(No. 17) -- The Use of Cruel Leghold Traps Can be Eliminated

Humane Information Services, Inc.
**REPORT TO HUMANITARIANS**

Humane Information Services

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Welfare Institute. We also understand that Mr. William T. Bedding, director of Argus Archives, in New York City, has prepared a comprehensive compendium of facts about fur which will be published shortly. In addition, the fish and game departments of both the Canadian and Norwegian Forest Service, and the fishery commissions of the various provinces and states, will also have data. We estimate that the world production of fur skins has been 100 million, and probably 125 million. The number of fur skins procured in 1969, according to the trapping association, was 216,000, wild mink 230,000, muskrat 600,000, and 1,128,000. If squirrel were included, the number would be 1,700 million.  

Many Words - Little Action

The cruelties of trapping have been described, and many humane society publications in this country and abroad, over a period of many years. It is obvious, therefore, that they have not led to effective action to outlaw the leghold trap, except in a few countries, notably England and Norway. In order to understand why this is so, and what can be done (Continued in third column)

Trapped animals frequently gnaw or twist their legs off, leaving them in the trap. This is called a "wring-off." (Photograph from Facts About Furs, UW, England) taken by W. J. Schoonmaker, Defenders of Fur-bearers, Washington, D.C.)

All of these styling changes have been abetted by the advent of "simulated" or "fake" furs, some of which cannot be distinguished from the real thing except on close inspection. This has not only provided a substitute for furs for those who are unable to afford the latter, but more importantly, has reduced the "status symbol" value of fur garments.

Economic conditions affecting consumer expenditures in general also affect the demand for furs. When fear of losing jobs or (See TRAPFIR, page 3, column 1)

A wolf caught in leghold trap howls in pain. (Photograph from Canadian Association for Humane Trapping)
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Income growth, or the value of securities declines, people tend to become more careful in their spending. Among the first items to be affected are the two items most significant in the number of fur animals procured. This had a very important influence on the domestic demand for furs beginning in late 1968.

Reduction in Demand

Not Necessarily a Reduction in Furs

The changing economic conditions during the past several years have affected the production of fur skins affecting trapping in the United States very little. The reason for this is that a great variety of both demand and supply conditions affect the number of animals caught, in other words, unless combined with a more direct approach to the trapping problem.

In our Report to Humanitarians No. 4, issued in 1965, we tried to analyze the situation and suggest a number of more direct approaches, which were the cooperation of humane societies. We received a flood of letters from our readers agreeing with these suggestions. By the humanitarian movement in the United States has given no indication whatever of a desire to pursue such a constructive and progressive program.
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Tears and Big Eyes

It would have been difficult to drum up all kinds of reactions in response to the few physical facts and deep-seated emotional reactions. The baby seals in Canada are killed when they appear as black masses red on this white background it seems much more gruesome than, for example, on some dark prairie in winter. Even if actual cruelty were involved, such bloody sights, appearing on color TV and in color photographs, will certainly arouse considerable attention of the public.

And the Canadian seals receiving this attention are the same ones that were killing big eyes, with unbelievable shrill expressions. Moreover, the mother seals, which are always present when the heads are stuck on the Canadian ice are seldom present when the less mobile baby seals are killed, are always present when the humane trap is used. Therefore one could hardly find, in the whole animal kingdom, a more effective way to arouse the emotions of tenderhearted humans than babies and mother-love! Unfortunately, those engaged in efforts to protect against ice-coat, seal hunt were lacking this great emotional appeal until recently, when the claim was made food animals. This is another area where the need for improvement is much more apparent.

If any reader gets the impression, from these candid remarks, that Humane Information Services is not concerned about the possible objections by so-called farmers or for any animals made to suffer, they are dead wrong. What we are opposed to is the killing of defenseless animals. In this instance the motherhood and physical appearance to suit the priorities of the human movement as to sensibility, and we feel that the neatness and efficiency in dealing with the great sources of animal pain is certainly mainly for effective attention, such as trapping.

Ranch Mink Much More Important

Even the ranch or farm-rased mink is much more important than seals in any well-planned scheme to eliminate the suffering of fur-bearers.

During the 1969 season the number of ranch-raised mink killed in the United States was 5,845,000, and in Canada it was over 1,800,000, a total for North America of about 8 million. In the same period, the number of hair seals (including the "hairy" seals) taken in Canada was only 139,150 (32,850 in total for the United States). This is approximately 60,000 seals killed in Alaska, and we have a total for the two countries of around 200,000 seal skins to trade in comparison with seven million ranch mink.

These Reports to Humanitarians have carried many members of our movement around the country telling them about the great need for developing a more humane method of killing the ranch mink. Certainly this affront to the feelings of our most tenderhearted animals than any seals, baby or adult, that suffer, on the average, than the lesser. Furthermore, any simple-minded person who has uncovered a method of using injections of sodium pentobarbital which would be practical and painless for mink ranchers, making the production and slaughter of ranch mink as humane as for-humanely-slaughtered food animals, should be given the priority of adopting this method, far more would be accomplished to reduce suffering than by any other changes in the mink and Alaskan seal hunts. Yet, there have been few comments indicating interest on the part of ranchers, much less any sign of interest by the humane societies that have been surveyed. It is obvious that the value of this work is worth in new members and contributions.

Where can one find a better example of why this method of killing is necessary and has become so obvious to science and common sense?

If one of these efforts has been constantly successful, reasonably effective, low-cost, and humane trap available. The Canadian humane societies, for which (Continued in second column)

we have constantly-increasing respect, have gone about this in a sensible, business-like way. A number of these societies, including the Canadian Humane Trap Development Committee, the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals, the British Columbia Humane Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Ontario Humane Society, and some other provincial societies, have demonstrated that it is possible to develop humane societies to work together on a problem like this without destructive bickering and organiza- tional jealousies. They have also written to them for information, we receive long, informative replies, generously including with the statement that the letter is being forwarded to an official of another society who also is well informed. What a contrast to inter-society relationships in the United States!

Canadian societies have fostered a continuing program designed to develop a humane trap. For many years the leading candidate for a lethal trap would be used in trapping most of the fur-bearing wild animals has been the Conibear, invented by Frank Conibear the leading mink trapper who is a leading opponent of the leghold trap. It is manufactured in several sizes suitable for different fur species. The large size is especially good for beaver, and the small kind for muskrat. The Conibear does not bloom the skinner's fingers, but breaks the neck. Unconsciousness usually occurs in a matter of seconds, and death is almost immediate (see report in NaHL).

The difficulty with the Conibear trap, aside from its higher cost compared with the use of sodium pentobarbital, is not well suited to all species. Mink, for example, a very hardy animal, is not always killed immediately by the changes in the trap designed to make it more suitable for universal use are being made.

A number of other kinds of humane traps have been invented and tested, with varying results. They include the OK I and J, the Humane Society's Practical Humane Killer, the Compass, Compass Trap, Fish Trap, the Cesar, the Kaiser Trap, the Bigelow, and most recently the NaHL trap. The latter, designed by the National Research Council, to have particular promise, has been improved upon and continues recent introduc- tion, and appears to be mechanically effi- cient. But not all of its killing capacity have yet been conducted.

The different candidates for the most hu- mane and practical trap have been undergoing an evaluation by a highly qualified team at Ohio State University, in Ontario, Canada, un- der the direction of the Humane Trap Develop- ment Committee of the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies and supported by all of the leading Canadian humane and even by some trapping organizations. This evaluation is of their design features and mechani- cal efficiency. Those traps which appear to have the best quick-kill potential will then be tested under simulated natural conditions using live animals. The latter work will get started for some months, however. The ac- tivities of the trap development have now been transferred to the University of Guelph, also in Ontario, Canada. The scope of the work has been extended to include the Federal Federation of Humane Societies says the Committee "is de- termined to solve all problems within about 15 and 20 percent of the traps used in that country now are humane.

5. The increase in the number of humane traps sold by the humane societies in Canada is not yet readily apparent; however, it is certain that changes in the types of traps used are in the offing.

6. A number of these humane traps have been designed and are being patented in the United States by the NaHL.

7. We believe that the humane trap is the only humane trap for use for which it is most suitable, such as for beavers, can be expected to yield quicker results than when it is used for other species or other areas or regions where obstacles are greater.
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would be done is to force these people to use humane methods of trapping, and end the horrible cruelties of the leghold trap.

Once the Broomfield-Bayh bill becomes law, many trappers would find the humane traps such as the Conibear to be better for them than the leghold traps. The leghold trap trappers who have made the transition, for example, say that the Conibear is better in nearly all respects.

Trappers primarily seeking some particular species might have some cause for dissatisfaction with the Conibear. It is true that the humane traps will not be further improved for the trapping of these particular animals. For the present all that can be done about current Canadian efforts to produce a practically universal trap that can be used for all fur and for all furs, is that there is little doubt success will be achieved within the four-year period allowed by the Broomfield-Bayh bill. In the passage of the latter will result in breaking down the wall of indifference to efforts to perfect the humane trap for all species. Once the industry realizes that it must get behind the efforts of the humane societies, a crash program will be started.

In any event, the Conibear trap now available is suitable for trapping the species most commonly taken in the United States.

**Objections Not Valid**

Of course, some trappers will cry the tomatow. Nobody would be forced to give up their "sport" or livelihood. The only thing that (Continued in second column)

States, such as muskrat. It is ready to go now.

There is one apparently legitimate but no particular reason for the use of a killer instead of the leghold trap in the comparatively mild climate of the United States. The killing trap, or "killer trap" may begin to decompose, and suffer damage to the meat and pelt, unless the trap line is visited regularly. It has been admitted that The suffering of the animal taken by the leghold trap provides, in effect, a substitute for restrictive legislation.

The sale of meat from the otherwise unused carcasses in the 1960-61 season brought insanitary conditions, as compared with six million from the pelts. It has been said that the advantages of eliminating "wing-offs" would be more than offset the necessity for more frequent visits to the line in order to avoid deterioration of the pelt or if the meat is to be preserved for sale as pet or mink food. So, trappers are not going to be "ruined" by passage of the Broomfield-Bayh bill. On the contrary, by thus eliminating the great cost of cruelty in trapping, it may be of substantial benefit to the public image of the industry. When humane societies were urging passage of this federal humane slaughter bill for food animals in 1955, many meat packers fought the bill in just the same way, and with the same argument of prejudice and ignorance, as part of the trapping industry now is fighting the Broomfield-Bayh bill. Yet, when the slaughter law went into effect, the packers found that it not only saved millions of animals from unnecessary suffering, but also reduced costs of operation and labor turnover. Once the Broomfield-Bayh bill is passed into law and becomes operative, we are confident that the humane traps will not be further improved for the trapping of these particular animals. For the present all that can be done about current Canadian efforts to produce a practically universal trap that can be used for all fur and for all furs, is that there is little doubt success will be achieved within the four-year period allowed by the Broomfield-Bayh bill. In the passage of the latter will result in breaking down the wall of indifference to efforts to perfect the humane trap for all species. Once the industry realizes that it must get behind the efforts of the humane societies, a crash program will be started.

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**Imported Meat Legislation**

Since the last Humane Legislation Digest, included with Report No. 16, there have been many developments in the proposed legislation to require that all meat imported into the United States be from "humanely-slaughtered animals." The bill still is being considered by influential members of Congress.

On the 11th of September, 1971, Mrs. Christine Stevens, of the Society for Animal Protection Legislative, who has exceptionally good personal relationships with members of the House Agriculture Committee, has expressed real interest in the proposal. But she says that "at the present time the House Agriculture Committee has more than it can handle legislatively this year, so I would not recommend seeking introduction of this bill quite yet." She suggests asking for Animal Protection Legislative would be eager to support such a bill at the appro priate time and we will work you out not en gaged into law."

This is the most encouraging development to date. We are highly encouraged by the prospect of eventual support for this very important legislation, and meanwhile will continue in our efforts regarding the desirability of some delay.

**LIVESTOCK TRUCKING BILL**

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