

What are the Invasive Alien Species regulations?

- As a result of legislation that came into force in December 2019, there are strict controls on the keeping, movement, trade, breeding and release of certain species, classed as 'Invasive Alien Species', or 'IAS-listed species'.
- Because of these strict controls, some animals of IAS-listed species may unfortunately need to be euthanised to avoid breaking the law. This includes stray pets, if their owner cannot be found or licensed establishments are not available to take them in. It also includes injured and orphaned wildlife where alternatives, such as in-situ release, are not possible.

What species do the regulations apply to?

A full list of the affected species can be found [here](#). The IAS-listed species that you're most likely to encounter in practice are:

- Muntjac deer (*Muntiacus reevesi*)
- Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)
- Red-eared and yellow bellied terrapins/sliders (*Trachemys scripta* spp.)
- Egyptian goose (*Alopochen aegyptiacus*)

What does this mean for exotic pets and their owners?

- Owners who owned their IAS-listed exotic pets before this legislation came into force can keep their animals for the rest of the animal's natural life. They need to ensure their animals are kept in secure accommodation so they can't escape, prevent their animals from breeding, and microchip or close-ring the animal. They can also take their animal to a vet for treatment.
- Owners who can't look after their animals can rehome them to a new owner, sanctuary or rescue centre with a licence to keep that species, but the animals can't be sold. There aren't many establishments with licences to keep IAS animals, and those that do have a licence are filling up quickly. This means that if a new home can't be found, sadly the animal may need to be euthanased for legal reasons.
- If you are asked to treat an IAS-listed animal that's been found stray, you can treat them and reunite them with their owner if possible. If they can't be reunited, then the animal would need to be rehomed to a licensed establishment - the government advice states that stray animals can't be rehomed to a new owner if there's no proof of their origins. If this isn't possible, the animal will need to be euthanased for legal reasons.
- More detailed advice on euthanasia of terrapins is available [here](#)

What does this mean for injured/orphaned wildlife?

- Under the IAS regulations, it is illegal to release any animals of IAS-listed species into the wild, even if they've only been taken into care briefly for treatment and rehabilitation. So if an injured or orphaned IAS animal is brought to a vet practice, it

won't be possible to return it back into the wild. The only options are to euthanase the animal, or to find a licensed establishment which can take it in.

- The RSPCA believes that wild animals shouldn't be taken from the wild and kept in captivity for the rest of their life, because there are significant challenges with trying to meet their welfare needs long-term in a captive environment.
- Animals that are trapped can be released in situ (e.g. muntjac deer stuck in a fence that needs sedation before being freed), but remember that they may be more seriously injured than they look. See the [wildlife casualties page](#) for specific guidance on deer.

Where can I find more information?

- DEFRA guidance on invasive alien species:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/invasive-non-native-alien-animal-species-rules-in-england-and-wales>
- Natural Resources Wales advice on invasive alien species:
<https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/species-licensing/invasive-alien-species/invasive-alien-species-regulations/?lang=en>

Legal disclaimer

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