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General Licences: March 2022 update

Introduction

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update on the general licensing regime, particularly as it relates to the control of wild birds in England. It also details the work which the NFU has been doing, on behalf of our members, to ensure that these general licences (GLs) remain in place for the farmers who rely upon them to protect their crops and livestock. Links to the current versions of these GLs can be found at the end of this briefing.

Updated information can be found on NFUOnline <https://www.nfuonline.com/sectors/livestock/livestock-news/bird-control-licences-advice-for-members/>

A GL can be used for activities that carry a low risk to the conservation or welfare of a protected species. There are a [series of these licences](#), and those relevant to farm businesses include licences for control of pest birds and stoats, and also for release of gamebirds close to protected sites.

General licences for pest bird control: background

Following a legal challenge by Wild Justice on 25 April 2019, Natural England (NE) revoked three GLs which were used to control wild birds in England. Responsibility for licensing in England was taken over by Defra and the GLs continue to be issued by Defra with input from NE.

Defra announced on 18 June 2020 that it would extend its ongoing GL review until the end of that year. Together with NE, Defra also assessed other areas such as the use of GLs on and around protected sites and types of traps which can be used alongside GLs. Following at the end of 2020, three new licences came into force on 1 January 2021: GL40, GL41, GL42. Those licences were valid until 31 December 2021 and have now been reissued and are valid for 2 years from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2023.

During the consultation process the NFU was clear that the new general licensing regime must be a straightforward system that enables farmers to control a range of species in order to prevent serious



NE will launch an online Gamebird Advice Service in March to assist with plans for summer releases. When live, this service will be found [here](#) or the email for any gamebird related enquiries is gamebirds@naturalengland.org.uk

General licence for control of stoats

NE introduced a new GL for control of stoat on 1 April 2020. It is no longer lawful to use certain types of traps and stoats may only be caught in spring traps or live traps listed in the GL.



