

# Hares (Close Season) Bill [HL]

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[AS INTRODUCED]

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[AS INTRODUCED]

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# B I L L

TO

Establish a close season, from the start of February to the end of September, during which the killing or taking of hares is prohibited; repeal the seasonal prohibition of the sale of hares in the Hares Preservation Act 1892; and for connected purposes.

**B**E IT ENACTED by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

## 1 Protection of wild hares

- (1) A person who intentionally or recklessly kills, injures, or takes any hare or leveret in the close season is guilty of an offence.
- (2) In this section, “close season” means the period in any year beginning on 1 February and ending on 30 September. 5
- (3) Exceptions to the offence in subsection (1) are set out in section 3.

## 2 Penalties

A person guilty of an offence under section 1 is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to a fine, or to both.

## 3 Exceptions to offence 10

- (1) A land owner, lawful occupier or person authorised by the landowner or lawful occupier (an “authorised person”), is not guilty of an offence under section 1 if the person shows that their action was necessary for the purpose of preventing serious damage to crops on the land owned or occupied.
- (2) To be entitled to rely on the defence under subsection (1) the authorised person must show that— 15
  - (a) they had reasonable grounds for believing that hares of the same species had caused serious damage to crops on the land;
  - (b) it was likely that further damage would be caused to the crops and the damage was likely to be serious; 20
  - (c) non-lethal methods had failed; and

- (d) their action was necessary and proportionate for the purpose of preventing the damage.
- (3) To be entitled to rely on the defence under subsection (1) an authorised person must also show that they obtained a licence under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, prior to the action. 5
- (4) A person is not guilty of an offence under section 1 if the person shows that the animal had been so seriously disabled, otherwise than by their unlawful act, that there was no reasonable chance of its recovering.
- (5) A person is not guilty of an offence under section 1 if they show that the animal— 10
  - (a) had been disabled otherwise than by their unlawful act; and
  - (b) was taken solely for the purpose of tending it and releasing it when no longer disabled.

#### **4 Repeal**

The Hares Preservation Act 1892 is repealed. 15

#### **5 Extent, commencement, and short title**

- (1) This Act extends to England and Wales only.
- (2) This Act comes into force at the end of the period of one month beginning with the day on which it is passed.
- (3) This Act may be cited as the Hares (Close Season) Act 2025. 20



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*Baroness Helic*

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