



# FUND FACTS

## THE BLOODY BUSINESS OF FUR

The facts on fur are simple. The fur industry would like you to believe that fur is a fabric, but rather it's skin that's ripped or peeled off the backs of animals. And the animals don't die of old age — they are killed only for their skins during the prime of their lives. They are either trapped and killed in the wild or caged and executed at a fur factory farm. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, there is no reason to wear fur. No matter how you look at it, fur isn't chic. It's sick.

### TRAPPING OVERVIEW

At least 89 countries have banned the use of the steel-jaw leghold trap, which has maintained the same basic design since its invention in 1823 by Sewell Newhouse. But the United States, the world's largest fur producing and consuming nation for decades, has not banned the trap. Furbearing animals such as muskrats, beavers, nutria, raccoons, foxes, bobcats, badgers, lynx, fishers, martens, opossums, coyotes, otters, rabbits, and even skunks are trapped in the U.S. for their fur.<sup>1</sup>

Though only a handful of trappers claim trapping provides a source of significant income (most admit it provides recreation and minimal supplementary income), only a handful of states have banned the use of some or all traps. Rhode Island became the first state to ban steel-jaw leghold traps, in 1977, and New Jersey followed suit in 1984; some counties and municipalities in Minnesota and North Carolina have done the same. Connecticut and Tennessee prohibit the land use of leghold traps except when used in burrows, and Florida prohibits leghold trap use except when issued a special permit from the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. South Carolina prohibits the sale, manufacture, and use of all traps except "Size 3" or smaller used on private property near buildings.<sup>2</sup>



Photo: Chuck Traisi, The Fund for Animals

Millions of protected animals, including this California mountain lion, are caught in traps.

In 1994, Arizona voters banned all trapping on public lands, comprising more than 80 percent of the state's land. In 1996, voters in Colorado and Massachusetts banned the statewide use of all body-gripping traps, including all leghold, conibear, and snare traps. California voters approved a similar measure in 1998, and Washington voters did the same in 2000. The tide is clearly turning on the fur industry, as American citizens have said over and over again that they do not want their wildlife trapped and tortured simply in the name of a luxury product.

### TRAPPING CRUELTY

Traps are such imprecise killing tools that no one even knows how many furbearers are killed. The best guesses put the number at more than 2 million "target" species a year in the U.S. alone, along with an unknown number of "trash" species, who are simply discarded.

We do know, however, that trapped animals suffer. Obviously, after being trapped, animals struggle to free themselves. They

pull and twist their limbs from the trap jaws and end up with abrasions, torn ligaments, and broken bones. They gnaw at the traps and suffer broken teeth and other oral injuries. Most pathetic of all, they sometimes chew off their own trapped limbs — a Pyrrhic victory at best, as infection, blood loss, or predators ensure that freedom is short-lived. If unable to escape, the animal is certain to die of exposure, dehydration, or starvation; if the animal is still alive when the trapper checks the trap, the agony is ended by stomping or bludgeoning.

Animals caught in underwater traps and snares struggle desperately before drowning. A University of Guelph study in Ontario concluded that muskrats snared underwater may take up to 5 minutes before dying, mink may take up to 18 minutes, and beavers may take up to 24 minutes.<sup>3</sup>

The evidence on the cruelty of trapping is conclusive. A Canadian study on conibear traps revealed that only 15 per-

## MOST COMMONLY USED TRAPS:

- **LEGHOLD:** SPRING-LOADED STEEL JAWS THAT CLAMP SHUT ON AN ANIMAL'S FOOT ONCE SPRUNG; CAUSES INJURIES AND LOSS OF CIRCULATION EVEN WHEN "PADDED"
- **CONIBEAR:** SQUARE OR RECTANGULAR "SCISSOR-ACTION" TRAP IN WHICH AN ANIMAL PASSING THROUGH THE MIDDLE IS CAUGHT AS THE TWO SIDES ARE SNAPPED TOGETHER
- **SNARE:** WIRE STRANGULATION NOOSE THAT TIGHTENS AROUND AN ANIMAL'S NECK OR BODY; OFTEN USED ON FENCES TO HANG ANIMALS OR UNDER WATER TO DROWN ANIMALS

cent of strikes might have been instant kills, and that 60 percent of the animals suffered for a short period, while 40 percent were held in positions which caused extreme pain.<sup>4</sup> And a New York study reported that 62 percent of the animals caught in steel-jaw leghold traps and 66.7 percent of the animals caught in snares sustained visible injuries, fractures, or chewing.<sup>5</sup>

Even the so-called "padded" leghold traps cause significant injuries to animals. A recent study tested both padded and non-padded leghold traps on coyotes, and reported fluid swelling on nearly all the legs (97 percent) with no apparent difference among trap types. Lacerations were observed on 26 percent of the coyotes caught in padded traps. Two fractures in legs from the padded traps occurred at locations above the point of the trap impact, leading the authors to believe that these fractures occurred as the animals struggled to escape from the traps. Evidence of chewing footpads was observed in 4 of the 47 coyotes captured in padded traps.<sup>6</sup>

Trapping is not only a death sentence for "target" animals, but also for many non-target species — even those who are endangered or protected. Former government-employed trapper Dick Randall, an expert in his trade, testified before Congress in 1976 that, "The leghold trap is inherently non-selective. It is probably the most cruel device ever invented by man. My trapping records

show that for each target animal I trapped, about 2 unwanted individuals were caught. Because of trap injuries, these non-target species had to be destroyed."<sup>7</sup>

A 30-year study conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Denver Wildlife Research Center examined the trapping of coyotes as a measure to deal with sheep predation. Over 30 years, 1,199 animals were taken, only 138 of whom were coyotes — a non-target killing rate of 88.5 percent. The species captured included golden eagles, antelope, various small mammals and birds, and 30 sheep the coyote study was designed to protect.<sup>8</sup> During another study in which researchers tested four models of traps on coyotes, in addition to the 90 coyotes trapped, 65 other animals representing 17 species were caught, including 10 birds of 4 species, and 3 domestic dogs.<sup>9</sup> The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources report on the 1990-91 otter trapping season indicates that 36 percent "of the otters harvested this season were accidentally taken in traps set for beaver."<sup>10</sup> And after Alaska state officials set out wire snares to kill wolves in 1993-94, they reported that 38 percent of the animals snared were not wolves — the death toll included brown bears, wolverines, golden eagles, coyotes, caribou, foxes, and moose.<sup>11</sup> Across the country, there continue to be grisly accounts of companion dogs and cats who stumble into snares and traps near people's homes.

## DISEASE CONTROL

While literature developed by the fur industry and the trapping community usually contain the self-aggrandizing suggestion that trappers perform a public service by reducing the spread of diseases such as rabies, such claims are easily dismantled simply by reviewing the scientific literature. For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and numerous state fish and game agencies have acknowledged that a rabies epidemic exists in many north-eastern states directly as a consequence of the translocation activities of hunters and trappers. In 1977, hunting clubs

captured and transported 3,500 raccoons from Florida to West Virginia in order to enhance recreational hunting and trapping opportunities. Since rabies is endemic in Florida, it leaped to West Virginia and has been spreading inexorably along the east coast since that fateful and short-sighted translocation.<sup>12</sup>

The killing of random animals, though it may be psychologically soothing to landowners and health officials, does absolutely nothing to combat the spread of rabies. Animals infected with rabies do not eat during the latter stages of the disease, and therefore do not respond to baited traps. And traps do not have the ability to take only infected animals — healthy animals are also, if not predominantly, killed.<sup>13</sup>

The National Academy of Science recommended in 1973, "Persistent trapping or poisoning campaigns as a means to rabies control should be abolished. There is no evidence that these costly and politically attractive programs reduce either wildlife reservoirs or rabies incidence. The money can be better spent on research, vaccination, compensation to stockmen for losses, education or warning systems."<sup>14</sup> More than two decades later, many leading health experts have finally abandoned the notion of trapping as a panacea for disease problems. A leading rabies publication reports that "reducing potentially rabid wildlife populations through extermination has been largely abandoned as a means of controlling the disease. Population reduction often causes wildlife



Photo: Unknown

populations to expand rather than decline. Studies show decimated susceptible wildlife populations rebound in the next breeding season, setting up a new cycle for rabies outbreaks.”<sup>15</sup> Many of these researchers even believe “that the disadvantages of population reduction outweigh the advantages” because trapping may “remove older, naturally immune animals, thus allowing the more susceptible to move or be born into an area and actually” spread the disease.<sup>16</sup>

But our federal and state governments are still spending taxpayer dollars on trapping programs and allowing private trappers to kill animals for fur in the name of disease control. Instead, public education programs should be expanded to teach people how to identify rabid animals and how to prevent rabies by taking common sense precautions such as vaccinating companion animals and not leaving food or garbage outside.

### **MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH**

Because cruel traps have become a public relations nightmare for the fur industry, its spokespersons try to white-wash the issue by saying that the majority of furbearers killed for coats are humanely raised on “ranches.” Ranching now accounts for about half of total pelt production — but only a few species, principally mink, chinchilla, and silver and grey fox, are raised on ranches.

Nonetheless, fur ranches are nothing less than concentration camps for furbearers — where profit is the motive and humane oversight is absent. Packed in wire mesh cages, the animals are denied adequate space, normal social interactions, and free movement. As a result, the animals often exhibit distressed neurotic behavior, pacing frantically back and forth in their cages. Recognizing the cruelty inherent in the fur factory farming system, Austria and the United Kingdom have banned fur farms.

Given that the American government does not regulate fur farming and that the states do not force fur ranchers to comply with existing cruelty statutes, severe abuses occur. It is not rare, for instance, to have animals lying in their fecal matter or to have animals with toes frozen to cold wire mesh during winter.

And it’s often more economical for ranchers to hope sick animals will survive rather than to hire a veterinarian to care for them.

If that’s not enough, the animals — products of inbreeding — are plagued with genetic disorders, including deafness, blindness, nervous disorders, and crippling, which magnify the starkness of their existence. And while life is cruel and miserable, death is crude and blunt. Some ranchers break the furbearers’ necks, either manually or mechanically. They may anally electrocute them or poison them with strychnine or cyanide. Others gas animals with unfiltered and uncooled carbon monoxide or carbon dioxide — usually from an automobile exhaust pipe hooked up to the killing chamber.

Despite these realities — and the fact that the American Veterinary Medical Association has condemned most of these killing methods as inhumane — the fur industry claims to have animal welfare at heart and has issued standards of care to be “voluntarily” adopted by breeders. The fact is, the fur industry’s propaganda is as easy to see through as the wire cages in which the animals are imprisoned.

Over the last several years, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) has released tens of thousands of mink and beavers from fur farms. While some people question whether these captive-reared animals can survive in the wild, ALF activist Rod Coronado reported that after rehabilitating and releasing animals from fur farms he “saw farm-raised mink who immediately began building nests under logs and in other animals’ abandoned dens” and “began to swim in waters where they could find fish and crayfish.”<sup>17</sup> And Mark Pimlott, a wildlife biologist with the British Columbia Ministry of the Environment, reported that mink released by the ALF can survive in the wild, and said that the claims to the contrary by the fur industry are “a little self-serving.”<sup>18</sup>



Photo: Susan C. Morse, Mountain Lion Foundation

### **ENVIRONMENTAL NIGHTMARE**

While the fur industry promotes its product as a “natural” fabric from a “renewable resource,” nothing could be further from the truth. Gregory H. Smith, an engineer with the Ford Motor Company, reported that the amount of energy expended to manufacture a fur coat from trapped animals was nearly 4 times the amount needed to manufacture a fake fur coat, and that the amount of energy expended to manufacture a fur coat from ranched animals — after calculating the production of feed, cages, skinning, pelt drying, processing, and transportation — was 66 times the amount needed for a fake fur.<sup>19</sup>

Formaldehyde, chromium, and other dangerous chemicals are used in the processing of furs, and have catastrophic effects when this runoff leaks from fur farms into rivers or streams. In 1991, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) fined 6 New Jersey fur processors \$2.2 million as a result of the pollution they caused.<sup>20</sup> The EPA claims that the waste from fur processing plants “may cause respiratory problems, and are listed as possible carcinogens.”<sup>21</sup> Fur industry lobbyists are even working in state legislatures for more lenient water pollution laws, a chilling sign that their product can hardly be considered “natural.”

### **PROFITS AND POPULARITY**

Over the last few years, prominent designers such as Calvin Klein and Bill Blass have shown compassion and removed fur from their garments, and hun



Photo: Heidi Prescott, The Fund for Animals

dreds of celebrities have announced that they won't be caught dead wearing fur. Even the World Council of Churches has announced its opposition to fur, and Tel Aviv (Israel) Chief Sephardic Rabbi Haim David Halevi ruled in 1992 that Jews should not manufacture or wear fur because it constitutes a violation of Jewish law.<sup>22</sup> As more and more people are learning about the cruelty involved in making a fur coat, a January 2000 Harris Poll indicated that 72 percent of Americans would rather wear faux fur.<sup>23</sup>

The best evidence that fur is a dying industry is the dramatic drop in the number of animals killed for fur. For example, in 1987, 4.12 million minks were killed on fur farms in the U.S. but, in 1999, 2.81 million minks were slaughtered for their skins – a sharp decline.<sup>24</sup> Yet, the year 2000 saw an expensive media push by the fur industry to ensure fur's popularity again. The extremely cold weather aided the propagandistic advertising of the fur pushers, as the industry began pushing fur-trimmed collars, fur mittens, and many items other than full-length coats. Fur has not increased in popularity; instead, the small number of people who still wear fur have simply become less embarrassed about wearing it in public.

But, business remains ailing for furriers because a growing segment of the American public will not tolerate animals being tortured and killed for vanity. If people don't buy fur, no one will sell it. Ultimately, it will be the consumers — not politicians or judges — who decide the fate of the fur industry. Help spread the word about animal cruelty every time you see a fur coat. With the many available fake fur coats and other alternatives, the new fashion is compassion. 🐾

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### RESOURCES:

FOR A CATALOG OF FAKE FUR COATS, CONTACT:

**DONNA SALYERS' FABULOUS-FURS**  
 601 MADISON AVENUE  
 COVINGTON, KY 41011  
 1-800-848-4650  
 WWW.FABULOUSFURS.COM

FOR MORE INFORMATION  
 ON THE FUR INDUSTRY, VISIT:  
 WWW.FUND.ORG/FUR

FOR A COMPLETE EVALUATION OF THE CRUELTY  
 INHERENT IN THE WORLDWIDE FUR INDUSTRY,  
 READ: **McKENNA, CAROL. FASHION VICTIMS.**  
**WORLD SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS.**  
 WWW.WSPA.ORG.UK.



Photo: Peter Senteur, WSPA

Foxes like this one live their entire lives in cages on fur farms, until they are gassed or electrocuted.