



About the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards



Progress Report

In 1997, Canada, Russia and the European Union signed the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS). The 2007-2008 trapping season marked the first year Canadian trappers were required by law to use AIHTS certified traps for certain listed species. This requirement is the first step of a longer three-part process that will ultimately lead to regulating the use of only certified traps for all listed species.

Over the past decade, some \$3 million federal dollars have been invested in AIHTS related trap research and testing. Thousands of volunteer hours and some \$2.5 million annually have also been provided for regulatory changes and trapper education programs by provincial and territorial governments in order to comply with AIHTS requirements.

The **Fur Institute of Canada**, in cooperation with federal, provincial and territorial governments, trappers and industry stakeholders, has been given responsibility for coordinating implementation of the AIHTS in Canada.

How did the Agreement come about?

As a result of relentless pressure by anti-fur lobbyists, the European Union (EU) passed a law in 1991 (*EU Regulation 3254/91*) that bans the importation of wild fur products from any country into its member state countries, UNLESS

- The country has prohibited the use of the leghold trap
- OR
- Trapping methods used by the country for twelve listed species meet internationally agreed humane trapping standards.

To meet the requirements of the EU Regulation 3254/91, government agencies from Canada, the EU, the USA and Russia negotiated an Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards amongst themselves. The result was the AIHTS signed by Canada, the EU and Russia in 1997. Due to their domestic legislative requirements, the USA signed a separate but similar agreement with the EU.

By meeting the AIHTS requirements, the signatories are meeting scientifically supported animal welfare improvements related to trapping.

Key elements of the 1997 AIHTS

- Establishes an international standard that scientifically addresses animal welfare related to trapping furbearers in Canada, EU, Russia and USA, something the EU Regulation 3254/91 would not have accomplished.
- Ensures that Europeans also meet the same animal welfare requirements they require of other countries, regardless of the reason the animals are trapped.
- Requires that traps be tested to determine whether they meet the species-specific welfare thresholds set out in the agreement. Requires traps not meeting the AIHTS to be phased out.
- Provides for orderly implementation including a timetable and protocol for the testing, certification and mandatory phase-in of approved traps.

- Ensures that standards apply to 19 listed species, which exceeds the number listed under EU Regulation 3254/91. Allows for changes or additions to listed species, standards, or terms of the agreement that are approved by all signatory parties.
- Permits the continued use of those traps for which there are no certifiable alternatives while research continues.
- Applies science-based standards for all trapping purposes. The Agreement applies to trapping for:
 - Wildlife management purposes, including pest control
 - Obtaining fur, skin or meat
 - The capture of mammals for conservation
- Includes procedures for setting disagreements and does not affect rights to resort to the WTO (World Trade Organization)

How does the Agreement benefit Canada?

- The Parties (Canada, EU and Russia) guarantee not to impose trade restrictions on fur products from other signatory countries. This means that as long as the AIHTS is in place, the EU cannot enforce its Regulation 3254/91 to ban importation of wild fur products from Canada.¹
- The AIHTS requirements for trap certification have increased interest in Canada's leading trap research, development and testing program.

¹ The USA is included under their separate agreement.

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- Under the Agreement, parties of the AIHTS (Canada, Russian Federation and EU) are required to meet as the Joint Management Committee (JMC) to administer the Agreement. This ensures an ongoing dialogue between Canada and the other signatories. The USA is included in JMC meetings to maintain continuity.

What has been accomplished since 1997?

- As required under the AIHTS, Canada has established a national trap certification process. In place since 2002, it is recognized and administered by all provinces and territories.
- Canada has become a technology leader in the development and use of Computer Simulated Models (CSM) for evaluating trap performance related to animal welfare. The wide range of testing data Canada has gathered over two decades, together with advances in computer technology, provided the information necessary for the development of CSM for several species. Development of CSM will continue.
- Canadian researchers are now able to evaluate trap performance for certain species using simulations without the need to use these animals in live tests. New testing technologies continue to be developed.
- Over 450 types of traps have been evaluated, including 110 using computer simulation models, under the **Fur Institute of Canada's** trap testing and development program.
- A total of 104 species-specific devices have been certified for 11 of the 12 Canadian listed species under the AIHTS.
- The use of AIHTS certified traps is now mandatory and changes to provincial and territorial trapping regulations are occurring in three phases:
 - Phase I, covering certain species for which traps have been tested and certified began in 2007.
 - Phases II and III will expand the list of species and trap types covered by regulations as certified traps become available.
- The process is co-ordinated through the **Fur Institute of Canada** which also publishes a regularly up-dated list of those traps that have been certified.
- Manufacturers are now required by law to put their AIHTS certification code on traps and to provide instructions for use.
- Six AIHTS Joint Management Committee meetings have been held to date.

What's ahead?

- Further testing and certification of limb restraining and killing traps that are still outstanding.
- Testing of Cage/Box traps. These traps are used primarily for animal damage control, relocation and animal research.
- New provincial/territorial regulations. Regulations will be phased in under the three-step process as scientific testing and new trap development make it possible to certify further traps.
- Continued research. The AIHTS is a dynamic agreement that will change over time just as trapping regulations in Canada have changed. Not all furbearers trapped in Canada are covered under the AIHTS and the Agreement calls for regular reviews, based on available scientific research, of both the listed species and the standards.
- New trap designs for use on various species and in different situations are expected in the future. In order to comply with its international obligations, Canada will need to maintain its capacity to test these traps.

The AIHTS is an important treaty that directs that animal welfare improvements to traps be made through trap research and testing. As well, it allows trap users, regardless of the purpose, to continuously improve the standards of their profession.

The **Fur Institute of Canada** is the official trap-testing agency for the Government of Canada and all provincial/territorial governments.

For more information on the AIHTS go to:

<http://www.fur.ca/index-e/aihts/index.asp?action=aihts&page=index>