

UEA researchers to investigate mysterious hare deaths

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Researchers at the University of East Anglia have joined forces with Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trusts to investigate the cause of mysterious hare deaths in the region.

Over the past month, landowners, farmers and members of the public have reported sightings of obviously sick and dead [hares](#).

Members of the public are now being urged to photograph sick and dying hares and share their sightings with Dr. Diana Bell, from UEA's School of Biological Sciences.

Dr. Bell has recently been studying the impacts of diseases on rabbit populations, including myxomatosis and strains of hemorrhagic disease.

Dr. Bell said: "Both Suffolk Wildlife Trust and I have been told about hares that have been found either dying or already dead at different sites around the county.

"The death of any animal is obviously distressing but we're asking people to try and photograph these hares to help us understand what is happening.

"Getting good images of the bodies of these hares, along with their exact location, is crucial for us to rule out or identify possible diseases."

East Anglia is a stronghold for brown [hare](#), which have experienced a national decline of more than 80 per cent in the past 100 years and are almost entirely absent from the south west of the country.

One of the issues facing the species is an intensification of agriculture, which has limited their supply of food and habitat.

There is also no closed season for hares, which means that they can be shot legally at any time of the year – including during breeding season. Illegal hare coursing is also still prevalent.

Hares can be distinguished from rabbits in a number of ways. Hares are

larger than rabbits, with longer hind legs and black-tipped ears that are at least as long as their heads.

Ben McFarland, Head of Conservation at Suffolk Wildlife Trust, said: "The reports of hare deaths are obviously of great concern, especially considering the importance of the populations in this region.

"We are monitoring all sites closely and asking anyone who sees an animal that is dead or unwell to get in touch."

Have you seen a sick or dead hare? Please send a photograph of the hare (including its head and bottom), and details of its location, to Dr. Bell by emailing d.bell@uea.ac.uk.

Provided by University of East Anglia

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