

Promoting Snap Traps over Glue Traps

Summary

Glue traps are a method of rodent control that often results in a slow and painful death for the animals trapped by them. In comparison, snap traps are more humane as they kill trapped animals instantly. This intervention involves advocating against the use of glue traps, either at the business or government level, and possibly advocating for the replacement of glue traps with snap traps. This is considered to be a relatively promising intervention for several reasons: (i) it would create guaranteed welfare improvement for wild animals without any expected negative side effects; (ii) it is unlikely to have significant opposition; and (iii) it would help to promote values around improving wild animal welfare. A potential negative of this intervention is that it deals with acute suffering at the end of an animal's life, so it may not be as cost-effective as interventions that deal with more prolonged forms of suffering.

Description of intervention

Glue traps are boards with a sticky surface designed to trap animals. They are considered to be one of the cruelest methods of rodent control – animals caught on them can experience significant and prolonged suffering before they die, as users of the traps fail to kill them immediately after they are trapped. In the most extreme cases, some have succumbed to blood loss after trying to chew through their own limbs to escape [1]. Glue traps are indiscriminate killers and may also catch “non-target” animals, such as birds [2]. Snap traps are a much more humane method of rodent control as they kill instantly. This intervention could be carried out in several ways:

1. Outreach to encourage individuals/ corporations to swap glue traps for snap traps;
2. Outreach to convince glue trap-sellers and manufacturers to stop; or
3. Government outreach for a ban on (or increased regulation of) glue traps.

Biggest strengths and weaknesses of this intervention

- **Strength:** This could be one of the first targeted wild animal suffering (WAS) interventions carried out by an effective altruist organization. It also would not face some of the challenges of many other WAS interventions – there is a guaranteed improvement to animal welfare, and the intervention is less likely to be faced with opposition from outside (e.g. commercial) interests. This is particularly true if we advocate for replacing glue traps with snap traps (rather than directly banning glue traps).
- **Weakness:** The intervention tackles acute suffering, so the number of welfare points that it stands to affect will be more limited when compared to an intervention addressing chronic suffering. However, the suffering caused by glue traps seems to be on the more extreme end of acute suffering, so it will likely affect more welfare points than the average acute suffering intervention.

Summary of how the intervention scores on each criterion

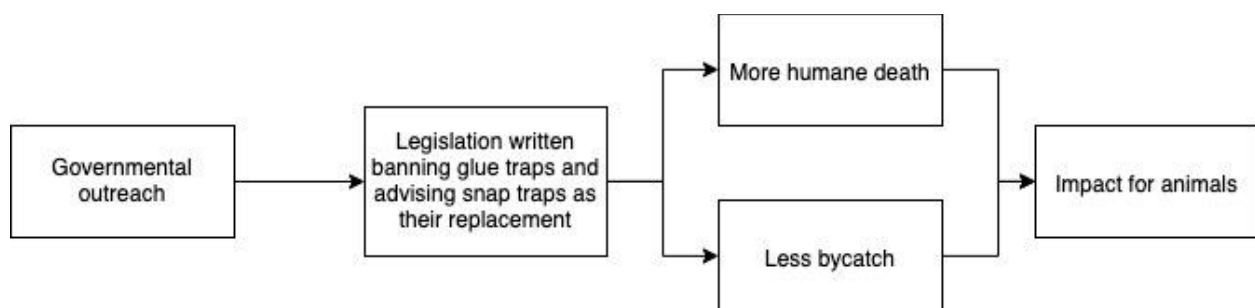
Animal	Problem	Idea	Score	Strength of idea	Limiting factors	Execution difficulty	Externalities
				2	1.5	1	0.5
Rodents	Death	Snap traps over glue traps campaign	33.5	7	7	5	8

Brief description of how the intervention performs on each criterion

Criteria	Ranking	Description
Strength of the idea	7/10	The evidence supporting the use of snap traps over glue traps as a more humane method of rodent control is undoubted. This idea is particularly strong when advocating for a replacement of glue traps with snap traps, rather than banning glue traps outright. The balance of potential welfare points lies somewhere in between - while not as high as for an intervention addressing chronic suffering, the effect on welfare points would be higher than for the average acute suffering intervention. This is because the idea aims to alleviate a prolonged and extremely painful death caused by the use of glue traps. Animals chewing through their limbs to try and escape is a striking example of this extreme suffering.
Limiting factor	7/10	Overall, the limiting factor seems most likely to be funding or talent. Identifying two co-founders interested in starting the project would probably be the immediate bottleneck. A longer-term bottleneck will be acquiring large donations from funders. The size of the problem and replaceability are unlikely to be a concern in the long or short term.
Execution difficulty	5/10	This charity looks like it could run lean, with little funding. The feedback loop should be quick in most cases (e.g. corporate outreach), and even in the longer term, progress should be relatively straightforward to evaluate as political progress on legislation is usually reported. Although this intervention would

		be best approached through governmental campaigns, which are usually very difficult, it could be simpler to run than the average. Opposition by a powerful industry against the campaign is unlikely, as there does not seem to be an analogous sector such as the “big meat” and farming industries which affect farmed animal welfare campaigns. This legislation could also be quite simple to pass due to its non-partisan nature. Regrettably, the UK government has responded to a recent petition (May 2019) asking for a ban on glue traps stating that “.. the use of glue traps is a lawful method of pest control in England. The onus is on operators to act within the law by ensuring that their activities do not cause any unnecessary suffering” [3], so passing this legislation might encounter challenges not perceived intuitively.
Externalities	8/10	Mostly, pest control is disconnected from the larger animal movement, with minimal inspiration or flow-through effects to other animals. The only major externality is that given the relative neglectedness, there might be some benefits to establishing the field strategically, instead of allowing it to be passively created as a domain within animal issues.

Basic causal chain



Provisional conclusion

This seems like a promising intervention, especially since it might be a good first step towards targeted interventions for wild animals.

References:

1. What to Do if You See Someone Selling or Using Glue Traps | PETA UK [Internet]. PETA UK. [cited 2019 Dec 4]. Available from: <https://www.peta.org.uk/action/see-someone-selling-using-glue-traps/>
2. Exhausted owl rescued after getting stuck in glue trap [Internet]. ITV News. [cited 2019 Dec 4]. Available from: <https://www.itv.com/news/westcountry/2017-04-14/exhausted-owl-rescued-after-getting-stuck-in-glue-trap/>
3. Petition: Ban animal glue traps [Internet]. Petitions – UK Government and Parliament. [cited 2019 Dec 5]. Available from: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/233106>