

Documentation of Painful Injuries Caused by "Padded" Traps

The principal device used by American trappers to capture animals for the fur trade is the steel jaw leghold trap. The leghold trap, whether "padded" or unpadded, is inherently cruel. The bone-crushing impact of the steel jaws on the victim's limb, snout, abdomen, or other body parts inflicts excruciating injuries. Further injury caused by being trapped in the vise-like grip of the jaws, include gangrene from lack of circulation to the trapped appendage, injuries sustained from chewing the trap jaws, lurching in the trap with resultant hip or shoulder injuries and "wring-off," the gradual amputation of a foot through pulling, circling and jerking or actually chewing through the trapped foot.



An unintended victim of a "padded" trap. Such traps catch any creatures unlucky enough to spring them.

A 1983 Canadian Fish and Wildlife Service report entitled "Comparison of Standard Leghold Trap to 'Cushion' Leghold Trap" included the following statements regarding injuries from "padded" leghold traps:

- "hemorrhaging in fascia of muscles from left shoulder to paw, muscles pale, nails of right forepaw worn from scratching, edema, dirt in mouth, G.I. tract empty, lungs congested and collapsed (mink)."

- "Fresh breaks in teeth..."

- "Found dead, stomach empty, blood and some vegetation in intestines and colon, dislocation at carpal/radial joint, bruised tissue in carpal area, slight edema (fox)."

- "Broken legs on opossum, rabbit and skunk, and chewing of feet by raccoons was documented."

Repeated instances of "wring-off" and other serious injuries inflicted upon commonly trapped species was elicited, but the data was eliminated from the final reports. These injuries included "broken legs" and "chewed-off feet."

Further documentation of injuries caused by "padded" traps were revealed in the course of a lawsuit after New Jersey banned the steel jaw leghold trap.

Records obtained pursuant to South Jersey Fur Farmers, Inc. v. New Jersey Fish and Game Council listed the following:

10/28/84	raccoon and skunk - self-mutilation
12/13/84	raccoon - chewed off foot
12/19/84	coon - chewed third and fourth toes
12/20/84	raccoon - chewed foot
12/28/84	coon - slightly chewed toes
01/16/85	raccoon - chewed foot
02/06/85	raccoon - chewed foot

Obviously the use of "padded" leghold traps is not sufficient to relieve the suffering of animals unfortunate enough to be victimized by these devices.

State Bill Against Steel Jaw Leghold Traps Advances in Arizona

Following a highly misleading campaign by pro-steel jaw trap interests leading to defeat of a trap ban referendum, Arizonans for Safety and Humanity on Public Lands (ASHPL) has reorganized and returned to the battlefield. The hardworking group is against the taking of wildlife in devices that are non-selective and result in prolonged suffering. They want to ban use of steel jaw traps whether they are "padded" or not.

The Arizona group is now focusing on state legislation which has the support of Governor Fife Symington and Attorney General Grant Woods. Legislation to prohibit use of all steel traps on public land, H.B. 2286, was introduced in the House of Representatives by Representative Sue Grace.

On February 11th a hearing on the legislation was chaired by Representative Grace before the Environment Committee.

Joe Melton, Chair of Arizonans for Wildlife Conservation, spoke in opposition to the bill. He claimed trapped animals "relax and die" when trapped. Then he complained about footage being shown by animal welfare organizations saying it is not supposed to be out in the public domain because it relates to the trap standards process. In response to a question, Melton confirmed that the number of trappers in the state is down from 1,200 to 200.

Barry Arons, Director of Public Information, Office of Governor Symington, reiterated the Governor's full support for the legislation.

Steve Williams, Arizona Department of Natural Resources, threatened that ranchers would not be interested in leasing land for grazing if the legislation is passed, thereby depriving the government of the income.

Dr. Carl Gustavson presented authoritative evidence on the efficiency of the taste aversion tests he has developed for preventing coyotes from killing lambs. The coyotes receive a strong and highly unpleasant but non-lethal emetic wrapped in meat and lambswool. They lose all desire to kill sheep as a result, making use of the leghold trap for predator control unnecessary.

Dr. Kathy Ingram, a practicing veterinarian and wildlife rehabilitator, described her personal experiences treating both target and non-target animals. She began to treat a raccoon whose front leg was so severely injured as to require amputation. But when she found that every tooth in his mouth had been broken off during his struggle to escape from the painful trap, euthanasia became the only option.

Following the testimony and a poignant statement by Representative Grace, the legislation was voted out of the Environment Committee (6-5).

In a July 1992 survey of public opinion in Arizona, 82 percent of those polled agreed with the statement that "steel-jawed traps represent a cruel and inhumane method of taking wildlife." May the will of the people prevail.