



N.M. WILDLIFE PROTECTION & PUBLIC SAFETY ACT

Restricting cruel trapping and poisoning on New Mexico public lands

House Bill (HB) 426

Sponsor: Rep. Roberto “Bobby” Gonzales

BACKGROUND: The New Mexico Wildlife Protection & Public Safety Act will protect wildlife from unintended or unnecessary death, injury or suffering, and will protect the public and their companion animals from accidental injury or death from indiscriminate traps when enjoying the outdoors. The bill also seeks to protect animals, people, and the environment by prohibiting the use of dangerous poisons to kill wildlife in New Mexico and will better align the management of New Mexico’s wildlife with modern conservation practice and the prevailing expectations for the humane treatment of animals.

THE PROBLEM: The types of traps used in New Mexico, legholds, Conibears and snares, are inhumane and indiscriminate. Because of their non-selectivity, both targeted and non-targeted animals—including family cats and dogs, threatened and endangered species—fall victim to traps.

According to the most recent US Fish and Wildlife Survey of Wildlife-associated Recreation, each year 787,000 people specifically seek to view and photograph wildlife in New Mexico. In contrast trappers represent only a fraction of the population, with only 2,000 buying a trapping license, and it is estimated that just 1,000 of these permits are used exclusively for trapping. Residents can currently trap coyotes and skunks with no license. Trapping is largely a commercial pursuit that benefits a tiny fraction of New Mexicans and out of state trappers who cash in on wildlife pelts for use in the fashion industry at the expense of wildlife and public safety.

In New Mexico, traps can be legally placed nearly anywhere including public land and can be placed as little as 25 yards from a hiking trail or public road, and 1/4 mile from a dwelling.

In addition, toxic poisons such as sodium cyanide M-44s and Compound 1080 livestock protection collars are too deadly, dangerous, and indiscriminate to use in our state. Sodium cyanide M-44s are notoriously indiscriminate and have accidentally killed thousands of non-target animals including badgers, bears, bobcats, foxes, birds, and even people's pets. Compound 1080 or sodium fluoroacetate, placed in “livestock protection collars,” results in horrific and excruciating deaths which can take as long as 15 traumatic hours and involves cardiac failure, respiratory arrest, and severe prolonged convulsions.

These dangerous poisons are simply unnecessary. The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that carnivores kill just 0.18% of the total U.S. cattle inventory and 4% of the sheep inventory. Instead of broadcasting poisons across our landscapes, many non-lethal methods including pens, sheds, and guard animals are effective and widely available. Clearly, restricting the use of traps will not prohibit private landowners, farmers or ranchers from protecting their crops, property, or livestock. The Act includes exemptions to allow landowners and government officials to use traps if necessary to protect crops, property, livestock, threatened and endangered species and public health and safety.

Additionally, trapping works against natural selection as the healthiest animals are targeted; it is market driven so the number of animals trapped increases with pelt price, not population levels. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the National Academy of Sciences and the World Health Organization, as well as numerous other scientific, public health and veterinary organizations, there is no scientific evidence that trapping or poisoning controls the spread of disease such as rabies.

THE SOLUTION: Prohibiting the use of dangerous, unnecessary poisons across New Mexico and restricting the use of cruel and indiscriminate traps will balance the expectations of the majority of New Mexicans that values the humane treatment of animals and responsible management of our state’s wildlife. The Act will also protect individuals from enduring the emotional and financial strain of dealing with the loss or injury of their companion animals to the jaws of a trap.