

Raptor Persecution UK

Inadequate response by Scottish Minister Jim Fairlie to parliamentary question on use & abuse of rodenticides

RaptorPersecutionUK

December 10, 2024

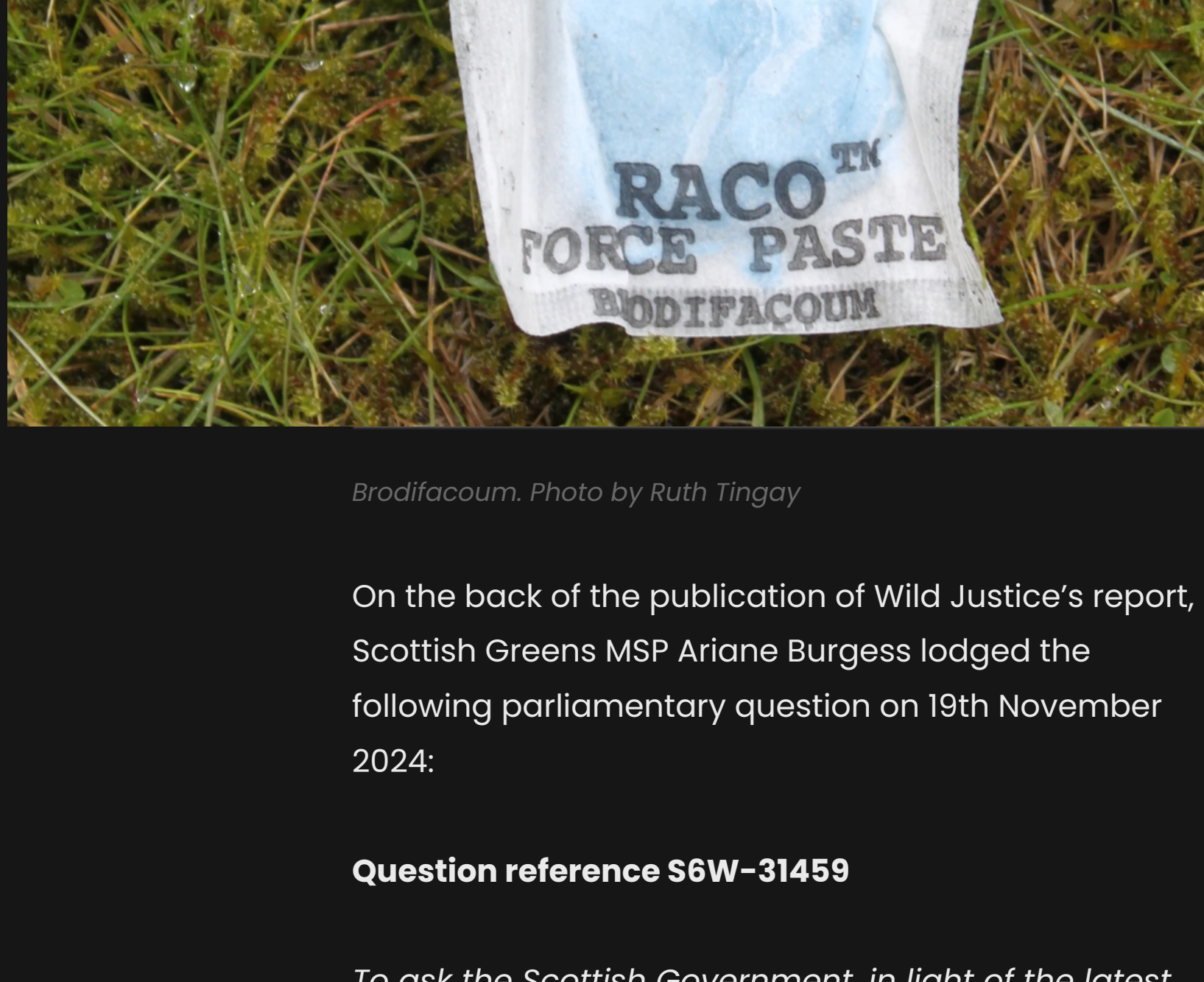
News

buzzard, gamekeeper, poisoning, red kite, white-tailed eagle

Last month conservation campaign group Wild Justice published a detailed report on the impact of the mis-use and abuse of second generation rodenticides (SGARs) on red kites and buzzards in England and the failure of the Government's Rodenticide Stewardship Scheme, which had been set up in 2016 to reduce the amount of rodenticides in wildlife (see here for press release and a copy of the Wild Justice report, 'Collateral Damage').



Brodifacoum bait station illegally set on the edge of a grouse moor in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Photo by Ruth Tingay



Brodifacoum. Photo by Ruth Tingay

On the back of the publication of Wild Justice's report, Scottish Greens MSP Ariane Burgess lodged the following parliamentary question on 19th November 2024:

Question reference S6W-31459

To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the latest report, Collateral Damage, by the UK campaign group, Wild Justice, which states that the Rodenticide Stewardship Scheme in England "is a failed scheme", and other reports that have indicated increased exposure to anticoagulant rodenticides in common buzzards in Scotland, whether it has assessed the effectiveness of the rodenticide scheme in Scotland.

The question was answered by Agricultural Minister Jim Fairlie on 3rd December 2024:

The Scottish Government continues to contribute to UK-wide monitoring of rodenticide use and exposure in wildlife. There is evidence that many users of rodenticides are complying with the Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use's (CRRU) Rodenticide Stewardship Scheme (RSS), and that in Scotland rodenticide use in agriculture has substantially declined since the introduction of the scheme. But, despite this, recent environmental data for Scotland indicate that it has not yet achieved the aim of significantly reducing wildlife exposure.

Both the UK Government Oversight Group, which includes Scottish Government representation, and CRRU have acknowledged that rodenticide residues in UK wildlife have not declined as hoped. The RSS is being updated firstly to ban the use of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) bromadiolone and difenacoum for open area use from the end of this year. This means no SGARs will be available for open area use; this is also intended to reduce accidental or deliberate misuse of other products in open areas. Secondly, training requirements for the farming sector are also being brought in line with other sectors from end 2025 to ensure a consistent level of professional training across all sectors and reduce the risk of poor practice.

Whilst it's true that legal authorisation is being rescinded for the use of the SGARs Bromadiolone and Difenacoum in open areas (see press release on this from June 2023, here), it is very clear from the Wild Justice report that the total increase of SGAR exposure in red kites and buzzards in England is being driven by a dramatic increase in the use/mis-use of Brodifacoum, not by Bromadiolone or Difenacoum.

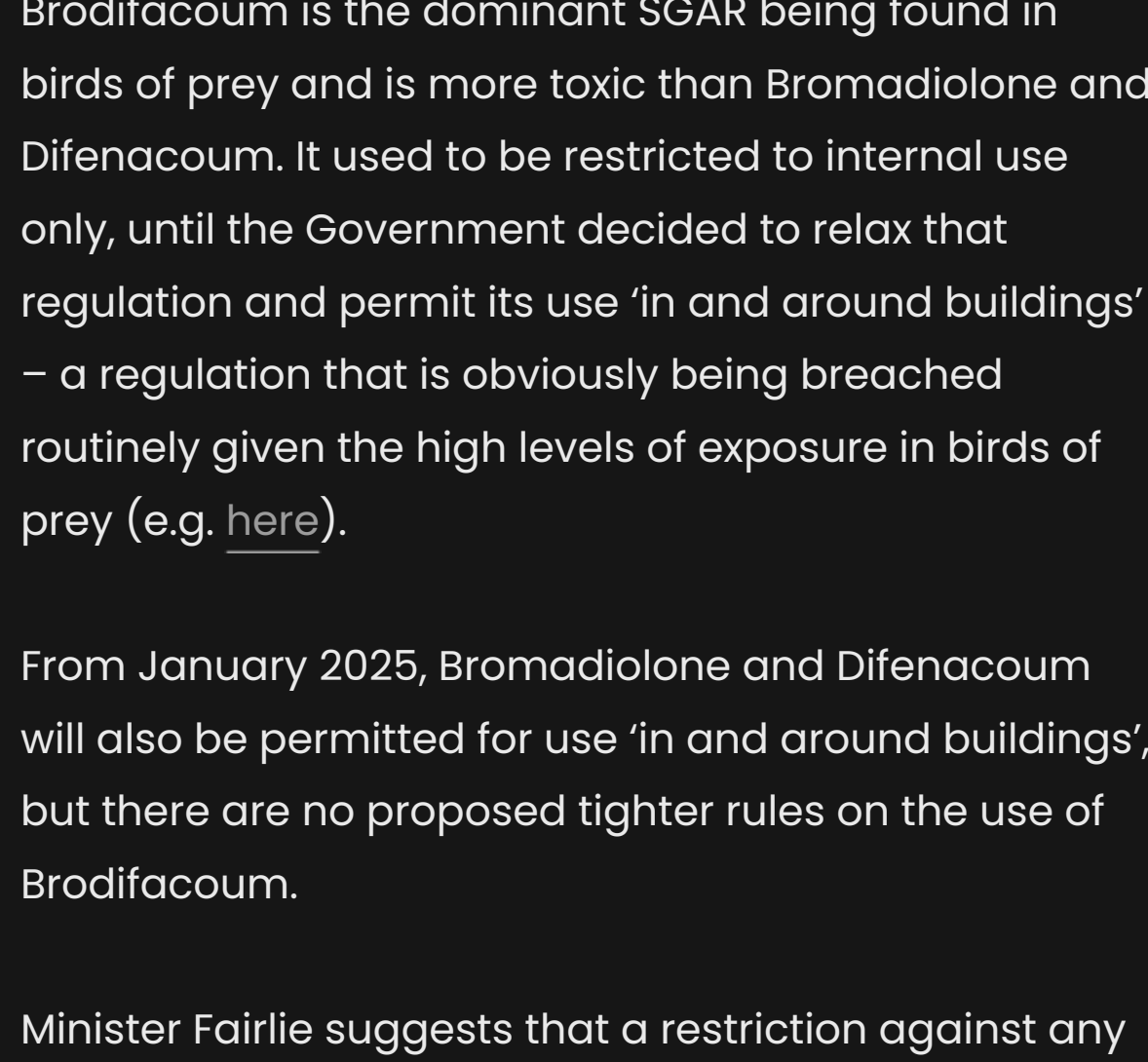


Fig 3 from Wild Justice's Collateral Damage report (p8) showing the percentage of buzzards and red kites analysed by the WJIS that contained different concentrations of Brodifacoum, Bromadiolone and Difenacoum.

Brodifacoum is the dominant SGAR being found in birds of prey and is much more toxic than Bromadiolone and Difenacoum. It used to be restricted to internal use only, until the Government decided to relax that regulation and permit its use 'in and around buildings' – a regulation that is obviously being breached routinely given the high levels of exposure in birds of prey (e.g. here).

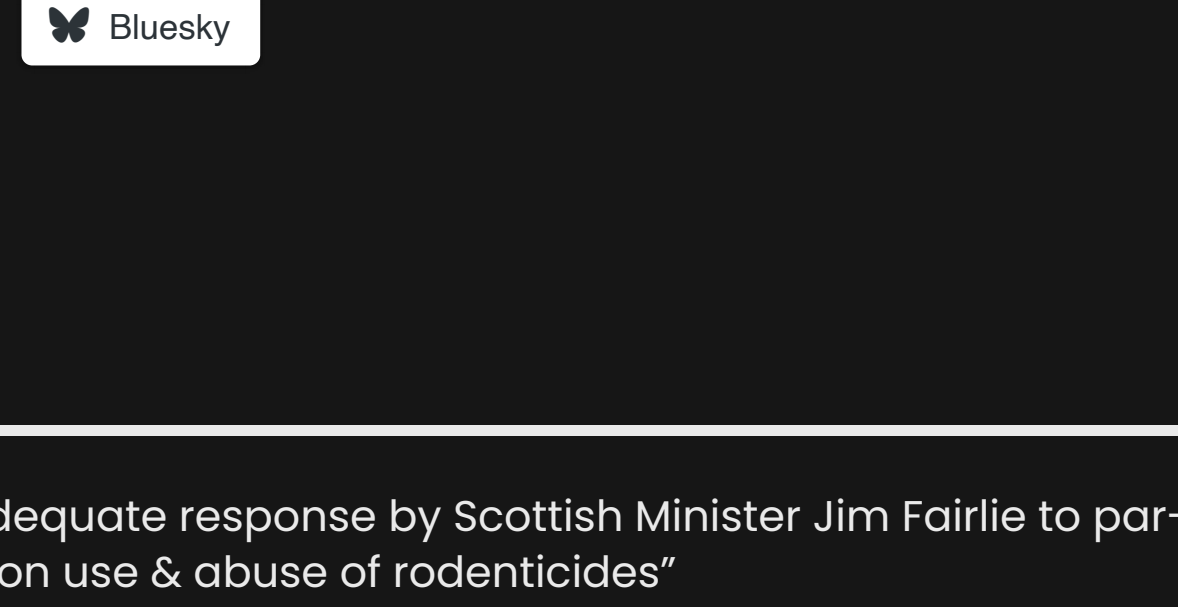
From January 2025, Bromadiolone and Difenacoum will also be permitted for use 'in and around buildings', but there are no proposed tighter rules on the use of Brodifacoum.

Minister Fairlie suggests that a restriction against any use in open areas of any SGAR is intended to reduce accidental or deliberate mis-use of other products in open areas and that new training requirements for all users (not just professional pest controllers) will 'reduce the risk of poor practice'.

I suppose he's thinking that this standardisation will remove any supposed 'confusion' between the use of different products. However, given that Brodifacoum is already supposedly restricted to use only 'in and around buildings', yet has been used with increasing frequency by gamekeepers for targeting birds of prey, Wild Justice argues that the new legal restrictions are unlikely to improve things significantly.

The Wild Justice report suggests that a better option is to return Brodifacoum to its pre-April 2016 approval status, so that it can be used in strict 'internal areas' within buildings, and to limit its use to professional pest control companies.

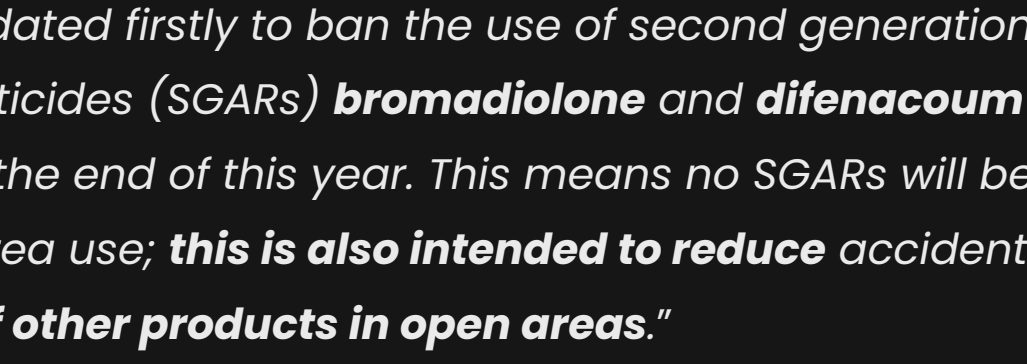
For those who might have missed it, Wild Justice's Collateral Damage report can be read/downloaded here:



collateral_damage_wild_justice-report-nov2024

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One thought on "Inadequate response by Scottish Minister Jim Fairlie to parliamentary question on use & abuse of rodenticides"

Keith Dancey

December 10, 2024 at 3:36 pm

"The RSS is being updated firstly to ban the use of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs) **bromadiolone** and **difenacoum** for open area use from the end of this year. This means no SGARs will be available for open area use; **this is also intended to reduce accidental or deliberate misuse of other products in open areas.**"

I wonder how Jim Fairlie thinks any banning of bromadiolone and difenacoum will lead to a reduction in the **deliberate misuse** of brodifacoum?

Weird.

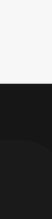
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