

A landowner's guide to

MONITORING AND PREVENTING ILLEGAL HUNTING WITH SNARES

What is a snare?

A snare trap is a simple piece of wire, cable, twine or nylon fashioned into a noose. The noose is then anchored to trees, fence posts and other vegetation, and positioned in such a way to capture animals either by the foot (placed parallel with the surface) or by the head or body (suspended vertically).



Snare with guide sticks



Nylon rope snare



Wire snare against a pole

What does the law say?

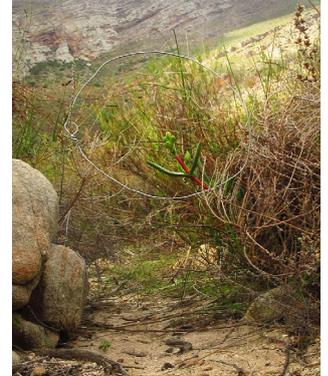
Hunting with snares is specified as a prohibited hunting method in terms of the Nature Conservation Ordinance No.19 of 1974, specifically section 29 (d).



“...29. Prohibited ways of hunting.—No person shall unless he or she is the holder of a permit authorising him or her to do so, hunt any wild animal— (d) by means of any trap...”

Where are snares placed?

Snares are placed along game trails or fence lines where there is a lot of animal activity. The nooses are carefully camouflaged or held in place with fine vegetation, and twigs or rocks are often placed to direct animal movement towards the snare. Some hunters even go as far as baiting their traps or placing them directly in front of animal dwellings (such as porcupine burrows). Stands of alien and disturbed natural vegetation tend to be hotspots for snaring activity.



Snare in a path



Snare placed in front of an animal dwelling



Wire snare in a vineyard

Why do people use this method of hunting?

Materials used to make snares are cheap and easy to come by. Snares are lightweight, can be carried inconspicuously and are not easily detected in the landscape, if one does not look out for it specifically.

Snare hunters who took part in a survey* in the Western Cape (2017/18) indicated that the bushmeat is mostly used for nutritional self-use. In some instances, animals are snared for their skins (to be used in regalia and head dresses) and in rare cases even for traditional medicine (muthi).**



* Nieman, W.A., Leslie, A.J., Wilkinson, A. Wossler, T.C. 2019. Socioeconomic and biophysical determinants of wire-snare poaching incidence and behaviour in the Boland Region of South Africa. Journal for Nature Conservation. Volume 52.

** Nieman, W.A., Leslie, A.J., & Wilkinson, A. 2019. Traditional medicinal animal use by Xhosa and Sotho communities in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine, 15:34.

What are the concerns about hunting with snares?

Animal welfare is a major concern since caught animals die a slow, painful death or can be severely injured or maimed if they manage to escape. The practice is highly wasteful since active snares are often not checked at all, resulting in captured animals simply rotting away. This method of hunting is extremely indiscriminate in that the hunter cannot select for species, age or sex of animals caught.



Do snares pose a threat to biodiversity?

Private property harbours a large proportion of biodiversity in South Africa. A recent study* (2017/18) in the Western Cape indicated that snaring activity is widespread and common on private properties bordering on protected areas.

A subsequent patrol project by the Cape Leopard Trust has confirmed this and hundreds of snares have been removed. Snare hunters who took part in the initial survey indicated that the species mostly caught are porcupine and small antelope such as duiker, klipspringer and grysbok. This is particularly concerning since porcupine and small antelope form the staple of leopard diet in the Western Cape. Although predators are not targeted *per se*, they use the same habitat and paths as their prey and can themselves also be ensnared. There are a couple of reported cases where leopard and caracal have managed to break free from a snare anchor point, but with the snare still cutting into the body. If such individuals manage to survive, it is likely that they will become so-called damage causing animals (repeat offenders involved in livestock depredation events) due to an inability to effectively hunt natural wild prey.



Porcupine and small antelope form the staple of leopard diet in the Western Cape but are the animals most commonly caught in snares.

What can you do to prevent illegal snare hunting on your property?

- Forewarn all permanent and seasonal workers that snaring is illegal and will not be tolerated (include clause in contracts).
- All other contractors entering the property (i.e. wood cutters, trail builders, alien clearing teams etc.) should be made aware of zero tolerance towards snaring.
- Engage in conversation with the workforce to understand the underlying factors driving bushmeat hunting and snaring activity, and try to resolve those matters.
- Educate the workforce about the negative aspects and impacts of snaring.
- Conduct regular, visible patrols to find and remove snares.
- Limit/restrict access to materials that can be used to make snares (i.e. discarded vineyard wire and cabling used in shade and wind netting).
- Share knowledge and create awareness about snaring activity among neighbours (51% of owners/managers of properties where regular snare activity was recorded in a recent study, were unaware of this happening and did not know what to look out for).



ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY



How can you contribute to monitoring and research?

You can report snares in the Western Cape via the Cape Leopard Trust website. The CLT's online "Snare Aware" tool is free and easy to use on your phone or computer. The data you collect will aid the CLT and CapeNature in monitoring snaring activity and employing adaptive management strategies.



Find the Snare Aware database here:

app.capeleopard.org.za/



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