



About Traps



Are all traps created equally?

Different traps for different species and locations

Animal species vary in size and behaviours, so no one type of trap or trapping method works for all species in all settings. Most traps are species specific, meaning they are designed to capture a particular species or group of like species. How traps are set and located is determined by what species is intended to be captured.

Trapping methods

There are two methods of trapping animals approved in Canada for capturing specific species, or for use in different settings or for different purposes.

Restraining Trapping Methods: Involves the use of traps such as limb holding or cage and box traps that are designed and set to hold, but not kill, the captured animal. Limb holding devices are essential in specific circumstances for effectively capturing large terrestrial species such as coyote. These traps will have to meet the welfare standards.

Killing Trapping Methods: Involves the use of traps designed and set with the intention of killing an animal of the target species. These trapping methods are designed to render a quick death to the captured animals. Similar to the common mousetrap, these devices are especially effective for capturing small to medium size animals such as weasel and fisher. They will have to meet the welfare standards.

Continuous improvement

Traps and trapping methods continue to evolve. Over the years, trappers themselves have adopted the use of more effective traps and trapping methods, as they become available. One result is that the conventional steel jawed leghold traps introduced in Canada by the Europeans have been replaced by modern limb holding devices that meet international welfare requirements.

The classic toothed steel-jawed leghold trap has been illegal for use in Canada for decades.

How do we know if trapping systems respect animal welfare?

Canada: a world leader in trap research and testing with an animal welfare focus

Virtually every country in the world permits the trapping of animals for food, commercial, scientific or animal management purposes, and for the protection of endangered species and public safety. This drives the continuing search to develop traps that improve animal welfare, that are efficient, safe and practical.

In Canada, the animal welfare improvements in traps and trapping methods over the past two decades have been possible through the collaboration of trappers, governments, researchers and the **Fur Institute of Canada**.

Canada has led the international development and implementation of trapping systems that continue to improve animal welfare

Begun in 1983, the Institute's trap research, testing and development program has married traditional knowledge with science and new technologies. Funding from governments, the fur trade and other non-government sources has totalled over \$18 million since that time. The program is leading to direct and measurable worldwide benefits to the welfare of animals that will always be trapped for various reasons.

Canada's state-of-the-art trap research facilities

Canada's trap research, testing and development program, led by **the Fur Institute of Canada**, is the most advanced in the world. As a result, the Institute has gained recognized expertise and a comprehensive database on animal welfare related to trapping systems.

As the Institute's research partner, the Alberta Research Council provides the scientists and laboratory controls needed to test trap performance and to collect the data necessary to ensure their compliance with the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS). (See AIHTS section.)

The Institute's Vegreville, Alberta research facility was completed in 1984 at a cost of over \$1 million. It was specifically designed to enable teams of scientists, engineers, statisticians and technicians to scientifically measure and improve the welfare of animals related to trapping and to advance trap testing methods. All animals housed in the research facility for the testing of traps are cared for and used in accordance with the requirements of the Canadian Council on Animal Care that oversees the use of animals in research and testing.

Results from this facility are being used internationally by manufacturers, government regulators, wildlife scientists and trappers.

Computer technologies are improving animal welfare

One of the objectives of the **Fur Institute of Canada** and Alberta Research Council is to develop ways to significantly reduce the need for using live animals in tests for evaluating traps.

Advancements in computer technologies and the accumulation of scientific data through live-animal trap tests conducted at the Vegreville facility have made it possible to develop and use Computer Simulation Models (CSM). These models are now being used to rate trapping devices for several species. Development of computer simulation models for other species is ongoing.

To date, the use of CSM has eliminated the need to capture, transport, house and use over 1,300 furbearing animals for live-animal trap tests.

Canadian-led trapping standards and certification relate to animal welfare

Animal trapping continues throughout the world for various reasons. However, until recently there were no animal welfare standards for traps. It was on Canada's recommendation and leadership that scientifically based trap-testing standards have been established. These standards are available for use by any country to measure and compare the welfare performance of different traps.

These standards were approved by the independent International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in 1999 and reaffirmed in their five-year review in 2004. The standards are used by Canada, and form the basis for trap performance testing as required by the Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS).

Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards

In June 1999, Canada ratified the 1997 Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) with the European Union and Russia. The AIHTS sets out welfare thresholds for trap performance requirements for a total of 19 wild animal species (12 in North America) that are captured for various reasons in those countries. (The United States has a separate, but similar Agreement with the European Union).

The AIHTS definition of Humane Trapping Methods "means the traps certified by competent authorities that are in conformity with the AIHTS standards and used in setting conditions specified by the manufacturers".

The Agreement on International Humane Tapping Standards has had A measurable impact on animal welfare through the use Of certified trapping systems and education programs

Under the Agreement, traps used for the species listed are evaluated using the ISO testing standards and must subsequently be certified as meeting the AIHTS requirements if they are to be used in Canada, the EU or Russia.

Traps in Canada are ultimately required to be certified. 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 was the first step of a longer three-part process, which will lead to regulating the use of only certified traps, thereby improving the welfare of animals trapped for various reasons.

How do we know traps are safe and are used safely?

Trap certification

A part of the trap certification process in Canada involves safety issues, as well as welfare performance and efficiency. This ensures that approved traps are safe to use when properly maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturers specifications and wildlife regulations. Meanwhile, continuous research leads to new safety features that can then be incorporated into new trap designs.

Trapper training

Professional education and licensing has become a requirement to practice fur trapping and wild animal pest control activities in most jurisdictions.

In Canada, mandatory and voluntary training and mentoring are used to upgrade skills and knowledge, to meet licensing requirements and to teach a new generation of trappers. Trapper education workshops and training programs are managed by trapping and wildlife associations. They cover best management practices, rules and regulations, trapper safety, animal welfare, and pelt/meat/by-product preparations.

Rules and regulations

Wildlife trapping is governed by municipal and provincial/ territorial regulations, which incorporate rules on safe use of trapping devices.

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 humane trapping go to: www.fur.ca