



Last night at 8.00pm, minister of environment Vicenç Vidal and head of species protection Joan Mayol, both of the Govern Balear, took the opportunity of a presentation at la Mola's Casa del Poble to announce the results of a campaign to capture snakes on the island of Formentera. Since April 76 traps have been placed and 262 snakes have been caught. According to Vidal, analysis by the Universitat de les Illes Balears (UIB) of collected data indicates that 44% of the reptiles had eaten lizards. The regional minister called the data “cause for hope” that snakes could ultimately be eradicated from the island.

Formentera Council (CiF) officials present at the presentation included Bartomeu Escandell, who fills a joint role as councillor of the president's office and head of rural affairs, and Daisee Aguilera, the CiF's councillor of environment. According to Aguilera, given the promising nature of initial results the Council has already acquired an additional 60 cages to extend the trap-and-capture push. Created by the Eivissa's Escola d'Arts i Oficis, the traps are considered more environmentally “ethical”. The recently updated design boasts two inner compartments which keep the captured snakes separate from the bait, live mice. Thanks to the tweaked design the mice's lives are spared, and instead can continue to serve as bait to catch more snakes. According to Aguilera, traps have already been set in la Mola, Es Caló, Sant Ferran and Migjorn, and she made assurances that at present the invasive reptiles had only been found in la Mola and surrounding areas.

“The current trap-and-capture push, a joint effort of the CiF and Govern, is a very positive first step”, said Aguilera, “but more measures will be necessary”. To stem the arrival of snakes, the environment councillor says the most important measure to adopt will be “a control of incoming ornamental trees”. Aguilera cited olive trees as the principal method of transport for stowaway snakes. She also seized the opportunity to salute “exceptional co-operation on the part of la Mola residents and of the population of Formentera at large”.