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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Strong public awareness of grey squirrel threat**

Awareness of the threat posed by grey squirrels to our native red squirrel remains high amongst the British public according to a recent national survey.

Over 71% of the population is aware that the grey squirrel is responsible for the decline to almost extinction of the native red squirrel.

The survey organised by leading squirrel charity, The European Squirrel Initiative (ESI) and conducted on their behalf by NEMS market research also showed that almost 63% of the population agreed that the invasive alien grey squirrel should be controlled in some way to protect the red squirrel population.

The Omnibus survey which questioned 1,000 representative individuals across the United Kingdom, revealed that over 63% would support the total removal of all grey squirrels using a non-lethal method linked to fertility control.

“These are very encouraging results,” said Andy Wiseman, ESI chairman, “They show the high level of awareness across the population of the threat posed by the grey squirrel and an understanding that grey control is the only viable solution to saving our native red squirrel.”

The survey, which is the eighth to be conducted by ESI since 2004 showed a consistent level of awareness of the threat posed by the grey squirrel with the percentage ranging from 59% in 2004 to 74% in 2009.

The area where there was the greatest level of support for grey squirrel control was in parts of the country where the red squirrel is present such as the north of England and the Scottish borders where 80% were in favour of grey control to save the red squirrel although there was a strong showing of 76% in the south of England.

‘The message here is that those in government and its agencies responsible for grey control should listen to the people and be more effective and robust in dealing with the problem,’ added Mr Wiseman.

ENDS



**Notes to Editors:**

**The European Squirrel Initiative:**

The grey squirrel, *Sciurus Caroliensis*, a native species of North America, was introduced to England from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, until 1938 when it became illegal to import or keep the species in captivity.

The European Squirrel Initiative was founded in June 2002 by a group of concerned conservationists and foresters. The organisation seeks the restoration of the native red squirrel and the protection of the natural environment by removing the impact of the alien grey squirrel in Europe.

Its role is to:

- Persuade conservation bodies and governments of the absolute necessity of ridding Europe of the grey squirrel.
- Continue to commission research into the Impact of the grey squirrel on local ecosystems.

For more information visit the ESI website: [www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org](http://www.europeansquirrelinitiative.org)

Issued on behalf of the European Squirrel Initiative by Kendalls.

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