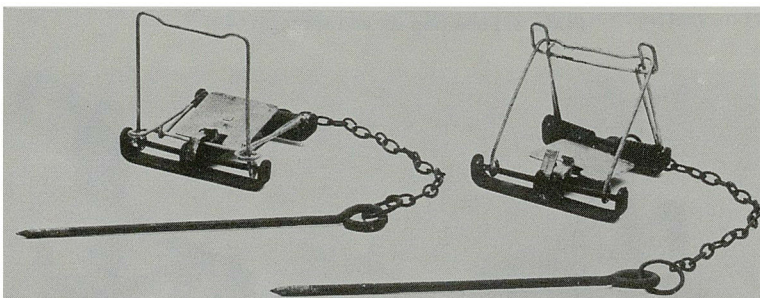


PLATE 11. Sawyer trap set and sprung. C.4921

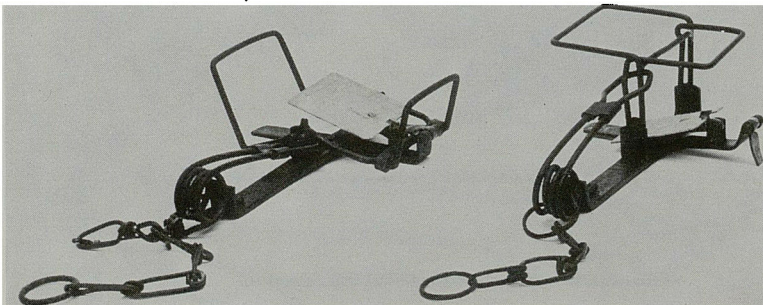


PLATE 12. Lloyd trap set and sprung. C.4867

POISONING

The anti-coagulant rat poison, warfarin, can be used to reduce squirrel populations in and around vulnerable crops at the time of year at which damage is expected in the same way as is recommended for the most effective use of traps. The animals must feed on the poisoned bait for several days in succession before they succumb. If their feeding is interrupted for a few days they may recover. Trials suggest that it will be six to ten days before bait-take reaches a peak and the majority of squirrels are feeding on the poisoned bait.

Legislation

The use of warfarin for grey squirrel control in England and Wales is defined in the Grey Squirrels (Warfarin) Order 1973 made under the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1972. This specifies the bait, poison concentration, method of presentation and counties in which warfarin may be used. The limitations are designed to reduce the risks to other wildlife, particularly red squirrels, and to domestic stock.

Table 3
PROVISIONS OF 1973 ORDER

Poison	Warfarin: 3-(α -acetylnbenzyl)-4-hydroxycoumarin or its soluble salts.
Concentration	Not exceeding 0.02% weight warfarin/weight of bait.
Bait	Whole grains of wheat over which the warfarin is evenly distributed.
Method of Presentation: outside buildings	In a hopper (Plate 13) made up of two components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a tunnel not less than 230 mm long and not more than 100 mm internal diameter or internal square dimensions, ii. a container of any size or shape to hold the poisoned bait. <p>The container must be firmly attached to one end of the tunnel and securely closed when holding poisoned bait so that the bait is accessible only to animals which have entered and passed along the length of the tunnel. Access by an animal to the poisoned bait at the junction of tunnel and container must be at a gap not more than 20 mm high and no wider than the tunnel.</p>
inside buildings	As for rat control.
Excluded Counties (except inside buildings)	Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland, Durham, Lancashire, Norfolk East Suffolk, Isle of Wight, Anglesey, Caernarvon, Denbigh, Flint, Merioneth, Cardigan, Montgomery, Carmarthen. (Areas are those defined before the 1974 reorganisation).

Poison

Poisoned wheat should not be prepared on a do-it-yourself basis from commercially available rat killer preparations. Poor mixing could

create greater risks for other wildlife and domestic stock and it is difficult to distribute the poison evenly over the whole wheat grains

to give the low concentration required. If the poison is not evenly dispersed in the bait, a proportion of the squirrels feeding may not receive an adequate dose.

A mixture of poison, sticker and dye is avail-

and less palatable. While adequate hoppers can be produced by do-it-yourselfers, suitable hoppers holding c.2.5 kg (Figure 13) are available from The Alton Metal Works Co., Ltd., Mill Lane, Alton, Hampshire or Fuller

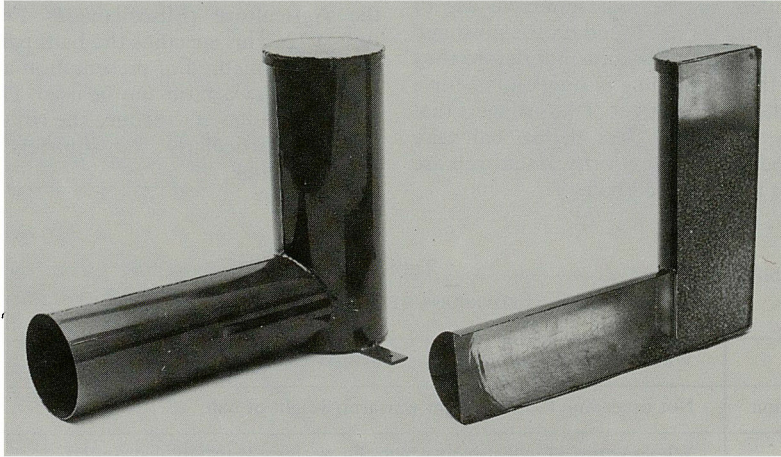


PLATE 13. Poison hopper complete, and in section to show bait in gap at junction of tunnel and container. C.4920

able from Rodent Control Ltd., 70 Queens Road, Reading, Berkshire. This must be added to the bait as directed to give the correct concentration of warfarin on a given quantity of wheat.

Hopper Design

The most important feature of the legislation on the method of presentation is the definition of the hopper. Animals can only reach the poisoned bait by going through the tunnel. This considerably reduces the number of species of mammals and birds at risk from feeding on the poison. The container may be of any size and shape and from it the bait trickles into one end of the tunnel through a narrow gap. A large container (holding more than 5 kg (11 lbs) of bait) is probably inadvisable: if the poisoned wheat gets damp it may stick or begin to germinate and the bait may become less accessible

Engineering Ltd., 83 Offington Avenue, Worthing, West Sussex, BN14 9PR.

Hopper Siting

Hopper sites should be chosen in the same way and at the same spacing as single-catch cage-trap sites. The object is to get as many animals as possible feeding as soon as possible on the poisoned bait. It appears that approximately 1 hopper to 4 hectares is an average density but in some areas it will be necessary to increase or decrease this figure. It is unlikely that hoppers will need to be closer than one to one hectare. It should be remembered that it is important to reduce squirrel populations in woodlands adjoining vulnerable crops as well as in the crops themselves just before the damage season. Since poisoning involves perhaps one weekly visit (rather than five with trapping) it may be possible for estates to cooperate during

the control season in the difficult situations where vulnerable pole-stage crops adjoin mature woodland and copses over an estate boundary.

When hoppers are first put out, a few hand-

scrape it out to the entrance. It is advisable, especially if hoppers are to be used in woodlands to which the general public has access, to have them clearly labelled POISON even where they have been camouflaged.



PLATE 14. Warfarin hopper positioned out of reach of badgers on a raised wooden platform. B.8814

fuls of unpoisoned bait should be scattered around the site to attract squirrels. Yellow whole maize is attractive and shows up better than wheat and there is no risk that poisoned wheat is scattered by accident. The hoppers must be pegged or wedged firmly in position with logs and stones to guard against accidental spillage and camouflaged with branches and leaves to reduce interference. In some cases it may be advisable to sink the tunnel in the ground to keep the hopper upright and make the problem of camouflage easier. When this is done the earth should slope gradually down into the tunnel entrance and the tunnel floor itself should be flat to prevent water running in. It is important that the tunnel should not be tilted down sufficiently steeply to allow bait to run down and encourage small mammals to

One visit weekly to a hopper holding 2.5 kg of poison bait should normally be adequate. It may be worth checking hoppers a little more frequently when squirrel populations are high particularly between the sixth and fifteenth days of poisoning.

At each visit, the bait should be checked to make sure that moisture is not causing the grains to stick together in the gap and stop bait flowing freely from the container to the tunnel. If a thin stick is used to free a blockage care should be taken to avoid pulling too much grain forward into the tunnel. Any spoilt bait should be removed from the hopper and taken away for safe disposal. A scoop or jug is advisable for topping up the hopper with poisoned bait. It is important that any spillage at the hopper is cleared up at each visit and not

allowed to accumulate. If badgers (or other animals) are tipping hoppers it may be advisable to lift the hoppers up on tables (Plate 14) if it is not practicable to change the sites.

When poison ceases to disappear, the hopper may be left *in situ* but must always be emptied. Unused bait may be spread under cover to dry and then stored in labelled polythene bags in a dry place.

Risks to Other Animals and Humans

The only risks to humans, domestic stock and game lie in misuse of warfarin. The risk to most other wildlife is reduced by the adoption of the tunnel entrance but a few birds, small rodents, rats and red squirrels may explore such tunnels. Birds are extremely resistant to warfarin poison and no evidence could be found in field trials of deaths resulting from feeding on the poisoned grain. Small rodents (particularly wood-mice and bank-voles) in the vicinity of hoppers will succumb to the poison bait but at the density required for squirrel control and at the time of year when poison can be effectively used, breeding in the unaffected population between hopper sites should provide adequate

replacement. In the course of field trials it has not been possible to demonstrate any material effects on the overall population of small mammals in a woodland nor on the predators such as foxes, weasels, stoats or tawny owls to which voles and mice are important food items. To keep this risk as low as possible, it is important that the numbers of hoppers used are kept to a minimum and that unused poisoned grain is removed from hoppers which are not in use.

The main areas of red squirrels in England and Wales have been protected by the legislation which precludes woodland owners and managers in those counties with viable red squirrel populations (as shown by the Ministry of Agriculture Squirrel Survey 1972) from poisoning grey squirrels. These areas of exclusion will be subject to regular review. In woodlands outside the excluded counties in which both red and grey squirrels are present it is recommended that warfarin should not be used.

All users of warfarin in areas close to nature reserves should notify the appropriate County Naturalists Trust or Nature Conservancy Reserve Wardens of their intention to use poison.

DREY POKING

The value of this method of killing squirrels for preventing damage to trees has become increasingly dubious—though it is one of the better ways of realising the value of grey squirrel for sport on a rough shoot. Research has shown that the high rate of movement of squirrels just before and during the damage period of May to July can result in a squirrel population being replaced in four to eight weeks. Drey poking can only be efficiently carried out while the leaf is off the trees in late winter and early spring and any impact made on the squirrel population then is likely to have only a brief effect on numbers. In addition, not all squirrels live in dreys; animals lodging in holes in trees are safe from poking (Plate 15). Another reason why drey poking invariably results in fewer dead squirrels than a trap-line in the

same area is that some squirrels are usually actively foraging and may well remain out of dreys during drey poking operations. Drey poking is most effective in wet, cold and windy weather from which the squirrels are most likely to be sheltering and at the time of year when the early litters are still unweaned.

A drey poking team should consist of one or two men to handle the poles and one or more guns, with a dog capable of taking any squirrels that come to the ground. The poles are in ten two-metre lengths of light aluminium tubing with spring clips to join the sections and a hook-top for dislodging the dreys. It is essential to touch the drey gently at the outset: squirrels then come out cautiously, often singly, whereas a savage jab sends them springing rapidly away. All dreys should be systematically des-



PLATE 15. Tree holes are probably more important than dreys for the survival of grey squirrels in mature woodland. A.5725

troyed. Even apparently old and dilapidated dreys often hold squirrels that have dived for the nearest cover on hearing the drey poking team in the woods. The poles are available from Reynolds Tubes Co. Ltd, Hay Hall Works, Tyseley, Birmingham 11 or from Gil-

bertson & Page, Corrys, Roestock Lane, Colney Heath, Herts. AL4 0QW.

It should be noted that using metal poles in the vicinity of overhead cables or power lines is highly dangerous.

CONTROL IN PARKS AND GARDENS

While any of the control methods already described may be used away from woodlands, it is safer to trap than to poison in areas where dogs or children might disturb and scatter poison bait. If poison hoppers are used, they should be clearly labelled POISON and firmly pegged or wedged to keep them upright.

Individual mature trees may be protected by

a metal sleeve. This should be at least 75 mm deep and the bottom edge should be at least 1.5 metres from the ground. The seam should be smooth so that the animal cannot get a toe-hold. This is only suitable for trees whose crowns are at least three metres from that of any other tree and which are unlikely to increase markedly in diameter.

Enquiries relating to this publication should be addressed to the Publications Officer, Forestry Commission Research Station, Alice Holt Lodge, Wrecclesham, Farnham, Surrey, GU10 4LH.

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