

Mammal Trapping, 1985 To The Present

Mammal trapping is still an important part of man's activities and land-based lifestyles. However, as animal rights groups raised concerns about the fur industry's practices, pelt production fell by 62% in the early 1990s, and the industry continued to struggle in the 2000s. Contrary to old beliefs, indigenous wildlife populations do not need to be trapped in order to remain within the carrying capacity of their environment. However, some species produce enough animals annually to allow the harvest of part of their populations. Trapping is not a technique that is exclusively linked to the fur industry. Trapping is often the most efficient way to selectively remove nuisance animals or reduce rodent densities in urban settings. In the past, intensive trapping programs have been useful in controlling or monitoring mammal populations that transmit diseases or parasites to humans and other animals. In agriculture, trapping is a valuable alternative to non-selective toxicants. Trapping is an essential component of research on mammal ecology, behavior and genetics. Mammal trapping continues to play an important role in today's societies. However, the way with which it is being carried out has changed to accommodate societal concerns about animal welfare and biodiversity conservation.

State-of-the-art trapping technology

From 1985 to 1993, in cooperation with the Alberta Environmental Centre and the Alberta Research Council, the Fur Institute of Canada funded an extensive research program that resulted in the development of effective research protocols and the development of humane trapping devices for several furbearers. Many of these new traps have been used as alternatives to controversial and inhumane steel-jawed foothold traps. Further research and development work has been conducted since 1993 by Alpha Wildlife Research & Management Ltd, an impartial research corporation who also organized a unique international mammal trapping symposium in 1997, and since then, published information on mammal trapping technology and ethics.

An Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS) signed by Canada and the European Union in December 1997, was implemented in Canada in the fall of 2007. The agreement requires that wild furs be taken in accordance with scientifically verified and internationally accepted humane systems. However, international standards failed to completely incorporate technical advances, and the United States developed its own best management practices on the basis of technical, economical and social criteria. Nevertheless, criteria for performance of humane traps consistent with state-of-the-art technological development have been identified by wildlife professionals and, at a 95% confidence level, humane killing traps should render at least 70% of target animals irreversibly unconscious in less than 3 minutes; humane live traps should hold at least 70% of animals without serious injuries. Over the last decades, tremendous progress has occurred in the field of trap research and development. Wildlife professionals are now more concerned with the well being of captured animals, and use traps that have been demonstrated to be humane, capture-efficient, and safe for animals and users.

Suggested Reading B.G. Cumming, "Human and Animal Rights," *Policy Options* 7(7):19-23 (1986) and "Humane Trapping," *Policy Options* 8(1):27-30 (1987); *Fur Institute of Canada, On Nature's Terms* (1985); G. Proulx, Ed., *Mammal trapping* (1999); R.A. Powell and G. Proulx, "Trapping and marking terrestrial mammals for research: integrating ethics, standards, techniques, and common sense," *Institute of Laboratory Animal Research Journal* 44 (259-276) (2003); S.D. Schemnitz, "Capturing and handling wild animals," *Techniques for Wildlife Investigation and Management* (2005).

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