WILDLIFE INCIDENT UNIT

WILDLIFE INCIDENT REPORT

15/14

The Food & Environment Research Agency

INCIDENT NUMBER	15/14
PART OF STUDY	FSGD-195
REGIONAL NUMBER	W/14/04
OTHER REFERENCES	28/B0305/03/14
SENDER	VLA Carmarthen
LOCATION	Pontrhydfendigaid Cardiganshire
GRID REFERENCE	SN7365
INCIDENT DATE	18 March 2014
SUSPECTED CAUSE OF INCIDENT	starvation
DATE OF REPORT	23 June 2014

REPORTING OFFICER [redacted]

SIGNED : ..... [redacted] **.....**

NUMBERS AND SPECIES INVOLVED

1 barn owl

COPIED TO [redacted] [redacted]

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Samples received			Date received	Sample identifier
97399	barn owl		27/3/14	Spec No.: 1
97399	barn owl	tissues	27/3/14	Spec No.: 1

Summary of field data

A dead barn owl was found in the middle of a field. The field belongs to the finder and has two cows and some calves within it. The finder thought that the carcase had been there for a few days and had been rung in 2013, when it was the largest chick from a clutch of five. Arrangements were made to collect the carcase and submit it to the AHVLA for a post-mortem.

Summary of post mortem report

A barn owl of unknown sex (leg ring FA 36324), weight 209g and emaciated body condition with severe autolysis was submitted for post-mortem. This owl had a reasonable cover of mainly white (and some light brown) feathers. The carcase was emaciated with greening of the skin. Both eyes were missing. The ring was attached to the right leg. There was greening of the skin and subcutaneous tissues. There was little subcutaneous fat. There were reddened skeletal muscles which were very wasted. The viscera were severely autolysed. The red/purple liver contained a focal ½ cm diameter pale-cream lesion apparent at the surface of the liver and extending into the parenchyma. The gut was severely autolysed and decomposing. The gizzard contained semi-liquid brown material with several bones of a small animal (most likely a mouse / small rodent). There were little intestinal contents which were semi-liquid and brown. The lungs were reddened and autolysed. The myocardium was autolysed. The spleen was autolysed. The kidneys were dark red/purple and autolysed. The brain was semi-liquid. The endocrine and genital systems were not examined.

Analysis : chloralose analysis suite

97399	kidney	no chloralose detected	detection limit	2	mg/kg

Analysis : organochlorine analysis suite

97399	liver	no organochlorine detected	detection limit	0.7	mg/kg

Analysis : organophosphate analysis suite

97399	gizzard contents	no organophosphate detected	detection limit	3	mg/kg

Analysis : rodenticide analysis suite

97399	liver	no rodenticide detected	detection limit	0.02	mg/kg

Conclusion

It was suspected that this barn owl had been poisoned. Laboratory analysis for a range of likely pesticides has been undertaken on the submitted samples. However, no residues from the compound groups tested for were found. From the analytical results and the findings on post-mortem it is likely that a natural cause, such as starvation, contributed to the death of this barn owl.