



PETA

PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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September 23, 2004

The Honorable Gale Norton
Secretary
Department of the Interior
1849 C St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Norton:

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) is an international animal rights organization with more than 800,000 members and supporters dedicated to animal protection. Earlier this summer, our office was bombarded with complaints regarding a sad and shocking article that appeared in the *Rapid City Journal* about several abandoned dogs who were maimed and/or killed in leghold traps set by authorities at Badlands National Park. We have now learned that leghold traps, as well as other cruel devices, such as body-gripping traps and snares, are being used at national parks around the country to capture and kill dogs, feral cats, and other “nuisance” animals who wander onto National Parks Service (NPS) lands. **On behalf of our many members and supporters, we urge you to put an immediate end to the use of these hideous traps in our national parks.**

The NPS reportedly set leghold traps to capture domestic dogs who had been abandoned by an irresponsible owner. According to the Humane Society of Black Hills officer who discovered the dogs, two of the four captured dogs were so badly mangled and injured from struggling to free themselves from the trap that it was determined that they had to be euthanized. One dog survived for one to two days but had to be killed after he developed gangrene on one of his crushed limbs.

According to veterinarians, two of the trapped dogs had suffered from severe dehydration. The sole surviving dog’s leg was amputated. She suffered broken teeth from trying to chew her way to freedom, and she was visibly traumatized. This dog is now available for adoption—she’s so friendly that she surely could have been easily captured with a kind word, a leash, and a bit of food rather than a steel claw!

There is also the obvious concern that NPS employees set traps and then reportedly did not check them for 24 hours or longer. The photos of these animals and the veterinary statements attest to the fact that a written policy requiring the checking and clearing of all traps of all types **at least** every six hours must be implemented. **If traps cannot be checked at safe intervals, they must not be set at all.**

PETA understands that the NPS feels an obligation to protect native species from depredation by dogs, cats, and other animals, but this kind of terror and physical pain cannot be justified under any circumstances.

PETA is eager to work with the NPS to ensure the humane capture and treatment of animals on NPS land. Meanwhile, please let us hear from you right away that you

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will place an immediate moratorium on the use of leghold traps, snares, cable restraints, and body-gripping traps on NPS lands until the NPS develops a humane trapping policy.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Boyles, Wildlife Biologist
Domestic Animal and Wildlife Rescue & Information Department



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