



GWCT tackles hot topics at Game 2018

GAMEKEEPING, AND ALL THINGS RELATING to it, was the topic at Game 2018, a maiden conference organised and hosted by the GWCT. Held in April at the organisation's Fordingbridge HQ, 100 keepers, farmers, landowners and other interested parties heard about such subjects as reducing antibiotic use, new traps, game cover, markets for game meat and good practice.

In the morning, *KtB*'s veterinary contributor Mark Elliott outlined how high standards in gamebird management, best practice in prescribing antibiotics, monitoring bird welfare, working with fellow vets, game farmers and shoots have helped reduce reliance on antibiotics.

Richard Barnes of Kings Crops handled the troublesome issue that

many gamekeepers encounter – that of rogue weeds in game cover and how these can be avoided where possible or controlled. Then, GWCT fox and predation expert, Dr Jonathan Reynolds, updated those present on new traps that are approved for stoats after AIHTS kicks in after 31 December.

Appropriately, a game lunch followed, which was provided by the Country Food Trust, a charity that uses game meat in wholesome casseroles packed in pouches and which distributes these to the homeless. In the afternoon we heard about this venture, as well as a talk from Graham Irving of Natural England about the hoops to go through before obtaining raptor licences. Dr Mike Swan spoke of the need to adhere to the codes relating to our industry and David

Steel from Savills showed how the shoot benchmarking survey can inform all types of shoots from the big commercial outfits to the small-scale, family-run private ones.

A delegate from the NGO said: "The GWCT aired some thorny and timely topics and, as always, the organisation was on the button for gamekeeping. Well done to Austin Weldon for devising the conference and Roger Draycott for organising it. I believe they are planning this to be a regular fixture, perhaps roving the country. If one happens near you, it's well worth the effort."

Closing the conference, Dr Roger Draycott summed up the mood, saying: "One of the best ways of promoting game management is being able to demonstrate the conservation benefits that can arise on a well-run shoot."

Professor Nick Sotherton, GWCT director of research, addresses the Game 2018 conference.



Legal briefing

NGO LEGAL ADVISERS AND PROVIDER OF THE Legal Helpline, Knights, held a briefing for gamekeepers and shoot managers in Wiltshire in March. About 50 attended from Dorset, Wiltshire and neighbouring counties at the invitation of organisers Fowler Fortescue. Matthew Knight covered the liability of keepers, landowners and sporting agents; dos and don'ts of pest control; and many other legal matters. An NGO delegate at the event said: "Matthew addressed many tricky aspects of gamekeeping. The session was very informative and I feel better able to stay firmly on the right side of the law."

Sportsman supper for GWT

THE FIRST SPORTSMAN SUPPER TOOK PLACE THIS spring at Kirkbymoorside Golf Club, North Yorkshire, with 90 gamekeepers, family and friends enjoying venison burgers and sausages from a local shoot in support of The Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust (GWT).

Organised by Nick Binnington of Sportsman Game Feeds, and supported by the NGO and BASC, the supper was attended by 90 gamekeepers. An auction and raffle raised over £1,400 for the GWT.

Nick Binnington, Account Manager at Sportsman Game Feeds, commented: "The idea for the social evening came to

me last Summer – I was out with some of my customers and they were reflecting on how little they got to socialise and interact with other keepers, as they're all so busy working on their own estates. I suggested a keepers' social evening, and got the ball rolling by first finding a suitable venue and then arranging the event in partnership with Helen Benson at the GWT. Word soon got around about the social evening and we ended up attracting 90 keepers, which was a fantastic turnout! I've already had numerous requests to make it an annual event, so watch this

space and keep a look out for more event news from Sportsman!

Helen Benson of GWT said: "These funds will help us to support gamekeepers and their families, providing basic needs and making life more comfortable, particularly in later life and for the disabled. We also provide a helpline, listening and visiting service for the lonely and isolated which includes young families, young people starting out in their first job away from home, gamekeepers or partners living on their own and in later life."