



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES



## Setting a high bar for animal welfare

The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) developed the testing protocol and welfare criteria used during the development of Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States (BMPs) to evaluate trapping devices. Leading wildlife veterinarians and wildlife biologists led this effort within ISO.

## SCIENCE BRIEF

# ANIMAL WELFARE

Any discussion on the topic of animal use by humans brings with it moral, ethical, and practical implications. A concern that is always at the forefront of this discussion is animal welfare. We all want to be sure that the animals we use, regardless of the purpose, are given appropriate consideration. The United States and Canada have conducted the most extensive scientific testing of traps in the world to develop Best Management Practices for Trapping (BMPs), a program that ensures that traps are humane, efficient, safe and selective. Standards are applied and enforced to ensure animal welfare.

## Agencies have taken action to ensure the highest standard of welfare for captured animals.

When it comes to wildlife in particular, State, Tribal, and Federal Fish and Wildlife agencies in the United States regulate activities that involve the capture or harvest of wild animals through hunting and trapping. Members of the public who participate in hunting and trapping must typically go through education programs, be licensed, and then consent to abide by numerous laws and regulations regarding when, where and how wildlife may be taken and used.

Agencies not only provide education, but they also employ officers to ensure that laws and regulations are strictly enforced. This helps to make certain that wild animals are appropriately cared for. Whether an animal is trapped to reintroduce a population (like a wolf or a river otter), to protect threatened or endangered species (removing predators like foxes and raccoons), to participate in a research project or by regulating and monitoring public trapping programs, agencies strive to make sure that each animal is captured humanely.

Regulated trapping is a common capture technique used in agency furbearer management programs. Fish and Wildlife agencies in the United States have partnered through U.S. Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies to support the welfare of animals captured in traps. When the use of wildlife is involved, agency wildlife professionals are the source of expertise.



## Good outcomes

As part of the BMP animal welfare evaluation protocol, animals are ranked in categories based on the traps' performance. The categories include no injury, mild injury, moderate or severe injury. Acceptable BMP traps' effects on the captured animals had to have mild or no injuries.

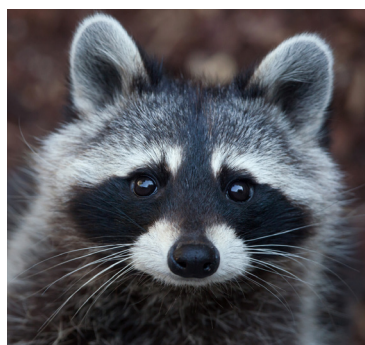
## Support for BMPs

The American Veterinary Medical Association, American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians, The Wildlife Society, and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies all recommend the use of BMP traps because of the high animal welfare standard required.

# The science behind animal welfare

Wildlife veterinarians, researchers, and biologists worked with the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the worldwide authority on standards development, to create a scientific protocol and animal welfare evaluation standard for the capture of animals with traps. Many years of scientific experience with the capture of wildlife went into the development of a welfare standard that ensures that an animal captured in a trap is free from injuries that compromise its ability to survive in the wild.

Since 1997, fish and wildlife agencies in the U.S. have invested millions of dollars in the development of the Best Management Practices for Trapping Program. This program has evaluated more than 600 trap types commonly used to capture some 23 species of wildlife. Traps that meet the animal welfare standard are recommended for use through BMP documents and through trapper education programs. This ensures that the highest level of professional wildlife management is conducted in the U.S. and that animals can be captured humanely. Wildlife professionals, those who use wildlife, and the public are all concerned about animal welfare. Working together, we can continue to make sure that our wildlife populations thrive and are treated with respect and concern as a part of management programs.



## MythBuster!

The myth that an animal captured in a foothold trap will "chew its leg off" to escape has been disproven by scientific investigation. Data collected on self-directed biting during the development of BMPs show that for most species, this behavior is nearly non-existent. For example, **99% of coyotes**, over **99% of wolves**, and **100% of bobcats** showed no evidence of self-directed biting. **Excluding raccoons, self-directed biting did not occur in 97%** of all other animals captured.

**98% of raccoons** caught in foot-encapsulating traps did not engage in self-directed biting, which is a behavior they exhibit about 20% of the time when captured in other types of foothold traps. As a result, foot encapsulating traps are recommended through BMPs for trappers, researchers, wildlife control operators, and other wildlife professionals who focus on capturing raccoons.

**MORE INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT**  
**<https://furbearermanagement.com>**