

Date: 13 December 2012  
Our ref: WLM / 2011 / 1801  
Your ref:



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Dear [REDACTED]

## **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**

### **Buzzard predation of free-range laying hens [REDACTED]**

Thank you for meeting with me at the farm, on 11 December 2012, where we talked about the decision to issue a licence to permit the live capture and removal of the Buzzards (and place them in captivity with experienced keepers), rather than to shoot them. You will not be expected to catch nor take away the Buzzards, these are actions [REDACTED] will carry out for you. However, [REDACTED] need your help and are thankful for your continued patience and cooperation with what has been a long drawn-out process.

You may recall [REDACTED] about a range of methods [REDACTED] use to catch the Buzzards. Perches and a 'crow trap' enclosure will need to be constructed well in advance of attempting to catch the Buzzards. This is to get them accustomed to the presence of these new perches and traps, so that they start using them [REDACTED] actually attach and set the traps to catch. [REDACTED] not know how long it will take the Buzzards to start regularly using the perches and start dropping in the 'crow trap' enclosure, it might take days or weeks, so to get things going, [REDACTED] like you to do the following: -

#### Perches

During winter, it has been observed that the Buzzards like to perch along the southern fenceline nearest your home. [REDACTED] like to encourage the Buzzard to get used to only using two perches along this fenceline. [REDACTED] like you to provide these and this is what they should look like: -

Two perches, one a few posts along from the near corner and the other behind the ruin. Each perch should comprise a simple, sturdy flat, plank of wood, not less than 100 mm wide and 200 – 500mm metre in length, screwed or nailed to the top of a two-metre high fence-post. Although mentioned during my site visit, a perch that abridges two fence-posts up to three metres in length might be a little too long. Perch lengths may need to be adapted to attract Buzzards to use them.

The tops of these perches should be tightly wrapped in a single layer of chicken wire that can later be used to attach components of a noose-carpet trap. A thick plastic mesh, gauze or artificial turf-like material could be placed on top of this. Mono-filament nylon netting must not be used, since this could ensnare birds' feet. Perch coverings will need to be securely stapled down to each perch to get the Buzzards used to standing on them without discomfort or entanglement, and needs to be completely flush with the timber.

It will be necessary to prevent Buzzards from perching upon other fence-posts. Ideally all, but certainly many of the fence posts beside each perch should be proofed by banging a 6-inch nail into the middle of the top of each fence post, just enough to secure the nail. Cut-off conical drink containers could be used, as you suggested, but be wary of making the fence-line look too artificial, which could spook the Buzzards into using another fence line to perch on. I suggest that it would be best to try using nails first.

### Traps

In case traps set upon the fence-post perches do not work, [REDACTED] also like to attempt to trap Buzzards in a full-size walk-in 'crow trap', using a Larsen or ladder trapping mechanism. These 'crow traps' are semi-permanent structures that are constructed on site. A 'crow trap' enclosure should be constructed near the fence-line, away from the chicken sheds and, if possible, avoid being visible from the road and public rights of way. You can either construct your own from scratch using the specification provided or purchase pre-fabricated frames (of the dimensions and size as per the spec. attached and details below).

Either way is acceptable, but the important thing at this stage is to construct the outer frame (and door) without fitting the Larsen trap door or ladder trapping mechanism, i.e. just build the partly open topped trap frame. Tempting as it might be to construct the whole trap to catch crows, [REDACTED] this does not occur yet for the reason that if a Buzzard was caught instead, and [REDACTED] not available to come and collect it, the Buzzard may have to be released (for welfare reasons) and [REDACTED] then not get another chance to catch it.

Please refer to the attached sheets for details. The basics of what this trap frame should look like are as follows:

A full size 'crow trap' enclosure, with a lockable door, but without the top fitted, should comprise a timber frame covered in standard hexagon chicken wire mesh. The frame should be secured to the ground. A 2.5 x 2.5 metre square frame with 1.5 metre high sides should be sufficiently large to allow Buzzards to drop in. Please let me know if you think that hens could jump inside. Remember, in being roughly 'M'-shape (looking from the short side) in profile when eventually fitted with the ladder top, the sides will become roughly 1.8 to 2 metres in height with the central strip (where the ladder goes) still 1.5 metres high.

A 'T'-shape perch should be placed inside, e.g. use a shovel handle, c.75cm in height (from the ground) and two-thirds (of the trap length) away from the side door.

### Pre-baiting

Both the perches and the floor of the trap frame can be pre-baited to attract Buzzards. It is preferable to use Rabbit or something other than chicken, since [REDACTED] to disassociate Buzzards from predating hens, but a recent kill could be used to pre-bait, if only to avoid the Buzzard taking another live hen (which they seem to do if you remove the kill).

Use pre-baiting sparingly as [REDACTED] not wish to attract crows to the area. Also, please ensure that bait, such as Rabbit, does not contain lead-shot. Rabbits should either be live-caught and despatched, or shot in the head and the head removed.

### Images of traps

Examples of traps can be seen on the internet, for example by using key words 'ladder trap' with a search engine such as Google. A similar search using the keyword 'Larsen trap' is likely to show images of smaller traps, which are not suitable for Buzzards, although [REDACTED] recommend a similar-looking trap door mechanism. Be aware that although you may find lots of examples of traps, these are not designed to catch Buzzards and hence our specifications may be slightly different. Note also that the ladder part may be slightly different to that in the attached spec. [REDACTED] go through this with you in the New Year in order to finalise what [REDACTED] will work best.

### Monitoring

Please maintain a log of your observations of the Buzzards, particularly their use of the perches and, if constructed, sightings of Buzzard inside the open topped 'crow trap' enclosure. This information is important to help us gauge when will be the best time to fit and set the traps and to have everything ready to transport the Buzzards away if caught.

Also, it will be really valuable to maintain your log of predation losses, during and after trapping. If the Buzzards are caught and taken away, [REDACTED] like to see the difference this makes and, of course, if any more Buzzards are out there causing you problems.

### Costs

It is expected that you, as the licensee, would provide and incur the costs of perches and the 'crow trap'. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the final setting up of a Larsen or ladder-operated trapping mechanism, if this method is used.

[REDACTED] veterinary costs, transporting and re-homing Buzzards. [REDACTED]

### What happens next?

After the Christmas & New Year break, I will telephone you to see how things are going, to ask whether or not Buzzards have started using the perches or landing inside the crow trap enclosure; and to address any queries or problems you may have. As before, if circumstances change, or if you have any queries, please contact me on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] [@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk), although be aware I will not be immediately available at times over the festive period.

If you experience a problem with our service, please let me know and I will try to resolve the issue. Alternatively, you may wish to write to the Head of the Wildlife Licensing Unit at the address above. To find out more about Natural England's complaints procedure, you can call our Enquiry Service (Tel: 0845 6003078; or email: [info@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:info@naturalengland.org.uk)) or view the details on our website <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/contact/complaints.htm>.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Lead Wildlife Adviser

Direct dial: [REDACTED]