

adopted Regulation 3254/91, which banned the use of steel jaw leghold traps within all its member countries. This regulation went a step further by banning the import of certain fur from countries that continue to permit the use of leghold traps.

It was hoped that the second prong of Regulation 3254/91 would provide a financial incentive for the United States, as the world's largest trapped-fur producing nation, to ban the use of leghold traps. However, the United States threatened to challenge the EU under international trade agreements if the import ban was implemented. The EU buckled under pressure, and as a result, leghold trapped fur continues to be sold throughout Europe.

### A FUR INDUSTRY PLOY

In 1996, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, a quasi-governmental body representing state game departments, embarked on a "Best Management Practices" (BMP) trap testing program aimed at legitimizing the use of leghold traps nationwide. The state game departments and the National Trappers Association are involved in this pseudo-scientific endeavor.

Although the BMP trap testing program is federally funded with taxpayer dollars funneled through the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), to date, the government has not allowed public review of the research projects. The humane community has never been allowed to monitor the BMP trap testing process. Program design and implementation has occurred with no public accountability, transparency, or oversight. Not surprisingly, many varieties of steel jaw trap are approved as so-called BMPs.



Anita Eiler/Dreamstime.com

Each year, thousands of bobcats are caught for their fur, and taxpayers subsidize the trapping and killing of almost 2,000 more by the USDA Wildlife Services program.

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Animal Welfare Institute is working with legislators, veterinarians, inventors, biologists, trappers and the public to fulfill its commitment to ending the long-drawn out pain and fear caused to animals caught in leghold traps. Here are some ways you can help:

- Support proposed federal, state or local legislation against the use of steel jaw leghold traps. Let your legislators, as well as your state wildlife agency, know that you support a prohibition on the use of steel jaw leghold traps in your state and across the country.
- If you see a non-target species (such as a dog, cat, bird or threatened species) caught in a trap, seek veterinary care for the animal. Next, document and report your findings to your local humane society and AWI. Such information will aid our efforts to pass laws that ban inhumane traps.
- If you or someone you know hires a nuisance wildlife control business to address a wildlife conflict situation, do not allow them to use leghold traps and other cruel and non-selective trapping devices. Ask for their trapping policies in writing before you hire them.
- Educate your family, friends and co-workers about this issue by sharing this brochure with them.

## ABOUT US

The *Animal Welfare Institute* is a non-profit charitable organization that was founded in 1951 to reduce the sum total of pain and fear inflicted on animals by humans. We seek to end the use of steel-jaw leghold traps and reform other cruel methods of controlling wildlife populations.



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*The increasing popularity of otter fur in China and other Asian countries threatens their populations in some parts of the world.*



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# TRAPPED ANIMALS

ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE



cover: Len Rue, Jr.



# TRAPPED ANIMALS

## ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE

### TRAPPING IN THE UNITED STATES

There are fewer than 100,000 licensed trappers in the United States, but each year, an estimated 3 to 5 million animals are caught and killed for their fur. Millions more are trapped annually by state and federal agencies, private nuisance wildlife control operators, and individual landowners. Unknown numbers of non-target animals, including dogs, cats, birds, deer, and threatened and endangered species, are also trapped and injured or killed.

The steel jaw leghold trap has been condemned as inhumane by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the World Veterinary Association, the National Animal Control Association of the United States, and the American Animal Hospital Association, yet it remains one of the most widely used traps in the United States today. Invented in the 1820s, the leghold trap is made up of two opposing spring-powered steel jaws that spring violently together on any animal who triggers the pan between them.

Designed to restrain an animal until the trapper returns, leghold traps cause serious and sometimes debilitating or fatal injuries, including joint dislocations, ripped or severed tendons and ligaments, broken bones and gangrene. As the animal struggles against the trap in a desperate attempt for freedom, he or she may break teeth right down to the jawbone from biting the device. Animals

may even chew off their own limbs to escape—a grisly phenomenon known as “wring-off.”

Non-target animals caught in leghold traps and then released may be so severely injured that they are unable to survive in the wild. A study conducted at the University of Minnesota Raptor Research and Rehabilitation Center showed that 21 percent of all eagles admitted to the center over an 8-year period had been caught in leghold traps. Of these birds, 64 percent had sustained injuries that proved fatal. Survivors typically require amputation of the trapped limb.

Trapping in the United States is regulated by individual states. However, regulations vary widely and may be poorly enforced. Some states only require trappers to check their traps once every three or four days, while others do not have any requirement at all, allowing trappers to leave their devices unattended indefinitely. Animals who are left in traps for days may die from dehydration, hypothermia or trap-related injuries; others may be killed by predators. If the animal is still alive when the trapper returns, he or she is usually killed by a blow to the head or suffocation induced by the trapper standing on the animal’s chest. Trappers seldom kill animals with gun shot, as a bullet hole reduces a pelt’s value.

### MODIFIED LEGHOLD TRAPS

In response to criticism of the steel jaw leghold trap, manufacturers designed a so-called padded version. While the term “padded” makes it sound as though this trap’s jaws are soft and provide a degree of comfort for the trapped animal, the reality is that the trap is identical to the steel jaw version, with only the addition of two thin strips of hard rubber along the jaws. The traps still

cause excruciating pain and sometimes debilitating or fatal injuries to their target or non-target victims.

Another type of leghold trap is the stoploss, which is designed to address the frequent problem of muskrats chewing off their own limbs to escape. When the device is sprung, a metal bar slams violently against the animal’s body, triggered as the trap jaws clamp down on his or her limb, thereby preventing the animal from accessing his or her foot to chew it off.

### LEGHOLD TRAP REFORMS

The United States lags far behind the rest of the world in regard to trapping reforms. More than 85 countries have banned or severely restricted the use of the leghold trap, including all member countries of the European Union (EU). Only eight states have enacted bans or significant restrictions on leghold traps: Florida, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, California and Washington.

Despite the introduction of federal bills to end use of leghold traps in the United States over the past half century, Congress has failed to enact such legislation. The “sportsmen” lobby (trappers and hunters) and agricultural lobby (which want to use leghold traps for predator control) wield tremendous power at the federal and state levels and have worked aggressively in support of the continued use of leghold traps.

### EUROPEAN UNION REGULATION

While the United States remains in the Dark Ages regarding trapping reform, European nations have recognized the unnecessary cruelty of leghold traps for decades. England passed federal legislation in 1958 to prohibit leghold traps. In 1991, the EU



*It is not uncommon for raccoons to self-mutilate when captured in leghold traps, sometimes chewing off their own limbs in a desperate attempt to be free.*



*Minks are often farmed, but continue to be trapped in the wild throughout North America to feed the growing global demand for coats and trim made from their fur.*



*Birds and other non-target animals often fall victim to indiscriminate steel jaw traps. This Great Blue Heron was captured in a leghold trap set for muskrats.*