

Illegal trapping cause of therapy dog's death

Muskrat traps set in wrong area of golf course

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A 71-year-old Wheeling man was cited for trapping without a property owner's permission for an incident in which a Mundelein man's therapy dog was caught in a trap and killed in the Gregg's Landing subdivision in Vernon Hills.

Libertyville police said William Cokenower was charged with a Class B misdemeanor. Police Chief Pat Carey said Cokenower can pay a \$75 fine and resolve the ticket. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources issued the ticket, but requests for more information on the case were rebuffed and a reporter from the Lake County News-Sun was told to file a Freedom of Information request.

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Rupert

The trapper had permission to trap muskrats at the White Deer Run Golf Club at holes 18 and 3, but was not supposed to be at the far northern area of the golf course, which was where Rupert, a 55-pound Chinook, was killed by a Conibear trap in a matter of minutes as the owner, Richard Poska, tried to free the trap from the dog's head. It took three men to get the trap off.

Bob Malpede, general manager and golf professional for the course, said the trapper was not in an area he was supposed to be trapping muskrats, which were causing the shoreline to erode away with their tunnels.

"No one feels worse than us," he said. "The trap was not something you use to catch muskrat," he said. "We told him to pick up his other traps and don't ever come back," he said.

Cokenower, known to the club, noticed muskrat tunnels near the edge of the lake and some ponds and offered to trap the muskrats for free, said Malpede. Cokenower has a trapping license from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Cokenower set up the trap that caught the dog on the southern tip of Charlie Brown Park in Libertyville. He did not have permission from Libertyville to do the trapping.

Trapping in Illinois is still a popular business. There are more than 3,000 licensed trappers in the state and more than 75 state laws and regulations restrict hunting and trapping. Additional federal laws and regulations apply as well. In 2006-2007 muskrat pelts sold on average for \$6.65.

But apparently there are no laws about using lethal traps in residential areas.

"I'm disappointed," said Poska. His wife, Margaret, used Rupert as a part of the Fremont Public Library Reading with Rover program and he would take the trained therapy dog to the Markland Children's Home in Bloomingdale for mentally disabled children.

"But maybe there is something we can still do," he said, referring to attempts to get regulations enacted so lethal trapping cannot be done in residential areas.

Poska is trying to talk to county board members and State Rep Ed Sullivan, R-Mundelein, to change the law.

Poska admits that he let his dog off the leash on an early Saturday morning while out for a walk on the golf course cart path, and the dog ran into the woods and got caught in the trap, which was baited with fish oil.