

The State's Position

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources supports modern, regulated trapping as a safe, ethical and practical means of taking furbearers. Wildlife management seeks to maintain healthy and diverse wildlife populations, and regulated trapping is an important management tool used to accomplish this goal. Trapping is highly regulated in Wisconsin and the species trapped are abundant. Trapping has important historical, social, economic and cultural value for trappers, farmers, landowners and Native Americans.

Trapping is Regulated in Wisconsin

The Department and trappers have been active in creating and implementing legislation and rules designed to closely regulate trapping in the state. The many laws include:

- Mandatory training and certification of first-time trappers
- Licensing of trappers
- Closely regulated furbearer seasons and issuance of special permits for some species
- Reporting, tagging and registration of certain species to regulate harvest, which additionally provides important scientific data on these species
- Requiring permission from landowners
- Restrictions on where traps are set
- Restrictions designed to reduce non-target captures
- Mandatory identification of traps with user's contact information
- Restrictions on sizes and types of traps
- Mandatory daily checking of all dry-land and non-submersion sets

Wildlife biologists monitor populations of furbearers and regularly review regulations. The Department is also involved in studies to identify traps and trapping systems that reduce the potential for injuries to animals yet maintain the efficiency needed to meet management goals. Traps are continually improving in quality, efficiency and humaneness.

Regulated Trapping Benefits Society

Damage and nuisance control: Trappers help to control abundant animals causing damage and problems for farmers, highway departments, foresters, homeowners and cranberry growers.

Wildlife Management: Information gathered through tagging and registration ensures furbearer populations remain healthy.

Trapping plays a vital role in maintaining Wisconsin's diverse landscapes and wildlife. Foothold traps, cable-restraints and cage traps allow the catch and release of individual animals in order to monitor population movements and health status. Trapping has been used to restore wildlife populations that were extirpated prior to regulation. Species like beaver, river otter, fisher, American marten and gray wolves represent some species that have been trapped and relocated to restore biodiversity. Fisher and American marten were re-introduced to Wisconsin.

Use of furbearers: Regulated trapping gives people the freedom to provide a local source of warmth from natural fur and food while pursuing a legitimate outdoor pursuit. There may also be economic benefits.



Trapping Education

Trapper education, conducted by trained volunteer instructors, has been offered in the state since the 1970s. Since 1992, all first-time trappers have been required to be trained and certified in:

- Knowledge of conservation laws
- Knowledge of wildlife management principles
- Trapper ethics
- Proper pelt handling and uses for meat, skulls and other parts
- Respecting landowner rights
- Proper trapping techniques



Visit dnr.wi.gov
keywords "trap" or "trapper ed"
for more information

Look for trapper education classes at: <https://gowild.wi.gov/customers/safetyedclass>



WM-551 2019

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Equal Opportunity Office, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240. This publication can be made available in alternative formats (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc) upon request. Please call 608-261-6452 for more information.

TRAPS, TRAPPING AND FURBEARER MANAGEMENT IN WISCONSIN



Responses to commonly heard statements opposed to regulated trapping:

Steel-jawed traps inflict tissue damage and pain.

It is incorrect to suggest injuries either never or always occur. Injuries are minimized by proper regulations, proper set techniques and trapper education programs that stress ethics and responsibility. Development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Trapping has identified humane trap systems for all furbearers in Wisconsin. Visit fishwildlife.org for more information about BMPs.

The DNR only cares about allowing people to kill animals while ignoring the needs of the natural ecosystem.

The fact that all wildlife has a function in the ecosystem is something the DNR, hunters, trappers and all citizens can agree on. The DNR is committed to managing wildlife for all of Wisconsin's citizens while allowing the opportunity for outdoor recreation, including regulated trapping, hiking and wildlife watching, among others. Hunters and trappers are interested in managing wildlife not only for hunting and trapping opportunities, but also for the inherent value of wildlife and wildlands. Hunters and trappers put money behind their convictions for the real, long-term benefit of wildlife—both hunted and non-hunted species—through license purchases and excise taxes on firearms and ammunition that provide the core funding for wildlife management.

The majority of Wisconsin's citizens oppose trapping.

This is untrue, and a 2016 study by Responsive Management, an independent social science firm, showed that 77% of Wisconsin's citizens support regulated trapping (Duda et al. 2016). The key to this support is the fact that trapping is highly regulated in Wisconsin, allowing for adequate management of furbearer populations.

Traps are not selective.

Relatively few non-furbearers are caught in foothold traps. Trigger adjustments, pan tension, trap size selection, selective set construction and selective attractants minimize the catch of other species. There are laws to minimize non-target capture, such as not allowing sight-exposed bait within 25 feet of a trap to avoid capturing raptors and restrictions on the types and sizes of traps that can be set.

A foothold trap set in a submerged muskrat burrow is very selective for muskrats or mink. A bait of aspen is very selective as beaver bait and an enclosed trigger trap set with sweet bait is selective for raccoons. Regulations and mandatory trapper education—already in place in Wisconsin—assure selective, responsible trapping. Additionally, the majority of trap types in Wisconsin are restraint devices, designed to hold an animal until it can be released or dispatched. Using restraint devices allow trappers to release non-targets.



Photo by Matthew Brinkman - Wildlife biologist/photographer

Trapping for disease control simply doesn't work.

All furbearing species have regularly used territories during significant times of the year when they are raising their young. When a population is too dense, these natural territories abut, overlap and are reduced in size. The resulting close and frequent contact yields opportunities for many diseases to spread rapidly in a chain-like reaction. Properly managed furbearers have adequate territory sizes and space between territories. This reduces or eliminates the possibility of rapid disease transmissions.

Regulated trapping is not a solution to wildlife disease outbreaks. But trapping can reduce threats to the health of humans, domestic animals and other wild animals. The best control for rabies is through domestic animal vaccination, avoiding pet contact with wildlife and ensuring that human activities do not encourage nuisance wildlife.

Trappers don't check traps regularly.

Wisconsin laws requires daily trap checks for land sets. Those who violate the law are investigated and ticketed by highly skilled Wisconsin Conservation Wardens.



Many countries and some states have banned foothold traps. Why doesn't Wisconsin follow suit when cage traps are more humane?

Cage traps are useful for specific species in specific situations. They are not, however, the tool to use in every situation. Cage traps have limited use and success because many species refuse to enter them, they are expensive, are more difficult to transport and are visible and prone to theft. While cage traps have passed humane trap research standards, they are often not the most humane type of trap available depending on the species in question. Current laws about frequent inspection, type, size and placement of traps help assure appropriate use. Objections to "steel-jawed traps" are likely an emotional objection to trapping in general and may reflect a lack of knowledge about regulated trapping in our state today.

Foothold traps are important to furbearer management not just because of harvest, but also for research purposes. Without the foothold, we wouldn't be able to collar and track species like bobcats, coyotes, wolves and badger to better understand their populations and habits. On a national level, foothold traps are the reason river otter were successfully reintroduced into many states, resulting in 49/50 states now having otter populations. Wolves were reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park using foothold traps and federally-endangered shorebirds such as Piping Plovers are protected through the use of foothold traps.

