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The Probe NADCA
ISSUE 181
OCTOBER 1997

Applying Research Findings to Coyote Depredation Control Efforts

Mark Collinge, Director, NADCA Northern Rockies Region, Boise, Idaho

Coyotes consistently account for the majority of predator losses suffered by livestock producers in the U.S., and they are probably one of the most intensively studied predators in the country for that reason. Millions of dollars have been spent over the last 25 years learning about coyotes and how to control coyote damage. Much of this research has involved studies carried out by researchers affiliated with the Federal government or various universities. Some of the findings from this large body of work provide logical explanations for a few things that many coyote damage control practitioners may already have believed, and in some cases may suggest new or different approaches for certain coyote damage control efforts. This article barely scratches the surface of this subject, but it does discuss a few of the most interesting findings.

Many of the early studies on coyote ecology involved live-capturing coyotes and outfitting them with radio-transmitter collars. Subsequent monitoring enabled researchers to determine home range, movements, activity patterns, and causes of mortality for these animals. Telemetry data showed that many coyotes are clearly territorial, while others are more transient and tend to roam over larger areas, encroaching on the territories of other coyotes but spending most of their time in the spaces between territories. An interesting phenomena started becoming apparent as coyote home ranges were plotted on maps during some of these studies. When comparing a coyote's home range with its capture location, it became clear that very few of the study animals were ever captured within the central portion of their home range. Coyotes were instead almost always captured on the edge of or outside of their home range. The data also suggested that when these radio-collared animals finally died, it was usually a human-caused mortality, and the mortality typically occurred outside of the animals' established home range. It appeared that coyotes were for some reason more vulnerable to being caught or killed when they were outside of their established home area.

An interesting phenomena started becoming apparent as coyote home ranges were plotted on maps during some of these studies. When comparing a coyote's home range with its capture location, it became clear that very few of the study animals were ever captured within the central portion of their home range. Coyotes were instead almost always captured on the edge of or outside of their home range.

As it turns out, a number of researchers over the years have documented a tendency for some species to exhibit what is referred to as a neophobic response when encountering new or novel stimuli in a familiar environment. That is, when an animal encounters a new, never-before-encountered object or smell within an area with which it is very familiar, it reacts very cautiously to the new stimulus, and may even avoid it. Conversely, when an animal encounters some new stimulus in an area with which it is not very familiar, it tends to engage in more investigative behavior and is more apt to thoroughly check it out. Territorial coyotes typically spend most of their time within their territory, and it seems reasonable to assume that they would be fairly familiar with the environment and notice changes within that area. But when these animals make occasional forays outside of their normal haunts, which they typically do several times a month, they are much more inquisitive and less cautious. It is during these forays that these animals may be most vulnerable to capture.

For the damage control practitioner, however, there is an important distinction to be made regarding this research. Coyotes captured for the field

Continued on page 6, col. 1

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

October 16-19, 1997: 8th Eastern Wildlife Damage Management Conference, Clarion Hotel and Conference Center, Roanoke, Virginia. Single rooms begin at $67 per night. Registration fee of $125 ($95 student) includes 2 lunches, reception, 1 dinner, 1 banquet, field trip, and Proceedings. NADCA Membership Meeting planned. Contact: Jim Parkhurst, Virginia Coop. Ext., Dept. of Fisheries & Wildlife Sciences, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061-0321, (540) 231-5573, FAX (540) 231-7580, e-mail: jparkhur@vt.edu

October 19-24, 1997: Second International Congress of Vector Ecology, Holiday Inn Int'l. Drive Resort, Orlando, Florida. Sponsored by Society for Vector Ecology. For registration information, contact: Gilbert L. Challet, Sec-Treas., P.O. Box 87, Santa Ana, CA 92702, (714) 971-2421 ext. 148, FAX (714) 971-3940.

November 18-20, 1997: Western Coordinating Committee - 95, "Vertebrate Pests of Agriculture, Forestry and Public Lands", Circus Circus Hotel, Reno, Nevada. An opportunity for those involved in research, extension, teaching and regulatory activities related to wildlife damage management to share information in an informal setting, as well as coordinate research and plan for future needs. Registration fee approx. $30. RSVP to Desley Whisson (916-754-8644) or Larry Sullivan (520-326-6991) by Nov. 4. Reserve hotel room at Circus Circus by mentioning "WRCC-95 meeting rate", $30 double or single, by calling 800-648-5010.

December 7-10, 1997: 59th Midwest Fish & Wildlife Conference, Hyatt Regency, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Theme: "Managing Natural Resources: Integrating Ecology and Society." Conference will include sessions on Prevention and Control of Invasive Species, and Managing Overabundant Wildlife. For further information, contact Michael Samuel at (608) 271-4640, or visit website http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/fh/fish/mwfwc.htm.

March 2-5, 1998: 18th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Doubletree Hotel, Costa Mesa, California. All-day field trip March 2. Plenary and concurrent sessions dealing with rodent, bird, predator, and other vertebrate pests issues from both a research and management perspective on March 3, 4, & 5. Registration and cost information will be available in October. Contact: Sydni Gillette, DANR-North Region, UC Davis, Davis, CA 95616, (916) 754-8491 or visit website http://www.davis.com/~vpc/welcome.html

April 19-24, 1998: 11th International Conference on Bear Research and Management, Park Vista Hotel, Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Contact: Michael R. Pelton, Univ. of TN, Dept. of Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries, P.O. Box 1071, Knoxville, TN 37901, (423) 974-7126, FAX (423) 974-4714, e-mail: pelton@utkux.utcc.utk.edu

June 16-18, 1998: 8th Annual Meeting, Bird Strike Committee USA, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact Gene LeBoeuf, Kirtland AFB, NM, (505) 846-5679.

Oct. 5-9, 1998: International Conference on Rodent Biology and Management, Beijing, China. Organized by Instit. of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Science, and CSIRO Div'n. of Wildlife and Ecology, Australia. For additional information and mailings, contact: Zhibin Zhang, Secretary General, Int'l. Conference, 19 Zhongguancun Road, Haidian District, Beijing 100080, P.R. China, or e-mail: zhangzb@panda.ioz.ac.cn.

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Your contributions of articles to *The Probe* are welcome and encouraged. The deadline for submitting materials is the 15th of the month prior to publication. Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of NADCA.

Nominations Still Needed

NADCA needs you! Consider serving for a 2-year term as Regional Director or one of the officers of your organization. Nominations are being sought for President, Vice-Presidents (West & East), Secretary, Treasurer (yes, Wes Jones is retiring!), and Regional Directors. Officers elected this fall will serve 2-year terms beginning January 1998.

Also, if you know of a fellow member who would be great in a leadership role, give them a call and encourage them to consider serving. Your NADCA leadership needs to be broadly representative of everyone involved in animal damage control—private sector, governmental agencies, universities, retirees, everyone. If you're reading this and are willing to serve, call Jim Forbes, Nominations Committee chairperson, at (518) 674-2190 right away! The ballot needs to be finalized and mailed to all NADCA members during November.

Impacts of the Book "Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage"

Scott Hygnstrom and Kevin Poague, School of Natural Resources Sciences, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0819

Prevention and Control of Wildlife Damage is recognized as the premier reference book in the field of wildlife damage management. Many of you have it sitting on a bookshelf right next to your telephone. The latest edition of the "Handbook," published in 1994, is available as a two-volume, 850-page book and CD-ROM. It was co-edited by Scott Hygnstrom; Robert Timm, University of California; and Gary Larson, USDA-APHIS-WS. It was published cooperatively by the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, USDA-APHIS-WS and the Great Plains Agricultural Council. Over 8,000 copies have been sold and are being used by resource specialists throughout the United States, Canada, Mexico, and other countries. It can be found in every USDA-APHIS-WS office in the nation and thirteen states have placed a copy in every one of their county Extension offices. It is used as a textbook in 15 university wildlife courses. Other primary users include personnel from state natural resources agencies, municipalities, private pest control operators, and the general public.

We conservatively estimate that the Handbook saves $220 million in resources and $210 million in labor each year.

For those of you not familiar with the book, it contains 77 chapters on wildlife species that regularly cause wildlife damage and nuisance problems in North America. Each species chapter includes an identifying illustration, quick-reference management outline, and sections on identification, general biology, damage identification, legal status, economics, prevention and control methods, and references. In addition, the Handbook includes chapters on identification and assessment, obtaining assistance, wildlife diseases, vertebrate pesticides, sample pesticide labels, and a directory of supplies and materials. The chapters were written by 75 authors who are recognized authorities in wildlife damage management. The Handbook emphasizes an integrated pest management (IPM) approach through the use of cost-effective non-lethal methods and safe, selective use of lethal control methods when justified.

To provide justification for continued support of the Handbook, we needed to document its impacts. Our objectives were to: 1) measure the change in knowledge and behavior of Handbook users, and 2) determine the economic impacts of the Handbook. We conducted a mail survey of a stratified random sample of 1,075 Handbook users, selected from a customer mailing list. Strata included private industry, state and municipal governments, cooperative extension, and USDA-APHIS-WS. We generated descriptive statistics using SAS.

Five hundred and twenty useable questionnaires were returned. Response rates by strata were relatively high (private industry-68%, government-46%, Extension-61%, WS-66%). Respondents indicated that they used information from the Handbook at least "once per day" (9%), "once per week" (41%), or "once per month" (50%). Most users reported that the Handbook increased their knowledge of wildlife damage management "considerably" (49%), or "somewhat" (48%). When asked how differently they handled clients' problems, respondents reported "considerably" (18%), "somewhat" (61%), or "slightly to none" (18%). Most users reported that the Handbook increased the efficiency of how they do their job "considerably" (60%) or "somewhat" (34%). Respondents indicated that on average they saved $635 in resources protected and $247 in associated costs each time they used the Handbook. In addition, they saved an average of 2.5 hours finding information, 2.6 hours conducting prevention and control work and 3.9 hours conducting prevention and control work in the future. By extrapolating costs and time saved, we conservatively estimate that the Handbook saves $220 million in resources and $210 million in labor each year. Information such as this is extremely valuable when we have to justify our activities to administrators, polititians, and other decision makers. Several other questions were asked relative to IPM, pesticides, and attitudes toward wildlife and natural resources issues, but the data have not yet been completely analyzed.

We thank all of the Handbook owners who put the book to good use and especially those who responded to our survey. Jack Ferguson reviewed the questionnaire, Pamela Lang entered data into computer files, and Diana Smith reviewed the manuscript. This study was funded through the Natural Resources and Environmental Management Minigrant Program, provided by the USDA-Cooperative State Research, Extension and Education Service.

Copies of the Handbook can be ordered (book-$45, CD-ROM-$43) by writing Wildlife Damage Handbook, 202 Natural Resources Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0819, or calling 402/472-2188.

Video Review

"Snaring Beaver ADC" by Byron Reichart, 4354 10th Rd., Bourbon, IN 46504
Length: 1 hr 56 min, cost $54.00 postage and tax paid

Snaring beaver is hot. If you can say anything about it you would have to agree that it is the cutting edge in trapping. I have received beaver-snaring information from no less than three different individuals. So this review is the first of the three, stay tuned.

Like all how-to videos, Mr. Reichart dutifully begins discussing equipment. He does a fine job discussing boring but essential information. I was impressed by how little equipment is needed to be a professional beaver snareman. I would definitely like to purchase his trapping harness if it is available. The problem is that no one manufacturers it. It was made especially for him. Mr. Reichart illustrates the benefits of the snare lock that he personally developed. But like all true professionals, you won't find a hard sell here. In fact, he recommends that you try all the locks to see which one you prefer. On a personal note, Mr. Reichart gave me one of his snares at the WCT ADC convention held in Chicago in 1997. My friends and I were hoping that Massachusetts would be interested in allowing beaver snaring since they banned everything else (except Hancocks). The beauty of his snarelock lies in the ease with which one can release an animal caught in the snare.

Reichart smartly spends the next few minutes showing how to set the snare. By performing the steps on dry ground, the viewer is able to get a closer view on the mechanics of setting a snare. With this information in hand, the viewer can spend his time observing Mr. Reichart's choice of set location and the little things that spell the difference between a good set and a great set.

The remainder and by far the bulk of the video is spent showing you how to set beaver snares in a variety of settings. Surprisingly, according to his promotional literature not one of the sets were pre-planned or choreographed. In other words, the cameraman just followed Mr. Reichart go to work at actual jobs. If you don't know already, this makes for a very difficult taping job. For it requires taping over a number of days to get the right shots. Mr. Reichart must do a great deal of beaver work because he set snares in flat lands (farm country), woodlands, and in culverts. The only other area that wasn't shown, that I could think of, was snaring river beaver. This isn't a criticism because how often do ADC people get called to trap river beaver? If you do, I am confident that the various sets can easily be transposed to river situations.

Mr. Reichart's instruction is straightforward and clear. He tells it like it is. I appreciated his frankness on how things don't always go right. His advice on handling trap-wise beaver is worth consideration by biologists. I think someone in the biological community should perform a test study on his ideas. Mr. Reichart is also to be commended for his crediting ideas gained from other trappers. Unfortunately, most of us forget to credit the individuals for the techniques we gained from being under their tutelage.

The purchaser of the video should be aware that the instruction covers open-water beaver snaring only. If you're looking for under-ice snaring information, don't buy this tape. I was surprised that he didn't mention any need for pre-treating the snare to make it less shiny, etc. I phoned Mr. Reichart and he said that he does recommend that the snares be boiled for one hour in a solution of 1/2-3/4 pound of baking soda to five gallons of water, rinse, and let dry. This boiling process dulls the snares so that they become grayer in appearance. He also said that odor is not a problem so his neglect of any warnings about odors was not an accident. One more concern centers around how to respond to misfires. Mr. Reichart is not alone in overlooking this, so I don't want to appear that I am beating up on him. I just would like to recommend to anyone considering a video to talk about evaluating misfires.

Traditionally, I have held it against authors for not talking about animal dispatch. My attitude was killing the animal is part of the process, so why shouldn't the video show how to do it? When I asked Mr. Reichart about this, he said he deliberately left it out because he didn't want the hassle. Given the venom of the protest industry, I have decided not to hold it against future videos. Given their propensity to skew the facts, they would probably use the footage against us. I am beginning to believe that trappers should start thinking about teaching trapping techniques only to bona fide trappers. The less people know the more they will rely on us. But that opinion should be left to another article.

The clarity of the sound was strong and clear. The video was also sharp except for the occasional instances where the sun was too bright. I would have liked him to talk about money more than he did. I understand that is difficult, given different cost structures around the country. But I still believe videos should talk about how long it takes to make various sets and the relative costs of equipment. By talking more generally, the video viewer can develop his/her own pricing schedule to meet his/her needs.

Over all, I give this video an animal damage control grade of "A minus." I fully believe that the viewer will be able to effectively snare beaver by following the instructions of this tape. Just remember to charge appropriately. Beaver work, while easier with snares, is still hard work. Those of you looking for speakers, I would suggest that you contact Mr. Reichart. He did a fine job when I heard him in Chicago.

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ADC News, Tips, Ideas, Publications...

ADC Now "Wildlife Services"

On August 1"Wildlife Services" became the official name of what was formerly USDA-APHIS-"Animal Damage Control." The change was announced in a memo by Deputy Administrator Bobby R. Acord to all of the unit's employees nationwide.

Noted Acord, "The name Wildlife Services captures the essence of our Program's current mission of balancing the needs of humans and wildlife in many different situations. Whether it's working to ensure human health and safety, protecting threatened or endangered species, or safeguarding people's property, we are increasingly being asked to utilize our expertise in many areas outside of our traditional role of protecting agriculture. Wildlife Services encompasses the diversity of these activities and accurately conveys the wide array of services our program provides."

Acord reported that the name change will take place over the next several months, and represents the culmination of efforts which began more than five years ago.

PETA Opposes Pigeon Control

PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) is objecting to plans by Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to deal with a pigeon pollution problem by capturing and killing the birds. The city had approved spending up to $5,000 to pay USDA to remove the pigeons after their attempts to get rid of the birds with decoys and repellents failed. PETA also objected to the city's efforts to get rid of beavers by blowing up their dams.

Iowa Deer Depredation Considered

The Iowa Natural Resources Commission in June gave initial approval to a proposal for hunters to buy extra licenses to help farmers shoot deer that are damaging corn and other crops. The rules also would require farmers to agree to a "depredation management plan" and to work with the Department of Natural Resources to find other ways to reduce deer damage. Only farmers who had suffered, or were likely to suffer, at least $1,500 of crop damage in one year would be eligible.

Exotic Cat Removed in North Carolina

USDA is investigating the death of an African serval, an exotic cat, in Cleveland County, North Carolina The 45-pound animal was shot recently by a farmer who said it had eaten 100 chickens in the past three weeks.

—All three above items were taken from USDA summaries of recent news articles from the Associated Press.

Bird Strike Committee Meets

The Seventh Annual Meeting of the Bird Strike Committee USA held in Boston, MA the week of August 12-14, was the most successful meeting to date. The 272 individuals in attendance were provided technical sessions, a special panel discussion on the use of falconry to harass birds from airfields, a special session dedicated to emerging technologies, a special session dedicated to training field personnel, poster sessions, and a field tour of the wildlife control program at Boston's Logan Airport.

There was a broad spectrum of attendees from keynote speaker John Goglia, a board member of the National Transportation Safety Board, and Mike Dunn, Deputy Secretary of USDA, to private consultants working in the field of airport wildlife control. There was also an exhibitors' area where product representatives and consultants were on hand to demonstrate or explain their services. Attendee groups were as follows: military or civilians working for the Department of Defense, 38%; private industry working in wildlife damage control, 19%; foreign nationals, 13%; USDA, 13%; airport managers, 11%; Federal Aviation Administration, 3%, and others, 2%.

The next meeting of the Bird Strike Committee USA will be held in Cleveland, OH the week of June 16-18, 1998 and it is already looking to be another good one!

Gene LeBoeuf
NADCA President

Obituary: Charles Dobbins

CHARLIE DOBBINS passed away in mid-September. For those of you who do not know him, he was a trapper. Mr. Dobbins was not your ordinary trapper. He was a student of wildlife. He spent more than 60 years of his life studying wildlife and developing new techniques to control wildlife damage. Most of the books, and ADC publications that demonstrate trapping techniques came from the many years that he spent perfecting them. He knew more about the habits of furbearers than most biologists. He had many friends and will be missed by all.

— Joey Brannon <adcbeaver@aol.com>

I consider myself lucky to have seen Charlie at the last NTA convention in Minnesota. I spent some time with him discussing various trap enhancements and, in fact, bought some equipment from him. He was storehouse of information and was always happy to share it!! He was a "trapper's trapper" and I am proud to have known him.

— Alan A. Huot <CTnwco860@aol.com>

Editor's Note: Charles Dobbins' books have been previously reviewed in **The Probe**, the most recent being Stephen Vantassel's review of "Beaver and Otter: Open Water Techniques" in the November 1996 issue (#171).

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Applying Research Findings to Coyote Depredation Control Efforts

studies that suggest a differential coyote vulnerability within and outside of the animal's home range were usually caught in baited or scented trap sets. The trap sets themselves, or the attractants used, likely were the novel stimuli the coyotes were investigating. If the same studies were undertaken using only coyotes caught in blind sets, the results would likely suggest that coyotes may be as vulnerable to capture within their home range as they are outside of their home range. At least one coyote study has been undertaken in more recent years where study animals were live-captured in blind sets using snares, and just as many resident coyotes were snared inside their home ranges as were caught along the periphery of their range. A blind set does not necessarily rely on attracting a coyote to some novel stimulus, so the chances of capturing a coyote within its home area may be increased. When a pair of coyotes associated with a den are killing livestock, for instance, damage control trappers sometimes capture one or both of these adult coyotes in blind sets using leghold traps or snares placed in trails near the den site.

The tendency for coyotes to sometimes react cautiously around a baited or scented trap set has been exploited by some trappers who occasionally use blind sets in conjunction with baited sets. A scented set at a good location might be backed up by several blind sets placed strategically nearby to catch an animal as it circles the set at a distance. I have talked to at least one damage control trapper who used this system and claimed to catch as many coyotes in the blind back-up sets as in the scented sets. An obvious advantage of this system would be the increased likelihood of being able to catch a coyote "in its own backyard."

If a coyote encounters a certain novel stimulus repeatedly in its travels, at some point the stimulus becomes familiar, and the coyote becomes more likely to investigate. An ADC trapper once related to me his observations on coyote responses to M-44s as indicated by tracks in the snow. His theory involved some assumptions that may not necessarily have been true, but was based on years of field observation and certainly fit well with the theory of neophobic response. He felt that often when a coyote came by a baited M-44 for the first time, it would cautiously circle the device and get the scent from downwind. The next time or two it came through it would come closer and might even urinate on the device. The next time through is when it would finally pull the M-44.

In addition to extensive research focusing on coyote ecology and behavior, a great deal of research has been devoted specifically to improving control methodologies for coyotes. Many of these studies have involved testing and comparison of various olfactory attractants for coyotes. The reports on these various tests are very relevant to most damage control trappers. One consistent finding throughout most of these studies is that while there are many very good lures available, Carman's Canine Call lure typically ranks among the best. And of special interest to the damage control trapper, this lure has typically been shown to be superior for catching adult and territorial coyotes.

What are the implications of this information to the damage control practitioner? I'll offer a few generalizations that probably make sense in light of some of these research findings. Keep in mind that these suggestions apply to those cases where specific, depredating coyotes are the target of control efforts. The control method of first choice will often be calling and shooting or aerial hunting, if local circumstances allow. But if these methods are unsuccessful or cannot be used, it may be helpful to consider these suggestions when putting out equipment.

- *If you're trying to catch a coyote "in its own backyard", and you want to achieve results quickly, try blind sets or sets with natural attractants such as urine or scat. Or place blind sets in conjunction with scented sets.*

- *Leave scented trap sets or M-44s in the ground long enough that a neophobic coyote could become familiar enough with the "novel stimulus" to overcome his caution and investigate the set. This may mean leaving a set in the ground for several weeks, at a minimum.*

- *Understand that at least during the early stages of coyote removal efforts using baited trap sets or M-44s, the animals being removed are most likely to be transients or territorial animals that are away from their territory.*

- *Always include a bottle of Carman's Canine Call lure as part of your selection of attractants for setting M-44s and traps.*

Weiner Fans Cry Baloney as Tables Turn on PETA Protesters

The clash of two titans of public relations was staged in cities across the country in recent weeks, and in every documented case, the good guys came out on top.

In an orchestrated effort, activists from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), protested and disrupted the appearances of the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile in July. The 27-foot "wiener on wheels" traversed the country in a summer-long circuit on its talent search campaign, videotaping youngsters singing the Oscar Mayer theme song for its television commercials.

PETA obviously expected to receive its usual media coverage for appearing at these events. Like the well-oiled propaganda machine it is, PETA directed its faithful to contact local media, issue press releases and protest the events as they occurred at shopping center parking lots in major cities beginning in mid-July. However, it probably didn't think the protests would backfire on them for a change.

A July 23 story on the front page of the Washington Post began: "Whatever headway it may or may not have made on behalf of the world's rabbits, pigs and kangaroos, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has reigned as a grandmaster of contemporary public protest. Or rather, it did until 9:05 a.m. today when the animal rights PR juggernaut ran head-on into the Oscar Mayer Wienermobile on a supermarket parking lot here. And ended up looking like roadkill."

Repeatedly, in scenes like this in city after city, PETA protesters flashed placards that read "Meat is Murder," and chanted slogans like, "Oscar Mayer is to blame! Exploiting children is a shame!" What PETA protesters didn't anticipate was a bitter response from parents, angry that their children were caught in the crossfire of the activists' extremism. For a change, PETA protesters were lambasted with more heckling than they were accustomed to dishing out.

During an appearance in Salt Lake City, Utah, protesters were met with shouts of "Go home you idiots!"

Oscar Mayer has ten teams of college students who travel to more than 100 cities, auditioning children between the ages of 3 and 12 for commercials.

A spokesman for the company told a Salt Lake City reporter, "This event isn't about hot dogs or politics, it's about kids having fun."

WLFA Vice president Rick Story summed it up. "Last year PETA decided it was anti-fishing. This year it's hot dogs. What's next, apple pie?"

—from the Wildlife Legislative Fund of America web site

Legislative Update

Representatives of seven animal protection groups on July 17 filed with the California Attorney General's office language for an initiative measure to be placed on the November 1998 ballot to "ban cruel traps."

According to the language proposed, passage of the initiative would change the state Fish and Game Code to prohibit any person from trapping "for the purposes of recreation or commerce in fur any fur-bearing mammal or nongame mammal... with any body-gripping trap, including but not limited to steel-jawed leghold traps, padded-jaw leghold traps, Conibear traps, and snares." The use of cage and box traps, nets, suitcase-type live beaver traps, and common rat and mouse traps would not be included in the ban. The initiative would further prohibit the use of Compound 1080 and sodium cyanide within California for the purpose of poisoning any animal.

An exception is made to allow padded-jaw leghold traps to be used by federal, state, county, or municipal government employees or their authorized agents "in the extraordinary case where... the padded-jaw leghold traps is the only method available to protect human health or safety."

The organization "Friends of Animals" withdrew their support for the initiative because they do not feel the final language went far enough in prohibiting all use of traps. Sponsors of the initiative as submitted include the following seven groups, who have organized together under the coalition called "Protect Pets and Wildlife (ProPAW)": The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), the Ark Trust Inc., The Animal Protection Institute, The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), the Fund for Animals, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and the Doris Day Animal League.

To qualify for the ballot, proponents of the initiative must collect 433,269 valid signatures within a 150-day period. The current population of California is approximately 31.9 million; 9.1 million live in Los Angeles County alone.

The Editor thanks the following contributors to this issue: Mark Collinge, Scott Hyngstrom, Kevin Poague, Jim Miller, Eugene LeBoeuf, Joey Brannon, Alan A. Huot, and Stephen Vantassel. Send your contributions to **The PROBE**, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

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