

January 16, 2016

The Honorable James Inhofe
Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inhofe and Ranking Member Boxer:

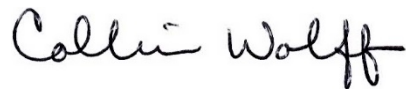
I am writing to urge you and your colleagues in the Senate to support Senator Cory Booker's amendment to restrict the use of body-gripping traps on National Wildlife Refuges. As a board-certified veterinary surgeon, I specialize in the treatment of traumatic injuries in companion animals. While proponents of body-gripping traps will argue they are a safe and effective means of legally capturing target wildlife, my firsthand experience in treating companion animal trap injuries leads me to vehemently disagree! The undeniable truth is these bone-crushing devices are inherently indiscriminate and inhumane. Across my home state of New Mexico, there have been an exasperatingly large number of reports of trap-related injuries to non-target animals, including cats, dogs, and humans. All too commonly these injuries occur on public lands intended to be a safe environment for its visitors engaged in various recreational activities. Unfortunately, pet owners permitted to walk their dogs on public trails are oblivious to the sanctioned placement of wildlife traps on many of these lands, often within feet of the very same trail used by trappers. There is absolutely no justifiable reason why law-abiding pet owners and their canine family members should have to walk among a veritable mine field and risk the needless suffering faced by unintended victims of one of these traps.

Just this past year, I became involved in the care of one such unintended victim of a steel-jaw leghold trap, a young and healthy black Labrador Retriever named "Sam." Sam and his owner were walking on a trail along the Rio Grande, a popular local outdoor destination for biking, horse riding, and dog walking. Through my involvement in Sam's veterinary care, I discovered that trapping was also among this list of activities. Two weeks and nearly \$3000 after I began intensive management of Sam's wound resulting from the trauma inflicted by the trap, I was forced to concede my worst fear – the damage was too severe to save Sam's leg. It is difficult to convey the barbaric nature of trap-related injuries with words alone. Instead, for the sake of Sam and all pets that have been, or will become, collateral damage resulting from sanctioned trapping on public lands, I am compelled to attach a photograph (see below) of Sam's leg injury as it appeared just before I amputated his hindleg. As a veterinarian, I take very seriously my role as an advocate for companion animals that have no voice of their own. Given our nation's lawmakers have the capacity to enact sensible policies that would prevent such accidents from occurring in the first place, I make this final impassioned plea to the lawmakers who possess the power to end the needless suffering of pets like Sam: please support Senator Booker's amendment to restrict the use of body-gripping traps on National Wildlife Refuges.

You and your colleagues on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee have an important opportunity to advance legislation that stands to benefit animals across the United States by including Senator Booker's provision to limit the use of body-gripping traps on wildlife refuges. Senator Inhofe – your state of Oklahoma already severely restricts the use of Conibear traps and strangulation snares, and with good reason. Oklahomans are fortunate not to have to hear about the type of horrific trapping incidents we see far too often here in New Mexico. Senator Boxer – California has similarly prohibited the use of body-gripping traps. I hope you both will work to extend this commonsense measure to public lands nationwide where the safety of all visitors should be our highest priority.

Thank you both for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Dr. Collin Wolff, DVM, DACVS-SA
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Surgeons – Small Animal
VCA Veterinary Care Animal Hospital & Referral Center, Albuquerque, NM

CC: Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee

