

POSITION STATEMENT
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS
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AAWV Position Statement Regarding the Use of Foot-Hold Traps for Wildlife

The capture and handling of live wild animals is necessary for some aspects of wildlife conservation, research, disease surveillance, and management, as well as to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts. Foot-hold traps are one method to live capture a variety of species in a humane, safe and practical manner when an approved model of trap is used according to best management practices.

Nevertheless, significant opposition to the use of foot-hold traps exists due to real and perceived risks on their use. Research into 1) techniques to reduce injury, 2) trap design and trapping methods improvements, and 3) public education and outreach is necessary to resolve this conflict. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA), the Fur Institute of Canada (FIC), and other national and international organizations have and continue to conduct extensive scientific research and review of traps and trapping methods to develop best management practices (BMPs). These evaluations use the expertise of trapping specialists and wildlife veterinarians to evaluate animal welfare, efficacy, species specificity, safety, and practicality as set forth by the International Organization of Standards (ISO) (ISO. 1999. 10990-5:1999 Animal (mammal) traps).

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians supports the use of foot-hold traps and techniques that are selective, humane, reduce injury and stress, and are safe to use to:

- a) Conduct research necessary for identifying the conservation needs of wildlife populations.
- b) Conduct disease surveillance to identify the spread or introduction of infectious agents and to identify disease threats to wildlife, domestic animals, and humans.
- c) 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; translocate, restore, or reintroduce species; and manage invasive species.
- e) Harvest select wildlife species by licensed trappers under the regulation of state, federal, and tribal fish and wildlife agencies that establish rules, zones, and quotas to manage local populations of animals.

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians supports a full understanding of the animal welfare issues involved in the use of foot-hold traps. Specifically, we recognize that:

- a) Free-ranging wildlife is valued for its contribution to functional ecosystems, for its intrinsic value, and for its commercial and recreational value.

- b) The welfare of wildlife, the environment, domestic animals, and humans may be in conflict under some circumstances.
- c) 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) Animals can be injured by some traps and trapping systems. Animal welfare is enhanced by using trapping systems that reduce or eliminate injuries in captured animals.
- e) Different species have unique behavioral characteristics and appropriate models of foot-hold trap types for various species will vary.
- f) Regulatory and educational programs are necessary for the controlled and proper use of humane foot-hold traps.
- g) The maintenance and continued development of foot-hold trap BMPS by the various groups that include AFWA and the FIC should be supported.
- h) Research to identify or improve trapping methods that reduce animal injury, minimize non-target capture, and maintain user safety should be conducted.

These statements represent the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians position on the use of foot-hold traps for wildlife.

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

Best Management Practices for traps and trapping incorporated by reference:

Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Trapping BMPS:

<https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/furbearer-management>

Fur Institute of Canada: Humane Trapping Standards and Animal Welfare:

<https://fur.ca/fur-trapping/humane-trapping-standards-and-animal-welfare/>

The Wildlife Society: <https://wildlife.org/tws-standing-position-traps-trapping-and-furbearer-management/>