

What types of traps may be used in Vermont?

The types of traps that may be used are specific in regulations, as are the sizes and locations where traps may be set.

Foothold Traps are designed to spring closed on the foot of the target animal when it steps on a trigger mechanism. Contrary to popular belief, in Vermont these traps do not have serrations or teeth. These traps are designed to hold the target animal unharmed and are often used in wildlife research and recovery efforts.

Padded Foothold Traps are similar to standard foothold traps, except the portion of the metal arms which close on the animal's foot are padded with rubber inserts.

Species Specific Traps are foothold devices designed specifically for raccoons. The footholding mechanism is encased in a protective housing. To set off the trap, a raccoon must reach into the housing for a piece of bait and pull on the trigger mechanism.

Body-gripping Traps are also known as conibears or quick-kill traps. They function like a mouse trap, quickly killing the animal by striking the head, neck, or body.

Cage Traps are wire box traps with one or two doors designed to restrain an animal in a portable cage. They work well for animals like raccoons that are not afraid of entering cages, but are not efficient devices for fox or coyotes.










"According to aboriginal Amer-Indian philosophy, using and respecting animals are not believed to be mutually exclusive. On the contrary, perhaps it is only when we recognize our dependence on other creatures that we truly respect them."

— Alan Herscovici, Second Nature, 1987

"Ironically, the elimination of hunting and trapping cultures may actually speed industrial "development" and exploitation of nonrenewable resources—with disastrous consequences for wildlife and the environment."

— Alan Herscovici, Second Nature, 1997

What are some benefits of trapping?

-  Trapping is often used to restore populations of animals, such as otter and fisher, in areas where they had previously been extirpated.
-  Fur is a renewable natural resource which has many uses.
-  Trapping is commonly used to capture animals and radio collar them for population studies.
-  Trapping has been used in Vermont to reduce the populations of predators such as raccoon, fisher, and fox that threaten the recovery of endangered species.
-  Trappers help farmers by removing animals that are causing crop damage.
-  Trappers assist homeowners experiencing property damage caused by animals such as raccoons and skunks.
-  Trappers assist town and state highway departments by removing beavers which are flooding roads.
-  Information provided by trappers helps in the study of wildlife populations.
-  People who trap often have an exceptional knowledge and concern for wildlife and natural habitats, and often possess a strong sense of stewardship toward nature. Trapping is an important outdoor activity that helps to keep people connected to the land.



"...hunter-gathers live in the forest, agriculturalists live adjacent to but within striking distance of the forest, and urban-industrial men live away from the forest. Paradoxically, the more the spatial separation from the forest, the greater the impact on its ecology, and the further removed the actors from the consequences of the impact!"

— M. Gadgill & R Guba, cited in Earth in Mind, David W. Orr, 1994

For more information regarding trapping and furbearer management in Vermont, contact:

Agency of Natural Resources
Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
1 National Life Drive, Davis 2
Montpelier, VT 05620-3702
802/828-1000
www.vtfishandwildlife.com

The Mission of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife is the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont. In order to accomplish this mission, the integrity, diversity, and vitality of all natural systems must be protected.



TRAPPING AND FURBEARER MANAGEMENT IN VERMONT



Trapping to Manage Vermont's Furbearers

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department cares deeply about wildlife, the future of their populations, and the habitats they depend on. Although it may be a surprise to some, regulated trapping plays an important role in conservation and management of wildlife. Trapping in Vermont is strictly regulated by the Department, thereby ensuring that Vermont's wildlife populations will be conserved for future generations of Vermonters.



People trap for many of the same reasons that people hunt, fish, garden, or manage a woodlot for firewood. They enjoy interacting with nature and learning the habits of animals. Trappers also derive a sense of satisfaction by providing for themselves and their families via a locally-abundant source of food and clothing. The economic incentive for trapping varies greatly from person to person as well as with the current price of fur. People also trap to resolve property damage caused by wildlife such as a flooded driveway or crop degradation. Biologists sometimes trap or enlist the assistance of trappers to manage wildlife populations and to capture animals for population studies and reintroduction efforts.

There are cultural values in the sports, customs, and experiences that renew contacts with wild things... First, there is value in any experience that reminds us of our distinctive national origins and evolutions, i.e. that stimulates awareness of history...a farmer boy arrives in the schoolroom reeking of muskrat; he has tended his traps before breakfast. He is reenacting the romance of the fur trade. Second, there is value in any experience that reminds us of our dependency on the soil-plant-animal-man food chain, and of the fundamental organization of the biota.
— Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, 1966

What do people do with the animals they trap?

The fur is sold and crafted into articles of clothing, folk art, make-up and art brushes, fishing lures, and other products. Meat from beavers, raccoons, and muskrats is often used for tablefare or pet food. The glands and other tissues of certain animals are used in perfumes, leather preservatives, salves, and moisturizers. Trappers cooperate with wildlife agencies by donating carcasses of some trapped animals to be used in biological studies. Finally, carcasses are left in the woods as food for other wildlife.



Coyotes, valued for their fur, sometimes prey on livestock.

"These ties to the land (via regulated trapping), passed through generations, are the basis for a strong sense of (land) stewardship."

— Debra Mason, UVM Master of Science Thesis 1990

Where does trapping occur?

Trapping occurs on private lands, but only if permission is granted by the landowner. It also can occur on state and federal-owned lands.



Raccoons, a very common species, are trapped for their fur, to help reduce property damage, and to protect the nests of spiny softshell turtles, an endangered species

What animals can be trapped in Vermont?

Licensed trappers trap and sell the fur of:

<i>Beaver</i>	<i>Coyote</i>	<i>Raccoon</i>	<i>Weasel</i>
<i>Muskrat</i>	<i>Red Fox</i>	<i>Skunk</i>	<i>Bobcat</i>
<i>Mink</i>	<i>Gray Fox</i>	<i>River Otter</i>	<i>Fisher</i>

**All of the species listed above are common in Vermont and exist throughout the entire state. Many are more abundant now than they were 200 years ago.*



Although water control structures are often recommended by Department biologists as one solution to human conflicts, many of the beavers taken by trappers in Vermont are trapped at the request of landowners who must control beaver to avoid property damage.

The biggest threat to wildlife is the destruction and degradation of habitat. Effort and money should be focused on the conservation and stewardship of land to ensure the perpetuation of all wildlife populations for future generations.

Does trapping harm wildlife populations?

No. Trapping in Vermont, as in all states, is strictly regulated. It is only allowed for species which are common throughout the state. In fact, because of human alterations to the landscape, some wildlife populations such as raccoon and skunk are higher today than they were prior to European settlement. Trapping helps to control the numbers of raccoons and skunks and reduce predation on the nests of migratory songbirds and waterfowl. Restrictions, such as season lengths and bag limits, are used to prevent overtrapping. Trappers' reports help wildlife biologists monitor harvest and the status of wildlife populations.

Is Trapping Inhumane?

No, not if traps are used correctly. In Vermont, trapping is one of the most highly-regulated outdoor activities. Laws are strictly enforced to ensure traps are used correctly. Trappers can humanely catch certain animals by choosing the proper type and size of trap, and by setting it at a specific location. *The same foothold traps used by trappers are often used by biologists to live-capture wild animals which are then released unharmed in new areas.*

First-time trappers are required to take a training course so they are familiar with the laws, ethics, and the humane treatment of wildlife. Laws, regulations, education programs, and capture methods are continually reviewed to ensure that trapping is a humane and responsible activity.

...when we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect. There is no other way for land to survive the impact of mechanized man, nor for us to reap from it the aesthetic harvest it is capable, under science, of contributing to culture.

Working to Improve Trapping through Research

Improvements to traps and trapping methods needs to continue. Vermont and other state wildlife agencies, in cooperation with the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, have begun a program to develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for trapping wildlife in the United States. This program includes the largest trap testing study ever conducted and has relied on the assistance of wildlife veterinarians, university researchers, trappers, and other natural resource professionals.

Once completed, the BMPs for trapping will be provided to state agencies and trappers for incorporation into trapper education and wildlife management programs. BMPs will be used by the United States as part of an international commitment to identify and promote the use of improved traps and trapping methods for capturing wildlife. BMPs will help identify the most scientific, practical, and humane methods of trapping.