that the interim arrangements will need to continue for 3-5 years. There is still no clear evidence offered that MAFF Badger control policies have actually reduced the incidence of TB in cattle.

Sweatshirt design competition

Council has been thinking about offering a wider range of sales items, including some distinctive sweat shirts. We did have one design, which Steve Harris wore at the Whale Symposium. Nobody noticed! So there will now be a competition to think up a better design for a Mammal Society sweatshirt. Please send your ideas for designs, no matter how crudely drawn, to me (c/o the Mammal Soc office, Baltic Exchange Buildings). Good ones will be aired in the Newsletter. If one is ultimately put into production, by popular acclaim, it's designer will receive a prize. (Ed.)

Meanwhile a new batch of Society ties has been produced. They are in blue, red, grey and green (each a single colour, not all four!) and feature the hedgehog logo. They are available at £5 each, post free from the office.

From the Archives

The last Newsletter included a drawing made of participants at the 1955 Easter Conference. I thought the bearded character was a youthful Ian Linn, Exeter's chief mammal. However, I am informed that it was probably Peter Crowcroft, complete with "mice all over". Will the real Bearded Gent please identify himself?

HELP WANTED: Black rats

Following the interest shown in the near extinction of this not-so-popular British mammal, Graham Twigg has offered to conduct an enquiry to establish the present distribution and status of the black rat. If you can help in any way, please write to him for a questionnaire form (Dr G I Twigg, Alderhurst, Dept of Biology, RHBNC, Bakeham Lane, Englefield Green, Surrey TW20 9TY).

HELP WANTED: Shrews

Chris Roots (same address as Graham Twigg above) writes "I am carrying out a study of the parasites of British shrews and would be pleased to receive any unwanted specimens. Either whole shrews (frozen) or the internal organs preserved in 5-10% formol saline would be welcome. Please remember data: sex, maturity, location and date. If specimens need collecting, please phone 0784 35553 Ext 48 to discuss how. Thanks for your help."

ITC-5

The 5th International Theriological Congress will be in Rome (22-29 August 1989). The advance programme is now available from the Secretariat (Dept di Biologia, Universita di Roma). There will be 6 plenary lectures and about 32 "Symposia". Subjects for the latter include fossorial mammals, evolution, social systems in Microtines, genetic variation in mice, elephant evolution, biology and conservation of Lagomorphs, reintroductions, optimal foraging, Viverrids, Beavers, Insectivores, Cetaceans, Canids, Ungulates, gene flow, digestive systems in small herbivores, rodent control and more- a pretty varied programme! There are also lots of workshop sessions planned and meetings of SSC Specialist Groups. Registration fee (before March 31) is 250,000 lira (about £100). More details from the Secretariat in Rome.

A NEW DIY SMALL-MAMMAL TRAP

I designed this trap with dormice in mind, using materials I happened to have laying around in my garden shed. The main appeal is that it employs a ready-made trap tunnel in the form of Osma down pipe. This means that there is a minimum amount of fabrication involved and, with the possible exception of cutting the pipe to length, it can be constructed on the kitchen table. The door and release mechanism are similar in design to the Longworth trap. Both the door and rear panel are recessed to prevent gnawing damage. In fact, the whole design is such that there are no exposed edges of plastic that can be damaged.

This design is offered as a cheap, general purpose, small-mammal trap and not as an "improvement" to any exi[illegible] designs, most of which have been well proven in the field. I hope people will try out the design and possibly develop it further. (Remember that if you too have dormice in mind you need a licence from the NCC. Ed.) I should be very pleased to receive comments from users.

Construction details:

The pipe can be obtained from most builders merchants, but note that at least two sizes are currently available. The Weldmesh and wire can be obtained from most hardware stores or builders merchants. Total cost of materials in September 1988 was about 60p per trap.

The method of construction is fairly obvious from the diagram although the following notes may be helpful:

1 It may be necessary to experiment with making the trip mechanism a few times to develop ones "bending skills". However, the wire is cheap and so this is worthwhile. If a large number of traps are to be made it m[illegible]t be worth making a jig. Otherwise, a piece of graph paper on the work table is a useful aid to getting everything square.

2 A rear panel can be used as a double pointed scriber for marking the position of the holes.

3 Clothes pegs are useful clamps to hold the bar guide in position when soldering on the door.

4 The door and rear panel should be carefully bent to allow fitting and then straightened when the lugs are located correctly.

5 The trip mechanism must be slid into the trap tunnel diagonally and then carefully eased into place using fine-nosed pliers. Make sure that the pivot holes are not too tight.

Notes on use:
Pre-baiting - a clothes peg can be used to clamp the door open if pre-baiting is desired.
Bedding - Twists of hay can be poked into the rear panel. this is then pulled in by any captive animal (but see comment on bedding below).
Removing captives - these traps do not break apart like Longworths and they are not large enough to accommodate a hand as with Pat Morris' cage traps. To remove animals, hold the trap upside down, place a polythene bag over the door end and allow the door to fall open. A hand placed over the rear panel usually results in the captive making for the light at the other end. Failing this, blowing gently down the trap may help. A gentle tap onthe end of the trap may also set the captive sliding down.

These traps have undergone limited testing in a known dormouse wood. They were attached to horizontal or near horizontal hazel boughs using wire, and baited with apple. Although much more testing is needed for the results to be scientifically acceptable, the success rate was about 8% (3 animals in 39 trap-nights) which suggests that at least dormice will enter them. In view of the apparent unsuitability of standard Longworth traps for catching dormice, it would be interesting to know what features of these traps are important. Is it the larger entrance size, or the possible movement of air through the trap, or both?

The value of a plastic trap body in preventing chilling was demonstrated by the following experiment. Some of my plastic traps, without bedding, were set on the ground next to Longworth traps with bedding. Both were baited. Captures included bank voles and yellow-necked and wood mice. however, whist some mortality occurred in the Longworths, no mortality occurred with the plastic traps.

Pat Morris has pointed out that the smooth plastic of the trap body would probably act as a barrier to a dormouse approaching the rear of the trap. This may well be the case. With cage traps the animal can climb over and into the trap from any angle of approach. one solution, not yet tested, might be to glue a strip of netlon plastic windbreak mesh (available from garden centres) to the top of the trap tunnel.

John Messenger, 4 Penrhiw, Llanyre, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 6DY.

PHORESY BY SLUGS

Mary Rae writes to comment on the item in Newsletter 75 about slugs hitch hiking in the fur of mammals. She says "last summer, my cocker spaniel managed to bring a slug in on his coat on several occasions, big slugs and little slugs. I even found a small one in his ear. I assume that now he is older he moves more slowly. His coat is less silky and matts very easily and these were the explanation. They are very difficult to get of, at least the slime is very tenacious, and I doubt if he could manage on his own now. As for foxes, I would have thought it was unlikely that they would carry slugs. Those that come to my garden and are fed (not very liberally) keep well clear of any slug that has