

Cat survives three day ordeal in steel jaw leg trap

By Michele Liberti-Lansing
GUILDERLAND — After residents and area business people reported hearing the agonizing cries of a young cat for at least three days, the animal, brutally pinned in a rusty, steel-jaw leghold trap in a wooded area in Westmere, was finally discovered and rescued by a Guilderland Animal Control officer.

On Nov. 8, after combing the woods near routes 155 and 20, officer Pat House found the anguished female cat, approximately six months old, its right front paw trapped and mutilated. According to House, two "real rusty, old" steel-jaw leghold traps had been set, very close to each other, in that area, neither trap containing any identification. House said the trap's owner is required, by law, to have their name imprinted on the trap; in addition, the traps are (legally) required to be checked every 24 hours.

"We get an awful lot of strays in that area," said House. "A lot of people are trapping wildlife, also in that area, but they're using 'Have a Heart' traps, a humane trap that doesn't harm the animal. These work beautifully, it's a walk-in trap with a feed plate on it — the animal walks in and the door drops.

"Then the animal can be transported to a section where it's not causing any problems." (House said Guilderland Animal Control uses the "Have a Heart" traps for "nuisance problems." Said House, "We don't know why the trap was set or who set it... whether it was set as a prank, for a skunk... who knows?"

House, upon finding the cat, was not able to release its paw



The Enterprise — Michele Liberti-Lansing

Veterinary technician Michelle Isabelle from The Animal Hospital holds "Kitty, Kitty", the young cat whose paw was mutilated when she was trapped for three days in a steel-jaw leghold trap. Dr. Edward Becker operated on the animal and she's "doing great," he says. The cat will spend another week in the hospital, where she will remain until someone adopts her.

from the clamp. "I'm totally against leghold traps of any nature," said House, who said that ongoing legislation is attempting to prohibit these particular types of traps in New York State.

She took the animal to Dr. Edward Becker's Animal Hospital in Guilderland. "You never saw feet fly so fast," she said, as she recalled the cat's rescue.

"If you could have seen the agony in this animal's eyes... it wouldn't let me get to it. It (the trap) was so rusted, I couldn't get any grip to release it. The cat's foot was spread out three times its size. When you

release the trap and the circulation tries to get through (the limb), the agony is unbelievable." House said, "This is one of the worst ones I've ever picked up in a trap, mainly because it (the cat) had been in so long. It was awful..."

When the cat was brought to The Animal Hospital, Becker said it was "dehydrated and very thin, from exposure — the animal had no access to food or water for at least three days. The cat had to be anesthetized just to get its paw out of the trap, "since at that time (the paw) was imbedded in the trap," said Becker, who said the cat's leg

"looked crushed." "The problem is, there's always a lot of damage to the blood supply, which ultimately leads to more damage."

The damage occurred across the middle of the cat's foot. "She's lucky it wasn't a teeny bit higher," said Becker. "Cats need to have the pads on the bottom of their feet to walk on. Nothing will substitute for that, it's like the soles of our feet.

"I knew if I could save one pad, I could get her to walk again — and if I couldn't save a pad, I'd have to amputate the whole leg." Becker said the cat was treated medically until he could establish whether there was any blood supply to any part of the foot. For this reason, he had to wait a week before he could operate. Meanwhile, the cat was rehydrated with I.V. fluids and put on antibiotics.

"I then realized that one of the pads, on the inside toe, did have a blood supply. (During the operation) I was able to move that pad toward the center of the foot, to give her something to walk on. Also, part of the big pad was able to be saved. I think she's going to have enough to walk and be pretty normal."

Becker said the cat is "on the mend," but that she is currently being treated on a daily basis. "But she's doing great. I'd say in another week she'll be ready for adoption. She's a really nice cat."

Technicians at The Animal Hospital say the beautiful, sand-colored cat has grown quite a bit since its arrival at the hospital. The cat is healthy and extremely affectionate. While veterinary technician Michelle Isabelle held "Kitty

"Kitty" (the staff's pet name for her) the cat tried to hide her mangled paw from view, as if she were ashamed of the limb. Isabelle says she has been doing this since the operation.

House surmises the cat is a stray since the Guilderland Animal Control hasn't received any calls on it. "Maybe the picture will help," she said. "It needs a home desperately."

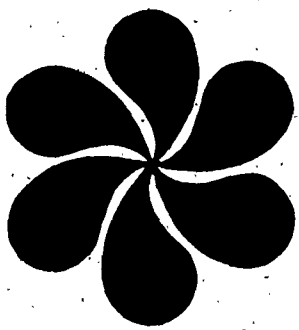
Becker will hold the cat at his hospital until a good home can be found for it. Both Becker and House stress that they are looking for a very caring home for this animal, particularly because it has been so traumatized in the last month. For those people interested in adopting "Kitty Kitty" please call The Animal Hospital at 456-0851, or Pat House at the Guilderland Dog Shelter, 861-6855 or at her home, 456-2007.

House would also like to find homes for three other animals currently being temporarily housed at the French's Mill Road shelter — a young, neutered male Staffordshire terrier, and two young female spayed cats. If homes are not located for these animals very soon, House says they will have to be taken to the Mohawk-Hudson Humane Society, where they will be "humanely" destroyed.

People in service

BERNE — Airman Richard J. Conklin has graduated from Air Force basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

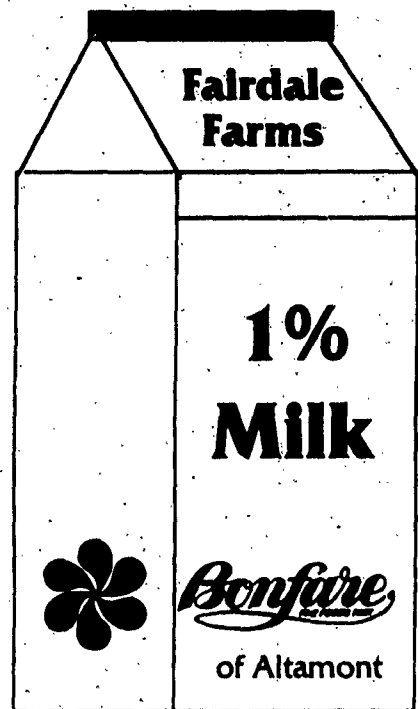
Conklin is the son of Shirley R. Petrosky of 416 S. Main St., Schoharie; and Isaac J. Conklin of West Berne.



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