



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

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Children's Committee
Room 011, Capitol Building
Hartford, CT 06106
Phone: 860-240-0370

**Testimony in SUPPORT of HB 5566, AAC child safety by
restricting the placement of leghold traps**

Dear Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo, and Honorable Members of the
Children's Committee:

On behalf of the Connecticut supporters of The Humane Society of the United States
(HSUS), the nation's largest animal protection organization, I am writing in SUPPORT
of HB 5566, which would restrict the placement of leghold traps.

This bill affords protective provisions and reporting requirements necessary for
protecting animals and children alike. Because these traps can be so injurious to
whatever animal stumbles onto them, it is vital to restrict their use so traps are not
placed in areas where children might encounter them. We applaud the provision in this
bill that requires trappers to report non-target catches (such as domestic dogs and cats)
to DEEP.

We also request that the bill be broadened to include body-crushing traps (also known
as Conibear traps or smooth wire traps). Although meant to kill animals by breaking
their spines, body-crushing traps only do so when the target animal enters the trap
perfectly – conditions very difficult to control in nature. When not killed outright,
these traps cause immense suffering. Body-crushing traps pose an extreme safety risk
to curious pets and children alike, due to the force with which they slam shut and the
amount of damage that they can do.

Why Trap Restrictions are Essential

• **Leghold traps and body-crushing traps are non-selective.**

Each year in Connecticut, ~6,500 wild animals are killed in these traps, but the number
of “non-target” victims—domestic dogs and cats, rabbits, songbirds, raptors—goes un-
reported. The high rate of “non-target” captures ranges as high as 67% according to
studies (AVMA, April 2008), which is not surprising, since the trap will spring on
anything of sufficient weight that sets foot in it. Non-target animals caught in traps can
be theoretically released but usually have little chance of survival due to injury
severity. These traps pose an obvious risk to pets and children.

• **These traps cause suffering.**

Both of these types of traps will cause significant physical damage to animals ranging

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from bone fractures, tooth damage, and twisted ligaments to hemorrhage. A scientific paper which reviewed mammal trapping studies stated “across the literature, the majority of studies show a significant percentage of trapped individuals suffering major injuries” (Iossa and Soulsbury, 2007). Connecticut trappers are only required to check traps every 24 hours, so the animal can struggle over a prolonged period, and be subject to weather extremes, pain, and predation—i.e., literally being eaten alive since they can’t get away.

- **Little has changed in 170 years.**

Since its creation in the 1820’s, leghold traps have gone through marketing “face change”, such as being referred to as “foothold traps” to avoid the stigma associated with leghold traps. These devices are much the same primitive device that they were nearly a century ago.

- **There is precedent for restricting the use of leghold traps.**

Eight states have banned or severely restricted the use of leghold and body-crushing traps due to safety and humane concerns. They are Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Washington, Arizona, California, Colorado, and Florida.

- **Trapping is not “population control”.**

The leghold trap is used almost entirely for recreational reasons, not necessity. Wild animals have high compensatory reproduction abilities which easily offset losses caused by trapping. This means that trapped animals’ numbers bounce back by the next breeding season due to increased litter size, breeding at an earlier age, increased juvenile survival, etc.—all phenomenon that are biologically adapted to help wild animals recover from cyclic population losses. Trapping merely creates this bounce-back effect which in no way provides any population “control” unless a large proportion of the population is removed along with the food source and habitat features which attracted them in the first place—both of which present a virtual impossibility except in the rarest of cases.

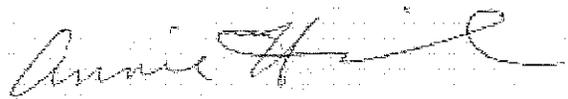
- **These traps are NOT necessary for nuisance wildlife control.**

The vast majority of nuisance wildlife animal removal is done in largely suburban/urban areas where leghold traps would pose a huge safety hazard. For this reason, box traps are the trap of choice.

For these reasons, The HSUS supports HB 5566.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



Annie Hornish

Connecticut State Director

The Humane Society of the United States

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Citations:

AVMA- Issues in animal welfare. Backgrounder: Welfare implications of leghold trap use in conservation and research. April 30, 2008.

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