

January 11, 2008

Dear Footloose Montana,

Thank you for your efforts to end trapping in Montana and protect our pets from horrible deaths.

My wife and I have always had dogs and spend most of our leisure time hiking with them on public lands. We are constantly aware of the potential hazards from trappers. We have agonized with friends over missing pets and the potential reasons for their failure to return.

Years ago I stopped at the intersection of two main USFS roads just west of Seeley Lake. My dog jumped out with me and several minutes later began yelping. I discovered his foot in a trap that had been set in the precise middle of the road junction – no doubt for coyotes. I managed to free him and then returned to the site within an hour with the local Fish Wildlife and Parks game warden. The warden told me this trap placement was illegal. Just then the trapper drove up to check his trap. The game warden spoke friendly to him and refused to cite him in any way despite just telling me his act was illegal. The relationship between trappers and FWP remains complicated to this day and I don't see any move ever coming from FWP to end trapping. We must do it ourselves.

Trapping is a horrible practice for pets but perhaps even worse for the targeted wildlife due to the large numbers tortured each year. I have spent my professional and recreational careers in the mountains of Montana and even so have rarely seen pine marten, beaver, river otter, mountain lion or wolverine. I have never seen lynx despite targeted tracking projects. I would like to see these animals and not stuffed.

Barry and Susan, Footloose members