



Animal Protection of New Mexico

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Trapping Fact Page

New Mexico Trapping Regulations

In New Mexico, traps may be encountered year-round. There are no bag limits for animals, trap limits by number, or game unit restrictions. Trapping is allowed on public lands (state, National Forest, or BLM lands) and is restricted by location only in the following ways.

Traps must be placed:

- outside 25 yards of a hiking trail designated by the agency on a map provided for the general public;
- outside 25 yards of the shoulder of any public road annually maintained with public funds;
- outside 50 yards of a livestock/wildlife watering area;
- or outside one-quarter mile of a dwelling, public campground, or rest-, picnic-, or boat-launching area.
- Exceptions: no trapping in Los Alamos Co., Rio Grande Recreation Area in Taos Co., Valle Vidal Unit of the Carson National Forest, McGregor Military Range, or Valles Caldera National Preserve.

State law requires that traps be checked every 24 hours by the trapper or a representative of the trapper. Traps must be marked either with the trapper's name and address, or a trapper ID number (provided free by New Mexico Department of Game and Fish [NMDGF]). There is no requirement for trap locations to be shared with Game Wardens, land management authorities, or the public. Similarly, trappers are not required to post warning signs on public lands so that people can protect their children and companion animals. Coyotes and skunks may be trapped year-round without a license. Trapping other wildlife requires a \$20 license from NMDGF, with half-year seasons in the fall, winter, and spring.

Target Wildlife Legally Trapped: Badger, Beaver, Bobcat, Coyote, Fox (Gray, Kit, Red, Swift), Muskrat, Nutria, Raccoon, Ringtail, Skunk (Spotted, Striped), Weasel

Non-Target (By-Catch) Animals Trapped: Black Bear, Birds, Cats (domestic), Coati, Deer, Dogs (domestic), Javelina, Mountain Lion, Skunk (Hooded, Hog-nosed), Squirrel

While licensed trappers are officially mandated to report their harvested animals to NMDGF, the requirement is loosely enforced. For the 2009-10 trapping season, only 28% of permittees reported their harvest. Non-target (a.k.a. by-catch) animals are not required for reporting.

The Economics of New Mexico Trapping and Wildlife

2004 Trapping, Wildlife, and Tourism Statistics (Source: NMDGF)

TRAPPING

- 767 estimated trappers in New Mexico (95% in-state)
- 7,344 target animals trapped (by-catch unknown)
- **\$671,000** generated by trapping (licenses, equipment, pelt sales)

WILDLIFE VIEWING

- 449,000 New Mexicans active in wildlife viewing
- 387,000 tourists visit New Mexico for wildlife viewing
- **\$384,000,000** generated by wildlife-watching in New Mexico (travel, equipment)

The Trapping Myths

“Trapping helps to control predators.”

Many in the agricultural and ranching industries make this argument. However, research indicates that trapping does very little in reducing livestock losses to wildlife, which, according to the USDA, only account for 4% of total livestock losses in New Mexico. Berger (2006) and Baker et al (2008) demonstrated that coyote eradication programs have little effect on reducing livestock depredations. Further, limits on trapping may actually increase livestock yields. Colorado, after restricting public lands trapping, saw a 62% decrease in sheep depredations between 1994 and 2004.

“If you prohibit trapping on public lands, hunting will be next.”

This argument is a common scare tactic by trappers to enlist hunting permittees, which are far more numerous (less than 2,000 trapping permits are sold every year in New Mexico). However, according to a 2005 survey of New Mexicans by Research & Polling, Inc., 52% of hunters favor prohibiting trapping on public lands, while only 33% oppose it. Hunters and their companion animals, like all of the public, are at risk of injury from unmarked traps in public lands.

“Trapping is a traditional way of life.”

This argument, while not a myth, does not reflect the evolving priorities for public lands in New Mexico. Today, people utilize public lands for a variety of purposes, with outdoor sports and recreational wildlife-viewing now the primary revenue-generators on New Mexico public lands (see *The Economics of New Mexico Trapping and Wildlife*). Wildlife in New Mexico have a right to live without the threat of being trapped and suffering in pain for hours or days between two pieces of crushing steel. Also, people deserve to enjoy our public lands without fear of harm from traps to themselves, their children, or companion animals.