

ODFW Trap Check Work Group
Tuesday, November 16th, 2021, 2pm-4pm PT
Zoom Meeting – Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t82APdvhFfo&t=1s> and Part 2:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ys5gr0HcVBk>

Participants:

- Kelly Peterson, Humane Society of the United States
- *Susan Getty (alternate for Bob Sallinger), Humane Society of the United States*
- Jim Soares, Oregon Trappers Association
- *Stan Steele (alternate for Jim Soares), National Trappers Association*
- Tyler Dungannon, Oregon Hunters Association
- Quinn Read, Center for Biological Diversity
- Kevin Christensen, APHIS Wildlife Services
- Bob Sallinger, Portland Audubon
- Lauren Smith, Oregon Farm Bureau
- *Kyle Williams (alternate for Lauren Smith), Oregon Forest & Industry Council*
- Jill Zarnowitz, ODFW Commission
- Greg Wolley, ODFW Commission
- Brian Wolfer, ODFW
- Debbie Colbert, ODFW
- Kevin Blakely, ODFW

Absent:

- *Jordan Cole (alternate for Association of Oregon Counties)*
- Drenda Howatt, Association of Oregon Counties
- Michelle Tate, ODFW
- Derek Broman, ODFW Wildlife Biologist
- Shannon Hurn, ODFW Deputy Director

Facilitation Team:

- Jamie Damon, Kearns & West
- Bianca Valdez, Kearns & West

Guest Presenter:

- Colin Gillin, ODFW

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Updates

Jamie Damon, Kearns & West facilitator, opened the meeting, welcomed participants to the ODFW Trap Check Work Group, and provided an updated agenda overview and meeting guidelines. She updated the group that the expected presenter, Bryant White, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, was unavailable for the meeting due to unexpected circumstances.

Economics of Trapping

Jamie opened the next agenda item on the economics of trapping. She shared there were previous questions from members of the work group on the economics of trapping and noted different aspects of

the economics to consider. Aspects of the economics include the program that ODFW administers, of the trappers themselves (how much revenue is generated, the number of active trappers, and impacts of trap check times), and damage control for forest landowners, county roads, and agricultural users. As part of the meeting packet, work group members received a copy of a presentation that was previously shared with the ODFW Commission regarding the administrative costs of the furbearer program and asked Kevin Blakely, ODFW to offer any further insight.

Kevin Blakley, ODFW, shared there is much to consider on the economics of trapping and damage such as program revenue, program management, incomes, and how it relates to the carnivore furbearer program.

There were no questions or comments from the work group on this topic.

Physical/Physiological Effects of Trapping

Jamie suggested to the group that since presenter Bryant White was unable to attend the meeting, they may want to identify questions for Bryant when he presents at a future meeting.

The discussion between the work group members is reflected below:

- **Comment:** A member inquired if Bryant White is a neutral voice given his supportive position of trapping and noted his Best Management Practices (BMPs) were in part funded by the fur industry. They also shared that since Bryant is not a veterinarian, he may not be a neutral voice to discuss trauma animals experience from trapping.
 - **Response:** Bryant is not a veterinarian. Bryant develops BMPs for the trapping industry, and the initial hope was to have someone speak on BMPs in addition to a presentation given by a veterinarian.
- **Question:** The question is framed as the physical and physiological effects of trapping, but what would a presenter speak on regarding whether animals feel pain in a trap, and how could one ethically study this?
 - **Answer:** The intent was to inquire a vet researcher on whether the research exists, or if other information is available to further inform the work group members as they develop recommendations.
- **Comment:** A workgroup member requested a veterinarian presenter to discuss mammals' response to pain. They noted that there is a significant body of research on how mammals respond to pain, although there may not be specific research as it pertains to trapping.
- **Question:** A work group member expressed surprise the group needs to provide proof that the deprivation of basic needs for survival (food, water, shelter, protection from predators) for any period is problematic for the animals. They noted for any ODFW permitting process, all provisions require providing basic needs to an animal. They added that whether there is an exception from these provisions for trapping because it's not practical to do daily is a reasonable question for the work group to consider. ODFW requires facilities and people with custody of wild animals to provide basic needs and would pull a facility's permit if these requirements were not met. The work group member suggested the group should focus instead on questions that seek to answer how to minimize the risk to harming animals to the greatest practicability to the trapper.
 - **Answer:** Jamie replied that the group should consider how they want to spend their time. From the last meeting, it was requested that the group consider research that

shows from a scientific basis the trauma an animal experiences the longer it is in a trap. She suggested that the group may want to consider distinguishing the requirements of live trapping for predator control from furbearer trapping and to consider the responsibilities of a trapper when a non-target animal is captured/injured or if an animal is not killed immediately in a trap designed to kill.

- **Comment:** Another work group member shared there is ample evidence from published literature that suggests trapping animals induces trauma of the animal and the length of time in a trap impacts the level of suffering on the trapped animal. The member noted they would share with the group some studies they pulled together on the topic.
- **Comment:** A work group member provided an example of trapping an animal to highlight the point that by trapping a certain species, one may promote a better environment for the larger population of the species.
- **Comment:** In response to comment made that animals suffer if deprived from basic needs, a work group member noted it's prudent the group does not assume that leaving animals in a trap longer makes them potentially less fit to survive after being released. The work group member wants to learn from the experts on the topic.
 - **Response:** A work group member shared disagreement. From the perspective of a wildlife rehabilitator, it is unethical to deprive an animal of basic needs for an extended period if there is potential to avoid that situation if an animal is in custody. Whether an animal can survive post-release is another issue, but whether the animal is suffering while being held is not something to be proved and the work group should not spend time on this.

Jamie summarized what she has heard some work group members share that it would be helpful to hear from a veterinarian on existing research while others shared a presentation is not necessary. She clarified the presentation from Bryant is focused on BMPs. Jamie asked the group whether they would like to hear from a veterinarian on the physical and physiological effects of trapping on an animal.

- **Comment:** Regarding the BMP studies, a work group member shared it would be helpful to understand how the study observed/evaluated animal injuries from traps and how they rated injuries on a scoring system. The work group member shared there is valid concern to try and minimize the harm and impact to animals, and part of the work group's goal is to decrease the amount of time an animal is spent in a trap. When looking at trap check intervals, the group is looking at the worst-case scenario (maximum time an animal spends in a trap), however most of the traps are empty and there's a duration a trapper spends checking traps that are empty, before they get to one that has an animal captured.
- **Question:** It was asked if there is a formula-like approach that the industry uses that accounts for the percentage of time traps will be empty that helps the industry set trap check times.
 - **Answer:** The work group member responded that the trapper wants to capture an animal as quickly and efficiently as possible. Unnecessary trapping for longer periods is not productive. Trappers want to maximize productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. They added that experienced trappers can anticipate which sets would produce quicker than others and quickly adapt.
- **Comment:** Kevin Blakely, ODFW, noted the opposing views on trapping and trap check intervals. He provided a response to a comment made by a work group member and explained that in

Oregon, trapping is an allowed activity, and the intent of having Bryant present is to look at what determines when trapping is going to occur and how to balance that with animal welfare. It is a different situation to take in an animal into a rehab facility as the level of care differs under various circumstances and permits. The group is trying to address when an animal is in a trap, and that trap varies across the different types, what are the balances for animal welfare that needs to be in place.

- **Comment:** A work group member noted they would like to hear from Bryant but also agree with a point made earlier by a work group member about there being unique standards that rehabbers must meet. They also shared interest in potentially hearing from others who are experienced in taking care of animals, such as someone from the Oregon State University veterinarian group.
- **Question:** A work group member noted regulations apply to a wildlife rehabber under the umbrella of the precautionary principle as the experience of a caged animal's perspective is uncertain. Due to the level of uncertainty, the member inquired why the same standard does not apply to trapping animals.
 - **Answer:** When an animal enters a rehab facility, it will be released as a wild animal. There are different considerations depending on the injury and trauma. Bryant would share information regarding the opportunities to take care of animal welfare concerns or consider injury and trauma of a trapped animal. This is done for wildlife management activities and release could be an option depending on the trap.
- **Question:** If the intention of trapping an animal is for predator control or furbearer benefit, and if a kill or live trap is used, are there exemptions for the care of that animal to allow it to be released into the wild?
 - **Answer:** There is not an exception to animal welfare concern and that's why there are differences in trap check intervals between types of traps on the landscape.
- **Comment:** In response to the above discussion, a work group member clarified they are not suggesting rehabilitation and trapping are the same but rather there are basic standards of care once a wild animal is in custody. There is an exception for trapping due to practicability issues. The member clarified they are objecting that the group must prove that by extending a period of time an animal is in a trap the level of suffering increases or is harmful. An animal will suffer without basic resources for multiple days. This point is consistent with the rationale ODFW uses on requiring people with custody of wild animals to provide basic needs for animals. The discussion should focus on how to minimize the risk and harm to an animal as much as possible as opposed to debating whether animals do suffer in traps.
 - **Response:** In response to the point made that suffering is inevitable, a work group member inquired to what extent does suffering occur. They added they would like to quantify the level of suffering and talk to experts not only about this spectrum of suffering but also on the feasibility of a study. Trappers want to minimize suffering of animal but feasibility to trap should be part of this conversation.

Regarding minimizing animal suffering, Jamie asked the group to consider what needs or information would be helpful in building understanding around suffering of trapped. She also asked the group to respond if they all agree that there is a level of suffering inherent in trapping, and if there is a need to quantify the suffering. Specifically, she asked the group if it would be helpful to have Bryant present to the group on BMPs and a veterinarian who can speak to the physiological and physical trauma of a

trapped animal. She requested for the group to consider how this information helps the group determine trap check time intervals and reminded the group's charge is to minimize the length of time an animal spends in a trap through a suite of recommendations which may include best practices, technology, training, etc.

- **Comment:** A work group member responded suffering occurs, but one must look at a population as a whole and not just on an individual basis. By not trapping, one may be causing more damage to the population.
- **Comment:** Another work group member shared at a minimum they would like to hear from the experts on animal welfare and what they believe the path forward is.
- **Question:** A member asked if they could just make a recommendation to the ODFW Commission for a study?
 - **Response:** In response to the question posted, the member asked the group to consider what the study would look like that would show whether a prolonged stay in a trap increases suffering and risk to an animal.
- **Comment:** A member shared that they are in favor of having Bryant come to present as long as the information is an additive factor that's germane to the conversation.
- **Comment:** Another work group member added that if one asks a researcher about whether a study is feasible, they will say yes. They also shared with the group that the research Bryant looked at pulled animals out of traps after 24 hours, and therefore to keep in mind that framework when listening to presentation.
- **Comment:** A member shared agreement that the longer animals go without resources, it is more likely their survivability diminishes. Are we looking at minimizing and reducing all concern and all potential harm? The member asked the group if the group is attempting to eliminate, all, some, or most risk to animals in a trap.
- **Comment:** A member shared that the goal is not to end trapping, and not all risk will be avoided. The question the group must focus on is what is a reasonable trap check time duration that allows trappers to continue to operate but reduces risk to animal suffering as much as possible.
- **Comment:** A member shared the group does not know what an interval means for animal suffering and further advocated for an empirical study.
- **Comment:** A work group member offered that ODFW deals with risk all the time. Regarding trap check times, ODFW is trying to find a trap check interval that is reasonable for both the animals and the trappers. They shared disagreement that further research is needed as the group themselves have a lot of information/experience and can work with that existing knowledge to develop recommendations. The group must start working through recommendations rather than relying on specific information that could take years to receive and may be unethical to leave an animal in a trap and check to see how it is feeling every day. Any department or agency has to deal with a level of risk and no decision will be perfect.

Jamie summarized points of agreement of the prior discussion into the following statements:

- *The group is working to identify how to continue trapping in a way that reduces risk to animals but is also practicable for trappers*
- *The group should do all they can that is reasonable to reduce/minimize animal suffering*
- *The group can't reduce all risks*

- *The group does not know the extent of animal suffering with the current regulations*

Jamie asked the group to confirm if they recognize and agree to the statements shared above. Work group members discussed the following statements and made suggested edits to the language. A few members shared caution on using certain language in the statements.

- **Comment:** A work group member shared that since the group is attempting to construct a value statement this late into the process is indicative that progress has not been made. The member noted there are fundamental differences on the issues and little incentive to find common ground. The member questioned whether the committee can be productive at this point or if ODFW must consider a different approach – to bring forward a proposal, receive public input, and makes decisions off that.
- **Comment:** A member added that the ODFW Commission is going to have a challenging rulemaking ahead of itself regardless, and the hope for this group was to make the process as straightforward as possible by providing a foundation for the Commission to stand on. The member suggested that group develop a handful of proposals that represent different viewpoints and to let the Commission sort it out.
- **Comment:** A member suggested that the process may still be productive if the group looked at each interval and discuss where to go for each interval. Other members shared agreement with this suggestion.

The work group discussed whether they should invite Bryant to the December meeting to present. There were concerns that not enough time would be given for work group members to really discuss the trap check time intervals and proposals. The group decided to consider inviting Bryant to a future meeting following the December meeting so that they can focus on discussing proposals and recommendations.

Confirm next steps, next meeting dates, upcoming meeting topics, and summary

Jamie shared the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, December 7, 2021. She noted that they are considering a longer, in-person meeting in late January depending on how the December meeting goes. She asked the group to prepare to bring ideas for proposed recommendations that they think the work group could support considering the information shared to date. The action items from the meeting are reflected below:

Action Items from 11/16

- All: Complete this Meeting Feedback Survey by **Tuesday, 11/23**
- KW: Develop a meeting summary and send to the work group by **Tuesday, 11/23**
- Jim/Tyler/Lauren/Bob: Please complete this Doodle Poll with your availability for Trap Check Meetings in January and February 2022 **by end of day Friday, 11/19**
- KW: Extend the 12/7 Trap Check Work Group meeting from 2-4:30pm PT
- All: Prepare to bring ideas for proposed recommendations at the next meeting

Jamie thanked the group for their engagement and participation in the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:15 pm PT

Chat log:

01:13:42 Jill Zarnowitz: my internet says its unstable.

01:20:32 Bob Sallinger--Audubon: Again there is a difference between considering what is practicable which seems like an appropriate question for this committee as opposed to debating whether depriving an animal of its basic needs (food, water, shelter, etc.) for an extended period of time increases risk or harm and suffering.

01:52:58 Quinn (Quynh) Read (she/her): Can we have a vote to stipulate on this issue?

02:07:17 Lauren Smith, OFB: Sorry had to step away

02:11:56 Jamie Damon (Kearns & West): We agree and recognize:

Not ending trapping

Animals suffer in traps

Allow trapping to continue to reduce risk to animals and is practicable for trappers

We can't reduce all risks

We should do all we can to reduce/minimize animal suffering

We don't know the extent of animal suffering with our current regulations

02:29:11 Bob Sallinger--Audubon: I dont disageee with what Kyle just said. If we can get to that I think it is worthwhile. However it seems like we have been avoiding that discussion.

02:44:38 Quinn (Quynh) Read (she/her): Sorry for grinning there — my son just made a puppet out of a wooden spoon.