

Abstract

Mammals are trapped throughout North America using various forms of restraining trap technologies with few regulations regarding animal welfare. White et al. (2021) claim to develop best management practices for trapping furbearers in the United States and is one of the few current analyses comparing and evaluating body-hold trap devices for animal welfare, capture efficiency and selectivity across multiple species. Here we challenge their claim of best management practices because their research methods do not follow the hallmarks of best science. Modern understandings of best available science require principles of Open Science such as transparency of all assumptions, methods, and analyses, data sharing, authentically independent review, and reproducibility. Here we outline how the data collection methods, and the three trap evaluation methods employed by White et al. (2021) are non-transparent, irreproducible, and based on dubious or unclear assumptions. Given scant research on potentially outdated devices, White et al (2021) might be seen as the only authoritative science that exists. However, such a view is compromised by shortcomings in the study that raise serious questions. The risk to carnivores posed by trapping, also threatens the evolved function of healthy ecosystems. Flawed analyses put public policy on an unsound footing. We suggest that if White et al. (2021) is hoping to develop useful BMPs for trapping, they should use metrics supported by the literature and design their recommendations to be equally useful to trappers, wildlife agents, researchers and landowners.