

Oppose HB 579

Protect Cecil County pets and wildlife from cruel snare traps

HB 579 would repeal the prohibition against possessing a snare trap in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Montgomery, and Prince George's counties, and repeals a prohibition against using, selling, possessing, setting, placing, or maintaining a snare trap in Cecil County.

Snares are inhumane and cause immense suffering

A snare trap is a loop of wire, stranded wire, or wire rope designed to ensnare an animal by the neck or leg. These devices cut into an animal's skin and can become deeply embedded, causing lacerations and tissue damage, and result in pain, injury, and even death. Snared animals are known to frantically chew on the cable and on their own limbs in an attempt to free themselves, breaking teeth, bloodying gums, and causing self-injury. They can also die by strangulation as they struggle against the tightening wire, often causing grotesque swelling and hemorrhaging of the head.¹

Snared animals may be hanged to death if they jump over a fence or branch in an attempt to escape, or can sustain joint dislocation, severed tendons, and other internal injuries as they fight against the snare. They may also struggle to near-asphyxiation, then briefly recover, then struggle again, repeating this horrific cycle for many hours until they die or the trapper returns to kill them. And animals captured in snares that are not monitored may die from exposure, dehydration, or starvation.² Even if snares capture animals alive, there are no laws, regulations, or guidelines to ensure that they are killed humanely, and methods include clubbing, drowning, or strangulation.³ Animals who are released or escape from a snare may later die from their injuries or suffer from their reduced ability to forage for food.⁴

Snares are “silent killers” that also capture pets and protected species

It is unclear how many non-target animals suffer or die in traps in the U.S., because trappers are not always required to report them. However, in field studies, snares have caught non-target wildlife, including deer, and domestic dogs.⁵ In 2013 a 12-year-old New Jersey dog was strangled to death by a snare set a few feet off of a walking path, and in recent years dogs have suffered a similar fate in Idaho, Wyoming, New Mexico, Iowa, Florida, and other states. In 2020 a hunting dog captured in a snare in southern Indiana had to be euthanized because of gruesome and debilitating injuries.⁶

Snares are silent killers; a dog who is hiking or hunting with his owner could become ensnared and quickly be choked to the point that he cannot vocalize. When dogs are captured in traps that clamp to other parts of their body, their owners can hear them bark, yelp or cry in pain and are able to rescue them. But tragically, dogs captured in snares may just hunker down and pass out before slowly and quietly suffocating.



A puppy's neck wound from a snare trap, shown after one week of healing.

Photo courtesy of Footloose Montana

¹ Papouchis, C.M. (2004). A critical review of trap research. In Fox, C.H. and Papouchis, C.M. (eds) *Cull of the Wild. A Contemporary Analysis of Wildlife Trapping in the United States*. Animal Protection Institute. Sacramento, California pp 41-55. Bang Publishing: Brainerd, Minnesota, USA.

² Proulx, G., Rodtka, D., Barrett, M. W., Cattet, M., Dekker, D., Moffatt, E., & Powell, R. A. (2015). Humaneness and selectivity of killing neck snares used to capture canids in Canada: A review. *Canadian Wildlife Biology & Management*, 4(1), 55-65.

³ Rochlitz, I. (2010). The impact of snares on animal welfare. In OneKind Report on Snaring. Cambridge University Animal Welfare Information Service: Cambridge, UK.

⁴ Myers, John: “Wolf, entangled in snare, shot in Duluth.” *The Duluth News Tribune*, February 12, 2018.

⁵ Papouchis, *supra* note 1.

⁶ Maher, Savannah: “Snaring Death Of Family Dog Raises Questions About Trapping On Public Lands.” Wyoming Public Media, Feb. 3, 2020; “Pet dog strangled in bobcat snare during family outing in SV.” *Buckrail*, Jan. 17, 2018; Ridenour, Shelley: “Owners of dog killed in trap recommend caution.” Challis Messenger, Mar. 11, 2020; “Proposed snare trap-ban legislation named for dog who died.” *Ruidoso News*, Jan. 9, 2019; Hardaway, Liz: “Traps set for coyotes snare dogs instead; two die.” *Venice Gondolier*, Aug. 22, 2018; Davis, Phil: “Hunting snare kills Woolwich family dog at Locke Avenue Park.” *South Jersey Times*, Feb. 7, 2013; Strandberg, Sarah: “Traps can kill pets; Calmar woman's beloved dog Skylar dies in her arms.” *Driftless Journal*, Dec. 4, 2012. Whaley, Grace: “Dog passes away after injured by possible snare trap.” *TriState Homepage*, Feb 18, 2020.

Snares also trap protected species, like golden eagles and bald eagles, and can inflict horrific injuries on non-target wildlife species.⁷ For example, a snare set for a coyote may be intended to restrain the animal by the neck or limb. But smaller animals who enter the snare, such as foxes or raccoons, may be caught by the spine or abdomen as they pass further through the loop before it fully closes, causing prolonged, severe suffering, deep lacerations, internal organ damage, and even death. In a study performed on red foxes, an average of 35% of captures were around the body rather than the neck.⁸ And a fallen cable loop will not catch the target animal, but may catch a smaller, nontarget animal.⁹

Cheap, lightweight, easy to make, and set in large numbers, snares are inconspicuous “land mines” that may be abandoned on the landscape and can imperil any animal crossing their path. The Missouri Department of Conservation states, “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.”¹⁰

Tools already exist to prevent conflicts with coyotes

The use of snares is not an effective strategy to protect people, pets, or livestock from conflicts with coyotes. We recommend that landowners and ranchers consult with experts about using non-lethal property and livestock protection methods including fencing, guard animals, birthing sheds, and noise and light devices that deter carnivores. If those methods are ineffective, though, Maryland livestock owners can lethally remove problem coyotes from their property at any time, and can engage the services of licensed wildlife damage control operators when necessary. But randomly setting cruel and indiscriminate snare traps in the area will not mitigate conflicts or reduce coyote numbers, and will serve only to endanger Cecil County’s pets and non-target wildlife who come across them.



A dog with a snare wrapped around the waist, shared by Texas-based Bastrop Animal Rescue, Inc. Photo courtesy of Wyoming Untrapped



A dog suffered this wound from a snare wrapped around his abdomen.

Photo courtesy of Trap Free Montana

Protect Cecil County’s animals from cruel snares: Please reject HB 579.

For more information, contact Maryland@humaneociety.org.



⁷ Kidston, Martin: “3 golden eagles caught in snare traps in Montana; 2 die.” *Missoulian*, January 29, 2013; and Rodriques, Jenny: “B.C. photographer captures rescue of bald eagle trapped in snare.” *Global News*, February 2, 2017; and Knudson, Tom: “Neck snare is a ‘non-forgiving and nonselective’ killer, former trapper says.” *The Sacramento Bee*, April 30, 2012.

⁸ 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

⁹ North Dakota Game and Fish: Using Cable Devices in North Dakota Responsible Use.

¹⁰ Missouri Trappers Association and the Missouri Department of Conservation: “Missouri Cable Restraint Training Manual.”