

THE TRUTH ABOUT TRAPPING FROM A VETERINARIAN

Trapping is animal cruelty. It is time to end trapping forever. It is time to divorce trapping from hunting.

As a veterinarian, I have treated cats and dogs caught in traps. Most required amputation of the affected limb. The tissue damage was extensive and infected. Some dogs had broken teeth from biting at the trap. A person from Hinesburg brought a cat to my clinic that he found in a trap illegally placed on his farm. It had been in the trap for days because it was severely dehydrated. The front leg was broken and the surrounding muscle tissue was rotted and infected. Even with fluids, she died from massive infection and dehydration before I could do surgery.

I understand trapping. As a teenager, I trapped muskrats to earn money by selling their fur. My focus was on money and not on the suffering of the trapped animal. Later, while in veterinary school at Ohio State, I worked for a human neurosurgeon. Dr. Hunt would take me down to the morgue when he examined brains of humans who died of brain related conditions. As he dissected the human brains, he described the part and the functions. Over in the vet school, I was examining animal brains and THERE WAS NO DIFFERENCE in parts or function. Size was the only difference. Both animals and humans have the cerebral cortex and the thalamus which are the pain centers in the brain.

Fast forward to the present. While attending a Fish and Wildlife meeting in Woodbury, VT, a trapper told a friend and me as he was leaving that "animals don't feel pain anyway". Is that the mentality of trappers? From their own comments and pictures, trappers ignore the pain and suffering these animals endure. The trapped animals are treated as "objects" and not sentient animals. Selfies of trappers on FaceBook show trappers taunting the trapped animal and often use the "whacking stick" to kill them instead of merely shooting the trapped animal. Trappers also kill the trapped animal by standing on its chest or trachea to suffocate it.

Reasons to ban trapping include: (1) Only one in three of the trapped animals is the target animal. I have read studies where the number was quite larger - one out of 18 was the target animal. One out of three is conservative. If the non-target animals are released, many suffer injuries that affect their life span. Some may already be dead. Some are merely killed. (2) The target animal is often

inhumanely killed with a "whacking stick", or its chest is crushed by the trapper standing on it, or it is asphyxiated by the trapper standing on its throat, or rarely it is shot. (3) Some trappers do not check their traps daily or properly ground them. So animals suffer longer and some die in the traps like an owl my friend in Bristol found in a trap. Or the fox seen in Williston running with a trap attached to its leg. (4) Sometimes these traps are set so close to hiking trails and areas where the public congregates that they pose a danger to the public and their pets.

8 states and 88 countries have laws restricting trapping. Vermont must be added to the list!

In addition, this information from a former Maine trapper provides proof of what happens to the non-target animals, especially cats:

"In my last year of land trapping and the only year that I trapped on land in a built up area, I caught 28 house cats and several dogs. I did not kill the dogs, but I did kill 26 of the cats. I did this upon the oral advice of the local game warden and the Maine Trapper's Association representative to prevent the cat owners from publicizing the injuries suffered by their cats.

Most cats caught in a steel jaw leghold trap struggle so hard they inevitably injure themselves—oftentimes severely, with broken legs and shoulders. Then, just as it still is today, the unwritten word among the trappers and some game wardens was that if you released the cats, the owners would know they had been in a trap. The owners would take their beloved pet to a veterinarian and the injured cat would then appear on the front page of the local newspaper, causing bad publicity for trappers and trapping. As trappers, when we were sometimes asked about missing cats, we were advised to say that fishers killed them—in much the same way that the coyote is nearly always vilified and blamed today for the disappearance of someone's cat." - Bill, a former trapper from Maine