

Trapping: How Best Management Practices Don't Improve Animal Welfare



Brenna Galdenzi, President & Co-founder



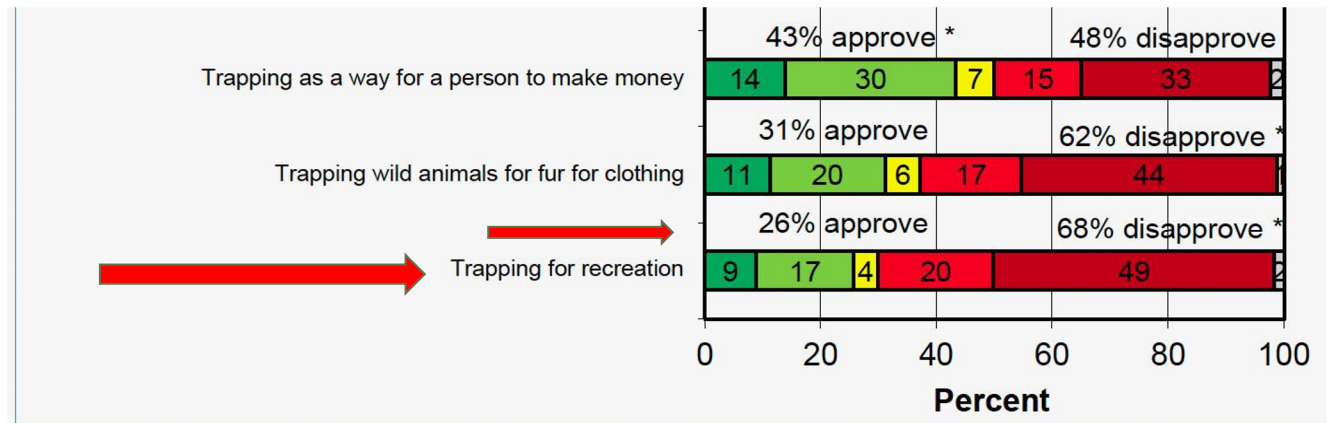
68% of Vermonters Oppose Recreational Trapping

Update from the most recent Fish & Wildlife Board Meeting

Commissioner Herrick referred to “recreational trapping” as a “misnomer,” but his own Department chose to use “trapping for recreation” in their 2022 survey.

It’s only because public support for recreational trapping is low (only 26%) that Herrick now claims the term is a misnomer.

That is cherry picking survey results.



Vermont Residents' Attitudes Toward Furbearer Management

Fish & Wildlife's Use of the Word "Science"

- **Science:** the pursuit and application of knowledge of the natural world following a systematic methodology based on evidence
- **Values:** influence which actions we should pursue (to trap or not to trap!)
- **There is no science that tells us we should be using leghold traps**
- Fish & Wildlife's **values, not science,** of being pro-trapping informs their policies

Raccoon in leghold | VT



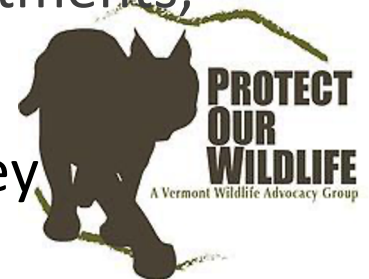
The Working Group

- Trapping interests were overrepresented 7 to 3 (*originally only 2 wildlife advocates; POW was only invited after requests made by Senators*) (see exhibit A)
- Pertinent data was omitted in some of Vermont Fish & Wildlife's presentations, leading to distrust in the process (*see exhibits B, C*)
- Our positions were incorrectly reflected in the minutes and on Vermont Fish & Wildlife's website and were corrected only after our request (*see exhibits D, E, F*)



“Best Management Practices”

- **Public Pressure** - BMPs only started after the public’s opposition to trapping, including pressure from the European Union that prohibited fur imports from countries that used leghold traps
- **Inhumane by their own standards** - Per BMPs, 30% of animals are allowed severe injuries, including amputation, compound fractures, even death
- **Inherent Bias**
 - BMP program conducted by a private organization—the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA)—a public relations advisor to state fish & wildlife departments, including VTFWD
 - BMPs were conceived, studied, and evaluated by the very people that they aim to regulate



BMPs Are a Marketing Scheme

AFWA provides strategic communication materials to fish and wildlife agencies across the country, including Vermont Fish & Wildlife.



“How to Build Credibility with the Media”

“How to Sell Your Story”

“Accept regulated trapping as a legitimate activity”

Source: “Communication Strategy for Trapping and Furbearer Management.”



“Best Management Practices”

- Conflict of interest in the field testing: Both trappers and Fish & Wildlife have an interest in promoting trapping.
- Only the trapper and their “technician” (friend/spouse/neighbor) in field collecting data—no independent oversight.
- Four scientists have completed a post-publication review of AFWA’s BMPs and it is under consideration by a scientific journal. The critique questions the fundamental claims of AFWA’s BMPs and exposes unscientific aspects of their work.

Would trappers trust the process if a PETA volunteer and their friend were in the field doing the trap testing?



VT Fish & Wildlife Dept. Recommendations Don't Satisfy Act 159

VT Fish & Wildlife Dept. recommendations:

- Don't meet legislative mandate on various requirements (see exhibit J)
- Incorporated the trapping stakeholder group's BMP recommendations verbatim, and even weakened their recommendations to make them less restrictive. This occurred after the working group adjourned without our knowledge (see exhibit G)
- Did not incorporate any of the wildlife advocates' recommendations as originally presented (see exhibit H, I)
- Recommendations will do nothing to improve animal welfare and protect non-targeted animals



This trap is referred to as a “padded” leghold trap and meets the BMP criteria.

[Video link](#)

BMPs Allow Unacceptable Levels of Harm

This severed paw was found in one of our member's back yards.

This is a **BMP approved** trap: an Oneida™ Victor Softcatch, “padded” leghold trap.



BMPs Allow Unacceptable Levels of Harm

- BMPs recommend leghold traps cause no greater than **moderate injury** in at least 70% of the animals trapped.
- **BMP's "Moderate injury" allows:**
 - amputation of one-digit,
 - permanent tooth fracture exposing pulp cavity,
 - severe joint hemorrhage,
 - eye lacerations
 - rib fractures,
 - major laceration on foot pads or tongue and
 - other injuries



BMPs Allow Unacceptable Levels of Harm

30% of animals are allowed “severe” injuries including:

- amputation
- compound fractures
- severe internal organ damage
- spinal cord injury
- death



This is an Approved Method to Kill Trapped Animals in Vermont Under the BMPs



Common Methods to Kill Used by Trappers:

- Beating an animal to death (clubbing)
- Stomping on the animal's chest to crush their heart and lungs (see photo)
- Drowning
- Strangling

Photo from Born Free USA's undercover investigation



This is an Approved Method to Kill Trapped Animals in Vermont Under the BMPs

Born Free USA investigator notes:

“It takes six minutes to finally kill the raccoon. It is repeatedly hit round the head and forced under water by [the trapper’s] combination stick and boot, but it keeps wriggling free only to get bashed over the head again when it emerges from below. It fights for its life, at one point grasping the stick by its paws, but finally [the trapper] manages to get his boot over the raccoon’s neck and pins him to the river bottom where it slowly drowns.”



BMPs Don't Consider Harm to Non-Target Animals

- This coyote was trapped by the face in a “quick kill” body crushing trap set for fisher in Killington. The warden said, the coyote traveled for over a mile before dying from the injuries.
- Traps set for coyotes can also catch raptors, raccoons, opossums and other non-targeted animals causing severe trauma—greater than what the intended target would have experienced.



BMPs Don't Protect Non Targeted Animals



Bobcats caught out of season in Vermont in a fisher set (L) and coyote set (R)



BMPs are Unenforceable

- Existing trapping regulations are not actively enforced, according to Vermont wardens we've spoken with
- Shortage of game wardens and enforcement personnel
- Difficult to differentiate BMP trap from conventional trap (also, traps are often not visible)
- Enforcement is impossible on posted land without a search warrant



Vermonters Oppose Trapping

- Despite decades of pleas from the public, there has been no interest in reducing animal suffering by VT Fish & Wildlife.
- VT Fish & Wildlife Department is only addressing trapping concerns due to bill Act 159.
- The public has spoken in multiple surveys—trapping is not supported by Vermonters:
 - 75% of Vermonters want to ban the use of leghold, body gripping traps and any types of drowning traps (UVM Center for Rural Studies 2017 poll)
 - Even according to VT Fish & Wildlife’s own 2022 Survey, 68% of Vermonters oppose recreational trapping, 62% oppose trapping for fur or clothing



It's Time to Move toward a more ethical relationship with wildlife

- Ten states, including Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Washington and New Mexico, as well as at least 108 countries, including all member countries of the European Union, have banned or severely restricted leghold traps.
- Wildlife is facing unprecedented threats.
- Traps injure, maim, and kill animals in a haphazard, exceptionally cruel manner.

H.191 aligns with what the public wants and with what wildlife needs by restricting most forms of trapping.



END

