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FAQ: Best Management Practices (BMP) for Trapping Furbearers; using the best science to improve trapping for the benefit of wildlife.

What is the Best Management Practices (BMP) program for trapping?

BMPs are scientifically developed guidelines designed to improve the outcome of capturing animals in traps in several ways. Specifically, the goal of the program is to evaluate and recommend trapping techniques that promote good welfare of trapped animals, enhance trapping efficiency (% of captures), selectivity (% capture of selected species), and safety (avoiding the capture of non-target species). The traps recommended for use through the BMP program are based on rigorous field-testing and extensive laboratory evaluations to meet specific performance criteria developed by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

Why was the ISO chosen to develop the standards used in the BMP Program?

The ISO was chosen to develop the standards for the BMP Program due to several factors:

1. **Global Authority**: ISO is recognized globally as the most authoritative standard-setting body.

2. **International Collaboration:** Initiated before the European Union's 1991 Wild Fur Regulation, Canadian and U.S. officials collaborated with ISO to form a multi-country technical committee, including wildlife experts from various countries.

3. **Expertise and Consistency:** ISO's process brought together experts to create standardized testing protocols for restraining and killing traps, ensuring scientific rigor, consistency, reliability, and the repeatability of testing procedures.

4. **Scientific Rigor:** ISO emphasized systematic methods for evaluating traps, using injury as the primary criterion for assessing animal welfare.

5. **Filling a Gap:** At the time, there were no agreed-upon international humane trapping standards. ISO standards provided a framework for international trade and regulatory compliance.

What are the key criteria for evaluating traps under BMPs?

The BMP process establishes thresholds for trap performance based on animal welfare, trap efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and user safety. These factors are evaluated using standard statistical tests based on sufficient sample sizes. These criteria ensure that traps meet the highest globally agreed-upon standards to minimize animal suffering and maximize effectiveness.

Why are BMPs being developed?

BMPs are being developed to improve trapping and furbearer management programs while addressing state-specific concerns and improving trapping technology systematically. The BMPs only recommend traps that meet globally accepted ISO standards and because of this, they provide a variety of traps and trapping techniques that trap users can choose from and be assured that animals captured will have good welfare. This allows for captured animals to be released unharmed when desired. Additionally, when BMP recommended traps and techniques are used, trap users should avoid non-target captures and have a high capture rate of target species.

Do wildlife biologists support BMPs?

Yes, The Wildlife Society (TWS), the professional society for wildlife biologists, supports the BMP program. In its position statement on Traps, Trapping, and Furbearer Management, TWS encourages anyone capturing wildlife with traps to use traps tested and recommended through the BMP program.

Do professional veterinary organizations support BMPs?

Yes, the American Veterinary Medical Association and the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians through their position statements on trapping support and recommend using traps tested and approved by the BMP program.

Do agencies and conservation organizations support BMPs?

Yes, all state, provincial, and territorial, and federal fish and wildlife agencies in the U.S. and Canada, and over 45 non-government conservation organizations (e.g., RMEF, IHEA, NWTF) support the BMP program.

Have the findings of the BMPs been published in a peer-reviewed journal?

Yes, in 2021, many of the findings regarding the use of live capture trapping techniques were published in the journal *Wildlife Monographs*. The article "Best Management Practices for Trapping Furbearers in the United States" underwent extensive independent peer review* and is available as open access. The Wildlife Society, which certifies wildlife biologists, publishes this journal and TWS assures scientific rigor and unbiased, objective results in its publications.

Were the criteria used to evaluate capture devices recognized as robust and valid by the scientific community?

Yes, the ISO provides objective and quantitative standards to assess capture device performance. Combined with the Agreement on International Humane Trap Standards, the ISO guidelines ensure the consistency, objectivity, credibility, and the repeatable study design of the BMP process.

Were the researchers objective and unbiased?

Yes, of the 14 authors of this work, 12 were wildlife professionals employed by state or federal agencies at the time of publication. The independent peer-review process used by The Wildlife Society meets rigorous standards, and more than 40% of devices evaluated failed to meet the pre-established BMP criteria.

Is this study reproducible or can it be replicated?

Yes, the study design is described in sufficient detail to be replicated by other researchers. However, fully replicating the study would involve substantial funding and coordination across a large area and many people over many years.

How are BMPs implemented?

BMPs are implemented through a coordinated field-based trap-testing program involving state and federal fish and wildlife agencies and the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). This program integrates existing and new information to create comprehensive recommendations adaptable by individual states. Outreach and education, rather than legislation, are the primary mechanisms for implementing BMPs. Based on information from a national survey of trappers, most furbearers in the US (~80%) are being captured in traps that meet the BMP criteria.

How do BMPs benefit furbearer management?

BMPs enhance the humane treatment of trapped animals, improve the effectiveness and selectivity of traps, and support sustainable furbearer populations. They also facilitate jurisdictional consistency and provide a framework for continuous improvement based on the best available science.

How does this study contribute to furbearer conservation?

The BMP program provides valuable information for furbearer management and conservation, including the most humane and efficient tools for harvest. Harvest data, often collected through trapping, are critical for monitoring population trends of many furbearing species. Without these data, there would be significantly increased uncertainty about furbearer populations. Additionally, BMPs provide scientific guidance for researchers conducting studies on furbearing species.

Are BMPs mandatory?

While BMPs are not legally binding in all states, they are strongly recommended and widely adopted by state and federal wildlife agencies. They serve as guidelines for best practices and are intended to be integrated into national and state-specific outreach and education programs.

How can I learn more about specific BMPs for different furbearer species?

Detailed BMPs for various furbearer species can be accessed through the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) website and related publications. These resources provide comprehensive information on trap types, performance criteria, and species-specific guidelines.

*Wildlife Monographs uses a single anonymized peer review model. This means that referees are qualified and unbiased experts in the field who assess the validity, significance, and originality of a manuscript without knowing who the author is. Referees are also expected to maintain confidentiality and not disclose any details of the manuscript.

Peer review is a process that helps to improve scientific manuscripts and ensure their quality and credibility before they are shared with the research community. It's been used since the beginning of scientific research publication, and is relied upon by wildlife biologists, managers, and policymakers to make decisions that impact wildlife populations and habitats.