

For immediate release: 20th December 2018



'Tyrannical' new regulations will outlaw the rescue of sick and injured squirrels

Natural England will be revoking licenses for rescue organisations to take in and rescue particular animals, including grey squirrels and Muntjac deer.

An email has been sent out to rescue organisations stating that the Invasive Alien Species Order 2019 will come into force on 29th March 2019, at which time their licenses to rescue and rehabilitate these animals will be revoked. Any wildlife rescue organisations working with 'non native' species such as grey squirrels previously required licences to help a limited number of grey squirrels each year. When this new Order is implemented, rescue organisations such as the London-based Urban Squirrels will no longer be able to rescue squirrels who are in need.

Under the new Order, if a member of the public comes across an injured grey squirrel, rescue organisations will no longer be able to assist in the care of the animal. Vets will also have no choice but to euthanize animals who previously could have been referred to a wildlife rescue agency.

Says Natalia Doran, from London-based rescue Urban Squirrels:

'While Urban Squirrels can guarantee that it will abide by the law, we have to nonetheless warn that a lot of "civil disobedience" rescue will take place throughout the country and the Order in question will be in reality unenforceable.'

'We understand the EU requirement to "control" "invasive alien species" and we understand that it is now going to be incorporated into UK law. But even the EU made a stipulation that special consideration should be given to species that are already well established within a country.'

'The requirement to "control" can be fulfilled by developing non-lethal alternatives, such as the oral contraceptive Gonacon that is already being worked on by Defra laboratories, and by limiting the food sources for grey squirrels, such as the supplementary feeding of game birds.'

'We would like rescue to be made exempt from the above Order and have started a parliamentary petition to that effect. It must be stressed that the numbers of grey squirrels that come into rescue are not significant in the statistical sense, but very significant in terms of the compassion footprint of humanity.'

Says Jade Emery, Wildlife campaigner at Animal Aid:

'To make rescuing any animal in need against the law is absurd and absolutely devastating. This new Order will do nothing but needlessly increase animal suffering and it is completely implausible that Natural England are unaware of this fact.'

'Upon coming across a squirrel in need of help, many members of the public are shocked when they are informed of the severe restrictions rescue organisations currently work under. Soon, this tyrannical and pointless regulation will mean that rescue organisations are forbidden from helping a single squirrel. By implementing these new regulations, Natural England will be condemning these innocent animals to suffering and often death, and robbing them of any chance of rescue. These animals are already vilified and persecuted, and now they face being deprived of one of the few lifelines that are open to them.

'I believe this sends a terrible message, especially to children, that some animals do not deserve our compassion and help purely because of their "non-native" status.'

Notes for Editors

- For more information, please contact Jade Emery at Animal Aid by email (jade@animalaid.co.uk) or phone (01732 364546 ext 233) or Natalia Doran at Urban Squirrels on (nataliadoran8@gmail.com) or 07415 983 900
- A petition against the changes is now live and available at <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/235425>

