

East Lothian man convicted of setting illegal snares



An East Lothian man has been convicted of setting illegal snares following a Scottish SPCA investigation.

Craig Aitken, 43, of Carlisle Place, Haddington, appeared for sentencing at Edinburgh Sheriff Court on Wednesday 25 May. Aitken was given a 180 hour Community Payback Order and a Restriction of Liberty Order requiring him to remain within his home between the hours of 9pm and 8am for a six month period.

Aitken previously pled guilty to setting illegal self-locking snares at Seggarsdean Farm without authorisation in order to cause unnecessary suffering to animals, contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Aitken also admitted stealing two trail cameras set up by the Scottish SPCA to record and identify the suspect involved in the setting of the snares.

Commenting on the investigation and court case, an undercover Scottish SPCA inspector said, "Images of Aitken carrying out this offence were captured using specialist video and camera techniques.

"A number of trail cameras and a live feed real time recording video camera were placed within a hedgerow in an effort to capture images of a suspect checking and re-setting the self-locking snares.

"This was a detailed enquiry carried out over a period of weeks, where we worked closely with the landowner and, with their support, were able to use specialised evidence-gathering techniques.

"Self-locking snares are constructed to cause the death of an animal. They become tighter as the animal caught struggles to free itself and will almost certainly cause serious injury, major suffering and a slow painful death.

“We found 47 self-locking snares set along a livestock fence at Seggarsdean Farm and they were set in such a way that any animal or bird using the fence could be targeted.

“Aitken had no permission to be on the land and was not authorised to set these snares by the landowner.

“We welcome Aitken’s conviction as this sends out a strong message that the Scottish SPCA will pursue those involved in illegal snaring activity and that the courts will deal with them appropriately.”

Photo by Scottish SPCA