



## **Snares/cable restraints are inhumane and indiscriminate and should remain banned in Vermont**

A snare, also referred to as a cable restraint, is a loop of wire, stranded wire, or wire rope that is designed to ensnare an animal by the neck or leg. The addition of different components to the snare cable (locks, stops, swivels etc.) can make it incrementally more selective and more likely to kill or to restrain.

### **What's the Impetus to Legalize Snares / Cable Restraints?**

Some state fish and wildlife agencies are making an effort to rebrand snares by attempting to classify them as a new device: cable restraints, when in fact, cable restraints are just snares with "add-ons." Faced with a decline in trapper recruitment and the public's growing opposition to leghold traps, state agencies are using euphemisms, such as "cable restraints" or "relaxing snares," in an effort to garner support for the legalization of snares. In a paper titled, "Using Advancements in Cable-Trapping to Overcome Barriers to Furbearer Management in the United States," the authors write, "The inherent simplicity of cable-traps may allow for higher trapper confidence and a faster learning curve, thereby increasing success and long term participation by newly recruited trappers."<sup>1</sup>

### **One of the Lead Associations on Fish and Wildlife Furbearer Management Cautions Against Using the Term 'Cable Restraint'**

Cable restraints are modified snares that may operate as traditional killing snares dependent upon: species caught; debris caught in device, such as mud or leaves; entanglement and other factors. According to the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA, of which Vermont Fish & Wildlife is a member organization), "Under normal field application, numerous external factors may affect the ability of a lock to perform as designed. For example, if a significant bend or kink forms in the cable just outside the lock position, if the lock becomes bound in the animal's hair, or if the animal cannot release tension on the cable due to 'entanglement', a relaxing lock may not be able to 'relax' as designed."<sup>2</sup>

Despite state fish and wildlife agencies' attempts at distinguishing cable restraints as separate from snares, the AFWA (again, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department is a member) states, "Because one snare has a feature with greater killing potential than another does not mean

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<sup>1</sup> Vantassel, Stephen M., Tim L. Hiller, Powell, Kelly D. J., and Hygnstrom, Scott E. "Using Advancements in Cable-Trapping to Overcome Barriers to Furbearer Management in the United States," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 74(5), 934-939, (1 July 2010). <https://doi.org/10.2193/2009-298>

<sup>2</sup> The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group (2009). "Modern Snares for Capturing Mammals: Definitions, Mechanical Attributes and Use Considerations. Available at [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/5515/2002/6134/Modern\\_Snares\\_final.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/5515/2002/6134/Modern_Snares_final.pdf)

that one will kill an animal and the other will live-restrain.”<sup>3</sup> They also state in the same report when referring to cable restraints, “A passively-activated snare with a relaxing lock could be used to kill or live-restrain an animal depending on the species, and how, where, or when it is deployed. Hence, establishing useful definitions of a ‘killing snare’ and ‘cable restraint’ requires incorporation of all these factors.”

### **Snaring Cable Restraints Are Inhumane and Indiscriminate**

Snaring cable restraint devices still cut into an animal’s skin, causing lacerations and tissue damage, and result in pain, injury, and even death. Animals, like the coyote in the attached exhibit, are known to frantically chew at the cable, and their limbs, to free themselves, thereby breaking teeth and bloodying gums. There are many factors that determine whether a snaring cable restraint restrains the animal or if the device causes major injuries and even death. For example, a cable restraint may be set for a coyote and intended to restrain the animal by the neck or limb. But if a smaller animal, such as a fox or a raccoon enters the trap, that smaller animal may be caught by the spine or abdomen as they pass further through the loop before it fully closes, causing deep lacerations, organ damage and other injuries. In a study performed on red foxes using the Wisconsin Restraint, which is built with a relaxing-type lock on aircraft cable and incorporates two swivels, a break-way, and a stop, which prevents the loop from closing to a desired diameter, an average of 35% of fox captures were around the body rather than the neck.<sup>4</sup> These types of captures result in prolonged, severe suffering, including hemorrhage, internal organ damage and even death.

In a highly-controlled snaring cable restraint study that required trap checks twice daily, with a small sample size (17 coyotes), performed by trappers and Canadian wildlife agencies, they reported that, “The most common injuries sustained included subcutaneous edema and hemorrhage around the head and neck and minor cutaneous lacerations. One of the Coyotes that showed indicators of poor welfare had one digit amputated, major laceration on the footpad, fractured bone fragments in the foot likely caused by self-mutilation in addition to a missing incisor tooth that may have been lost while the animal was biting the restraint. A second Coyote exhibited a hemorrhage of the mucosal lining of the stomach.” **If these types of injuries were documented under the best of circumstances and using the strictest of protocols, then one must ask what the result would be if snaring cable restraints were made legal to the general public, including youth trappers.** In the study, “Comparison of Injuries to Coyote From 3 Types of Cable Foot-Restraints”, the researchers reported, “A padded leghold trap may cause less injury to a captured coyote than cable restraints.”<sup>5</sup> For this reason and other reasons documented in this paper, we believe that Fish & Wildlife is making a broad and unfounded assertion that cable restraints are a humane option.

Snaring cable restraints capture “non-target” animals, including pets and imperiled species. It is unclear how many non-target animals suffer or die because trappers are often not required to report these captures. However, in field studies, snaring cable restraints have caught non-target wildlife, including deer, and also domestic dogs.<sup>6</sup> Snares also trap protected species,

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Muñoz-Igualada J, Shivik JA, Domínguez FG, González LM, Moreno AA, Olalla MF & García CA (2010) Traditional and new cable restraint systems to capture fox in central Spain. *Journal of Wildlife Management* 74: 181-187

<sup>5</sup> Darrow, P.A., Skirpstunas, R.T., Carlson, S.W. and Shivik, J.A. (2009), Comparison of Injuries to Coyote From 3 Types of Cable Foot-Restraints. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, 73: 1441-1444. doi:[10.2193/2008-566](https://doi.org/10.2193/2008-566)

<sup>6</sup> Papouchis, *supra* note 1.

like golden eagles and bald eagles.<sup>7</sup> Former USDA Wildlife Services trapper Gary Strader, shares, "The problem is, eagles eat until they can eat no more. Then they have to get in the air, but it takes a long runway for them to get off the ground. They start running down the trail you set your snares on (and) end up getting caught and killed."<sup>8</sup>

There are so many factors that dictate whether or not the device will function properly and whether or not the "right" animal will be ensnared by the "right" part of his/her body. Many of these factors are outside of the trapper's control, including the cable loop placement. A cable loop that has fallen will not catch the target animal, but may catch a nontarget animal.<sup>9</sup> A device that's set 10 inches off the ground to catch a coyote, but dropped a few inches due to the weather (wind, snow, etc.), will now ensnare non-targeted animals like foxes and bobcats and likely by the abdomen or another non-target part of the body.

**The legalization of cable restraints would result in yet another indiscriminate, inhumane trap that will present harm and death to not only the intended target, but non-targeted species as well.**

### **High Probability of Mass Saturation of Traps on Landscapes**

Cheap, lightweight, easy to make, and set in large numbers, these inconspicuous "land mines" may be abandoned on the landscape and can imperil any animal crossing their path, including deer. You can view video of a deer caught in a cable restraint by visiting this link: <https://youtu.be/Y2u92UNNz6I>

Even the Missouri Department of Conservation acknowledges the potential for trappers to set the devices and fail to retrieve them, stating, "Some trappers do not accurately record all set locations, or they feel that the cable restraints are so inexpensive that they do not need to retrieve every one of them. Restraints may remain active for a long time after the trapper quits checking them. Animals can be captured in them days or weeks after the trapper has left, and all trappers reputations are damaged by these actions."<sup>10</sup>

### **"Best Management Practices" Are Misleading and Bias is Inherent**

To assuage concerns about the inhumane and nonselective nature of snares/cable restraints and other devices, trapping proponents, including state wildlife management agencies, often refer to the Best Management Practices (BMPs) developed by the AFWA.<sup>11</sup> Analysts have found, however, that the trauma and injury scales used to develop the BMPs allow for an

<sup>7</sup> Kidston, Martin: "3 golden eagles caught in snare traps in Montana; 2 die." *Missoulian*, January 29, 2013 at [https://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/golden-eagles-caught-in-snare-traps-in-montana-die/article\\_09d14c2e-69ad-11e2-a5a2-001a4bcf887a.html](https://missoulian.com/news/state-and-regional/golden-eagles-caught-in-snare-traps-in-montana-die/article_09d14c2e-69ad-11e2-a5a2-001a4bcf887a.html).

Rodrigues, Jenny: "B.C. photographer captures rescue of bald eagle trapped in snare." *Global News*, February 2, 2017 at <https://globalnews.ca/news/3223397/b-c-photographer-captures-rescue-of-bald-eagle-trapped-in-snare/>.

<sup>8</sup> Knudson, Tom: "Neck snare is a 'non-forgiving and nonselective' killer, former trapper says." *The Sacramento Bee*, April 30, 2012 at <https://www.sacbee.com/news/investigations/wildlife-investigation/article2574607.html>.

<sup>9</sup> North Dakota Game and Fish: Using Cable Devices in North Dakota Responsible Use.

<sup>10</sup> Missouri Trappers Association and the Missouri Department of Conservation: Missouri Cable Restraint Training Manual." Revised March 2007 at [https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/downloads/4157\\_6377.pdf](https://huntfish.mdc.mo.gov/sites/default/files/downloads/4157_6377.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (2006). Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States: Introduction. Available at [https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3515/1862/6191/Introduction\\_BMPs.pdf](https://www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/3515/1862/6191/Introduction_BMPs.pdf).

unacceptable level of harm to wildlife and do not effectively consider unintended victims of traps.<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, BMPs are relatively unknown among the trapping community and are rarely followed by trappers. A 2015 report by the AFWA found that only 42 percent of trappers had heard of the BMPs. Of those 42 percent, only 66 percent currently use and plan to continue using the BMPs when they trap. That means that only 28 percent of all trappers are following the only, and insufficient, guidelines that the trapping industry has established to address animal welfare concerns.<sup>13</sup> This does not inspire much confidence that snares/cable restraints, if allowed, would be used appropriately.

### **Snared Animals Are Killed in Inhumane Ways**

Even if snaring cable restraints trap animals alive, there are no laws or regulations to ensure that those captured animals are killed humanely. Various forms of killing may be used, including clubbing, drowning, or strangulation, ignoring recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association. The trauma and injury scales used to develop the BMPs also do not provide guidelines on how animals, once caught, should be killed.<sup>14</sup>

Animals who are released or escape from a snaring cable restraint may later die from their injuries or suffer from their reduced ability to forage for food. For example, a 2019 study found that "...wolves captured with cable restraints suffered more injury to their mouth, but these would not hinder movement, although they could influence predation and feeding."<sup>15</sup> Just as foxes, coyotes, and domestic pets desperately chew at the metal jaws of a leghold trap, breaking teeth and bloodying gums, the same is true for animals restrained in snares with relaxing cables (cable restraints.)

### **In Closing**

21 states have a partial or complete ban on the use of snares, including Vermont. Our state should not weaken its existing law by allowing the use of snares regardless of how they are renamed or modified.<sup>16</sup> The end result will mean more non-targeted animals, including eagles, deer, bear, and other "big game" species being caught.

One of the industry leaders – *not a wildlife advocacy group* – the AFWA, has cautioned state fish and wildlife agencies on the nuances of snares and snaring cable restraints and to be careful when categorizing them as live restraining traps.

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<sup>12</sup> Rochlitz, I. (2010). The impact of snares on animal welfare. In OneKind Report on Snaring. Cambridge University Animal Welfare Information Service: Cambridge, UK. Available at [https://onekind.org/uploads/publications/onekind\\_report\\_on\\_snaring\\_chapter\\_1.pdf](https://onekind.org/uploads/publications/onekind_report_on_snaring_chapter_1.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. (2015). Trap use, furbearers trapped, and trapper characteristics in the United States in 2015. Available at [http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/AFWA\\_Trap\\_Use\\_Report\\_2015\\_ed\\_2016\\_02\\_29.pdf](http://www.fishwildlife.org/files/AFWA_Trap_Use_Report_2015_ed_2016_02_29.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Rochlitz, *supra* note 6.

<sup>15</sup> Gese, E. M., Terletzky, P. A., Erb, J. D., Fuller, K. C., Grabarkewitz, J. P., Hart, J. P., Humpal, C., Sampson, B. A. and Young, J. K. (2019), Injury scores and spatial responses of wolves following capture: Cable restraints versus foothold traps. *Wildl. Soc. Bull.*, 43: 42-52. doi:[10.1002/wsb.954](https://doi.org/10.1002/wsb.954)  
 Jones, D.M. and Rodriguez, S.H. (2003): "Restricting the use of animal traps in the United States: An overview of laws and strategy." Available at [https://www.animallaw.info/sites/default/files/lralvol9\\_p136.pdf](https://www.animallaw.info/sites/default/files/lralvol9_p136.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

Even to the experienced eye, a snare and a snaring cable restraint look identical, so how can Vermont game wardens properly enforce a law banning snares, for example, while allowing a snaring cable restraint? As law enforcement records indicate, Vermont's current regulations on trapping are difficult to enforce and result in very few tickets each year. The legalization of cable restraints would fall into the hands of poachers and illegal activity with little chance of being caught.



Photo of a snare by Pierre Grzybowski, the Humane Society of the United States.



Photo of a relaxing snare (cable restraint) Wildlife Control Supplies

Trapping wildlife, whether it be with a leghold, a snare, or a body crushing "kill" trap, is outdated and cruel and is opposed by 75% of Vermont residents. In a letter written to the legislature in January 2014, Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department Commissioner at the time, Patrick Berry, referred to cable restraints as a "modern snare" and understood that in order to legalize cable restraints, the prohibition on snares would have to be repealed first. We encourage Fish & Wildlife to listen to the people of Vermont and honor the legislative ban on snares.

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