

Trap ban initiative sparks heated debate

By LESLIE FARRIS
Of the Emerald

Pro- and anti-trapping forces already are battling over a November ballot measure that could severely limit the use of animal traps in Oregon.

Oregonians Against Trapping, a coalition of Defenders of Wildlife and Greenpeace members, recently submitted an anti-trapping initiative petition bearing more than 65,000 signatures to the secretary of state's office.

If 54,699 of the signatures are valid, the initiative will secure a spot on the November general election ballot.

The initiative calls for an immediate ban on the sale and use of snare and leghold traps for taking furs and a five-year phaseout of the traps in predator control.

Predator traps would be allowed through 1985 by special permit from the state agriculture department. After 1985, all snare and leghold traps would be prohibited except by special permit from the state Health Division to protect human health and safety.

Oregonians Against Trapping say the five-year phaseout provision should give trappers enough time to develop more effective, non-lethal methods of predator control.

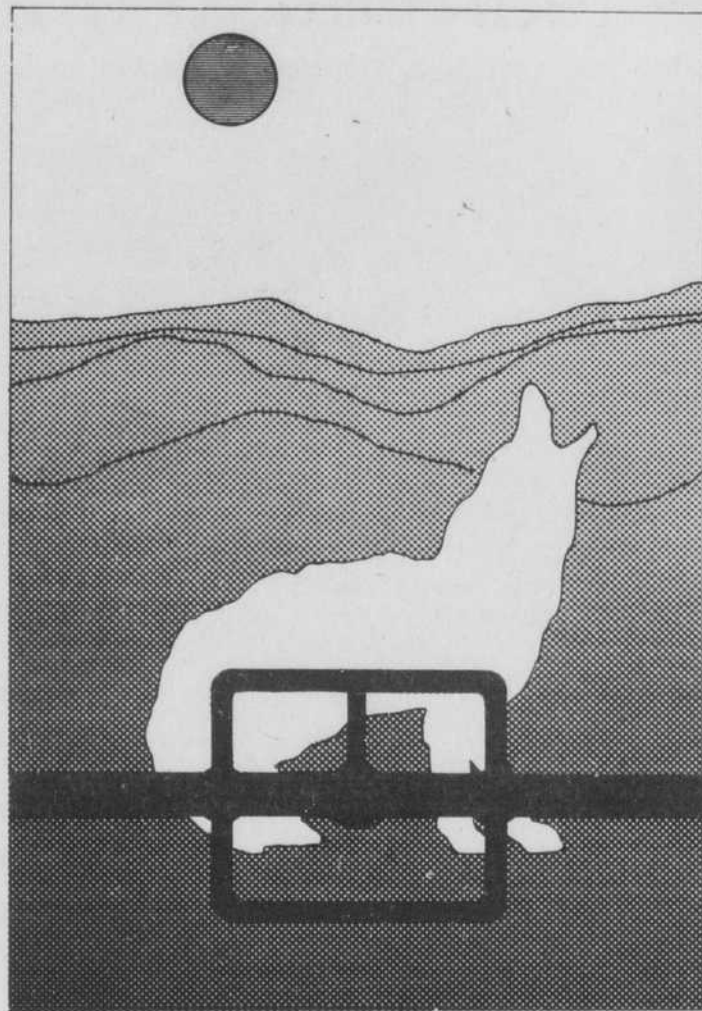
Sara Polenick, a member of the coalition, says several methods already have proven effective, including "taste aversion," coyote-proof fences and guard dogs.

Taste aversion involves baiting sheep carcasses with lithium chloride to make coyotes temporarily ill and to discourage them from attacking sheep.

"Predators do kill domestic livestock," Polenick says. "However, it is generally recognized that preventing the damage is much more complex than simply killing the predators."

And trapping proponents have been unable to prove trapping actually reduces livestock losses, Polenick says, citing a 1975 study by Connolly and Longhurst that indicates coyote populations may increase in areas of control.

"In most situations, killing coyotes at rates below 75 percent may merely stimulate reproduction and aggravate the problem by increasing the seasonal population pressure on the food supply," according to



Graphic by Sioux Anderson

the study. "With such increased competition for food, it is reasonable to expect coyotes to turn more to alternative food sources such as livestock."

But a group campaigning against the anti-trapping initiative — Oregonians for Wildlife Conservation — says trapping is "indispensable" to wildlife management, timber conservation and state health policy, as well as predator control.

Jim Griffin, campaign coordinator for the group, says

other studies prove his group's assertions. "We've got studies to prove our side, and they've got studies to prove their side," Griffin says.

"It all depends on how you read the statistics and what area the study's conducted in. Personally, I've been involved with sheep ranchers for many years, and I've seen how hard they work," he continues.

"They can get up three nights in a week because of coyotes and still lose eight sheep. And then they'll tell me, 'Since we got the coyote trappers, we haven't had a single loss.'"

But Polenick says too many trappers use tools that are "inefficient, archaic and brutal."

"Domestic dogs, cats, even sheep and cattle frequently are caught," she says. "Many veterinarians can provide examples of amputated legs or other serious injuries caused by leghold traps."

Non-target trapping is not the fault of the trap but of the trapper, Griffin says. "If a trapper sets the right trap in the right place at the right time of year, he won't get any of these animals."

"An amateur driver kills lots of cats and dogs alongside the road, but I sure don't want to ban cars."

Griffin says many trappers now use "off-set jaw" traps that "don't even crack a leg. I can't argue with the fact we are intentionally killing animals, but someone's done that for me everytime I go to the store to buy a piece of meat."

"And as far as representing people who trap for profit (fur trappers), I know people who raise cows just to skin them and sell the hide."

Polenick says she is worried that Oregon's fish and wildlife department is not responsibly managing the fur-trapping season.

"Although the agency is required by law to investigate the status and condition of the species before setting seasons, they have no data on any of Oregon's furbearing animals."

"The status of the populations is a complete mystery, yet the trapping continues, year after year," she says.

If the initiative is successful, Oregon will become the first state in the country to ban leghold and snare traps by vote. Florida and Rhode Island have banned the leghold trap through legislative action.

A.D. (Continued from Page 1)

penses that are impossible to cut without ultimately letting go of personnel.

"You can't cut a coach and keep a program going."

The Gregor report also commented on telephone use and travel expenditures, two areas which have put the Athletic Department in hot water recently.

The report called for telephone logs to keep track of long distance calls, "if not currently in use." Robinson says the department implemented telephone logs many months ago.

In the area of travel, the report

suggested beefing up the staff in order to watch expenditures more closely. Robinson says he's been requesting just that for a long time — but the budget can't afford it.

Robinson says the Gregor report was better than he expected, but adds that he's tackled with the budget for years, while the Gregor accountants only spent a number of hours.

The ASUO has sent copies of the report to State Board of Higher Education members and legislators on education committees.



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