



Tuesday 20 September, 2016

## Who would shoot a hedgehog?

*RSPCA appeal for witnesses to come forward about callous and cruel hedgehog shooting in Norfolk*

**The RSPCA is investigating after a hedgehog was shot at point blank range in the back with an air gun.**

The poor young female hedgehog was brought in to the charity's East Winch Wildlife Centre after she was found dragging her legs behind her in South Lynn, Norfolk, on Sunday. (18 Sept)

When she was examined by vets they found she had been shot with an air gun - and the metal pellet was lodged in her spine leaving her back legs paralysed.

RSPCA East Winch wildlife centre manager Alison Charles said: "This is just unthinkable. Who would shoot a hedgehog?"

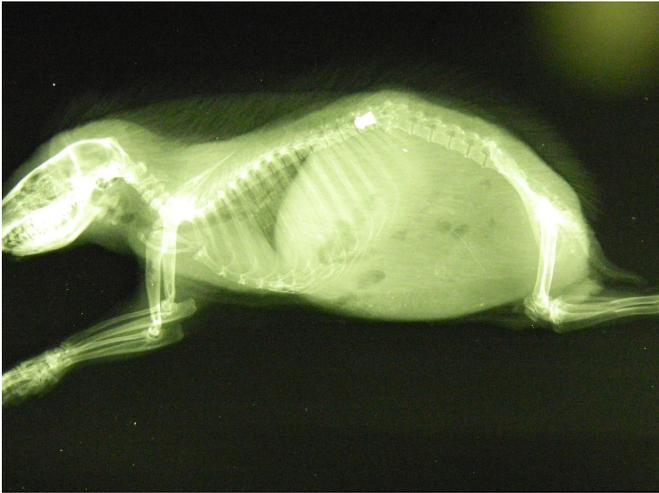
"This poor girl must've been in so much pain. When she came in to us she was dragging her hind legs behind her and clearly had no use of them at all. She was in a really bad way.



"Our vet examined her and suspected she had a spinal injury. When he took X-rays he found she actually had an air gun pellet embedded in her spine. We were all so shocked.

"We think the air gun pellet was shot at close range and it had impacted her vertebrae and severely damaged her spinal cord. Sadly there was nothing our vet could do to save her and she was suffering so much the kindest thing to do was to put her to sleep."

She added: "Unfortunately, air rifle attacks are not as rare as we would like. The injuries caused by attacks just like this are horrific and often fatal. Cats and wildlife are normally the animals that are targeted simply because they are out in the open with no one to protect them.



“It is very distressing to think that people take pleasure in causing such horrific injuries to defenseless animals.”

The RSPCA is currently calling for tighter controls with better education and explanation of the law when buying an air gun and that everyone must receive basic safety training before being allowed to walk out of the shop.

The penalties faced if caught deliberately using an air gun to injure an animal can be up to six months in prison and/or a £5,000 fine if

found guilty under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.