

Report to Minister of State Mr Micheal Ring T.D. Loughrea, Co. Galway Coursing Club

Loughrea, Co Galway Coursing Club meeting

This meeting took place on 22 and 23 October 2016 and was monitored by officials of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department – report at Appendix 1. The NPWS report did indicate that a number of hares were hit and pinned. A “hit” is generally defined as an incident where the hare makes a single contact with the greyhound but immediately moves on and makes its way into the escape. A “pin” is considered a more sustained contact where the hare is physically held by the greyhound or is pinned to the ground. Over the two days of this meeting NPWS officials recorded 4 hits and 7 pins. On the second day one of the hares pinned eventually died.

Irish Coursing Club (ICC) Report

In response to a request by the Department to the ICC for its views on the meeting the ICC in their letter (Appendix 2) stated that of the 73 hares caught for the meeting 72 were released at the conclusion of the meeting under supervision of NPWS officials. The ICC confirms that one hare was not released as it died from injuries. The ICC did not comment on the video posted by ICABS purporting to show an incident at the meeting which appear to show a hare being pinned by greyhounds and then rescued by club officials. However, the ICC did advise that when a hare is pinned by greyhounds they do have specific procedures in place for club officials to retrieve the hare.

Review by NPWS

There are a total of 26 conditions associated with the licences issued by the Department to the ICC on behalf of its affiliated clubs. These conditions have been developed and refined over a number of years including relating to hare welfare issues.

On the basis of the ICABS video it would appear that club officials acted promptly in rescuing the hare who was pinned by the greyhounds. Their action would appear to be in accordance with the instructions provided to coursing clubs by the ICC. In particular Paragraph 26 of the Summary of Directives, Instructions and Guidance Notes issued by ICC to coursing clubs provides that:

“Clubs should ensure that they have a sufficient number of capable and active personnel available to intervene and rescue a hare in difficulty with muzzled greyhounds. Such hare should be placed in a box and inspected, where possible, by a Veterinary Surgeon after coursing, and the appropriate treatment given. Dispatchers should be on the side of the field furthest away from the crowd”.

Recommendation

It is not considered that the NPWS report of the meeting or the short ICABS video purporting to record part of the meeting warrants action against Loughrea Coursing Club. However, the Department will consider revising its own report form to separately identify hares that are “hit” and “pinned” and ensure that the ICC have a similar reporting structure.

**National Parks and Wildlife Service
Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs
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