

**American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians
Position Statement Regarding the Use of Foot-Hold Traps for Wildlife
December 2007**

The capture and handling of wildlife is necessary for wildlife conservation, research, disease surveillance, and management, as well as to protect property and human and domestic animal health. Foot-hold traps (also known as leg-hold traps) are important tools for achieving these objectives and, when used properly, are humane, safe and practical. Nevertheless, significant opposition to the use of foot-hold traps exists due to both real and perceived risks. Research into methods designed to reduce injury and otherwise improve trapping methods, and public education and outreach, are necessary to resolve this conflict. The following statements present the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians position on the use of foot-hold traps for wildlife.

- 1) The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians supports the use of foot-hold traps to:
 - a) Conduct research necessary for identifying the conservation needs of, and threats to, wildlife populations.
 - b) Conduct disease surveillance necessary to identify the spread or introduction of infectious agents and to identify disease threats to wildlife, domestic animals, and humans.
 - c) To conduct disease control, eradication and prevention as well as monitor and evaluate such programs.
 - d) Implement wildlife management actions to prevent overpopulation of some species and subsequent environmental degradation or damage to property; prevent interspecific competition; and translocate, restore, or reintroduce species.
 - e) Commercially and recreationally collect game by licensed trappers under the strict regulation of state fish and wildlife agencies that establish rules, zones, and quotas to manage local populations of game animals.

- 2) The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians supports understanding of the animal welfare issues involved in the use of foot-hold traps; specifically, to:
 - a) Recognize that free-ranging wildlife is valued for its contribution to functional ecosystems, for its commercial and recreational value, and for its intrinsic value.
 - b) Recognize that the welfare interests of wildlife, the environment, domestic animals, and humans may conflict under some circumstances.
 - c) Recognize that opposition to the use of foot-hold traps exists and that a solution to this issue requires well-designed and sensitive research, public education, and outreach programs.
 - d) Recognize that animals can be injured by some traps and trapping systems and that animal welfare is enhanced by using traps that kill quickly and humanely, or capture animals in systems that reduce or eliminate injuries.
 - e) Support the use of foot-hold traps and techniques that are selective and humane, reduce injury and stress, and are safe for use.

- 3) The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians supports the improvement of trap safety for wildlife, recognizing that:
 - a) Regulatory and educational programs are necessary for the controlled and proper use of foot-hold traps.
 - b) The maintenance and continued development of Best Management Practices (under the auspices of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies) for use of foot-hold traps should be supported.
 - c) Research identifying or improving trapping methods that reduce animal injury, minimize non-target capture, and maintain user safety should be implemented.

These statements of our position replace any previous statements or letters on this subject, and remain in effect until otherwise amended, rescinded or retired.