

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2011

EXPLANATORY NOTES

THE ACT – COMMENTARY ON SECTIONS

Part 4 – Other Wildlife Etc.

Section 33 – Protection of badgers

198. **Section 33** of the Act amends provisions of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
199. The 1992 Act provides for five separate offences in relation to badgers: taking, injuring or killing (section 1); cruelty (section 2); interfering with badger setts (section 3); selling and possession of live badgers (section 4) and marking and ringing (section 5).

Subsections (3) to (5)

200. It is already an offence to knowingly cause or permit interference with a badger sett (section 3(2) of the 1992 Act). Subsections (2) to (5) create new offences of knowingly causing or permitting any of the other offences in the 1992 Act, except the offence of wilfully remaining on land or refusing to give a full name or address under section 1(5) of that Act.

Subsections (6) and (7)

201. Under the 1992 Act as originally enacted, licensing functions were split between SNH and Scottish Ministers based on the reason for granting the licence.
202. Subsection (6) amends section 10 of the 1992 Act to provide that the Scottish Ministers are the licensing authority (“the appropriate authority”) with power to grant a licence for any of the listed reasons, except where they delegate licensing functions to SNH or a local authority as set out below. Before granting a licence, the Scottish Ministers are required to consult SNH.
203. Subsection (7) inserts a new section 10A into the 1992 Act.
Delegation of licence-granting power – inserted section 10A of the 1992 Act
204. Section 10A of the 1992 Act allows Scottish Ministers to delegate any of their licensing functions to SNH by written direction, or certain development functions to a local authority by order subject to negative procedure (see subsections (8) and (9)) following consultation with the local authority, SNH and anyone else affected by the making of the order. If a local authority has been delegated licensing functions, they must consult SNH before granting or modifying a licence.

Subsection (8)

205. Subsection (8) amends section 11A(3) of the 1992 Act. This section creates a presumption that a person was attempting to do kill injure or take a badger where

there is evidence from which it can be reasonably concluded that this is what they were attempting to do. The amendment applies the presumption to the new offence of knowingly causing or permitting the killing, injuring or taking of a badger.

Subsection (9)

206. Under section 12(1A) of the 1992 Act, certain offences can be prosecuted either on indictment or summarily. These offences are primarily those related to badger digging and baiting and include the offences of causing a dog to enter a sett and selling a live badger. These offences are “relevant offences” within the meaning of sections 45(6) and 47(6) of the Criminal Proceedings etc. (Reform) (Scotland) Act 2007, which means that the maximum penalties on summary conviction are a 12 month sentence of imprisonment and/or a fine of the statutory maximum (which is set under section 225(8) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 and is currently £10,000). The maximum penalty for conviction on indictment is a 3 year sentence of imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. Offences covered by section 12(1) of the 1992 Act can only be prosecuted summarily. The maximum penalties for these offences range from a fine of level 3 on the standard scale (for offences under section 1(5) of the 1992 Act) to a level 5 fine (currently set at £5,000 by section 225(2) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995) and/or a six month sentence of imprisonment (for the offence of killing a badger as well as for most other offences under the 1992 Act).
207. Subsection (9) amends section 12 of the 1992 Act to extend the list of offences which can be prosecuted either on indictment or summarily. The effect is to allow the offences of illegally killing, injuring or taking a badger, possessing all or part of a dead badger, knowingly permitting or causing these offences, knowingly permitting or causing cruelty to a badger and knowingly permitting or causing the sale or possession of a live badger to be prosecuted summarily or on indictment.
208. Subsection (9) also amends section 12 of the 1992 Act to state that the maximum penalties for summary conviction for offences which can be tried either summarily or on indictment are a 12 month sentence of imprisonment and/or a fine of the statutory maximum. The effect is to ensure that the new offences which can be tried either way will be subject to the same penalties as the existing either way offences under the 1992 Act.

Subsection (10)

209. Subsection (10) extends the application of the time limits prescribed in the 1992 Act for bringing summary proceedings to cover all of the offences in the 1992 Act. The effect is that summary proceedings for any offence under the 1992 Act must be brought within 6 months of the date on which the prosecutor has sufficient evidence to initiate proceedings. In addition summary proceedings cannot be brought more than 3 years after the commission of the offence or, where the offence is an ongoing one, more than 3 years after the last date on which the offence was committed.

Subsection (11)

210. Subsection (11) makes a consequential amendment to section 13 of the 1992 Act to include the new offence of knowingly causing or permitting someone to unlawfully kill, injure or take a badger. This means that a court can disqualify a person found guilty of this offence from having custody of a dog.