

## **When Wolf Trapping - Here Is Some General Information to Help Minimize Incidental Non-Target Captures**

Non-target species catches is not what any trapper wants in a set. We are being watched by the general public and other agencies. We need to learn the tools and knowledge of how to use them to reduce the catch of non-target species and to hold wolves. These are all tools to help reduce the incidence of, and to help deal with catch of non-target species. **As a responsible trapper you need to exercise as many of these as possible and at all times.**

***Don't set traps where you expect to catch non-target species.***

- Look for tracks in the snow. Whenever a lynx or wolverine track is identified, trap sets should not be made in that vicinity.
  - Wolf, coyote, mountain lion, and lynx tracks show four toes in the snow, but wolverine tracks may show five toes. Wolf and coyote tracks usually show claw marks as well as wolverine. Cat tracks do not typically show claw marks when walking. Stride length (distance between front and back tracks) also vary with these species depending on average body length.
  - Know the non-target species habitat preferences and distributions – and trap other places. To avoid lynx habitat, avoid setting in thick small-size lodgepole pine thickets, and in old-growth forests, avoid thick cover. Consider using tainted bait, which helps attract canids, but tends not to attract lynx. Avoid using parts of rabbits or hares as visual baits.
  - To avoid wolverine habitat, do not set traps at higher elevations. Be aware that in most of western and central Montana, a wolverine will definitely be attracted to a natural kill/carcass.

***Tips at the trap site.***

- Use shock springs to reduce injuries.
- Use swivels to reduce injuries.
- Use the proper drags to not lose any animals in traps.
- Weld all the links and joints on traps and chains.
- Properly rig your traps for wolves and remember the maximum inside jaw spread of 9" for all wolf traps; and the new minimum 10 lb. pan tension regulation in Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. This will help to avoid non-targets captures, particularly lynx.
- Set up diverter logs/sticks to encourage deer/elk to go over or around sets.

- To avoid trapping domestic dogs – set up trap line signs that alert people that traps may be set in some places along a road or trail. Note - do not use the word “Danger” or “Dangerous” on your signs. Use “Caution” or “Be Advised” and then take down signs when you pull your line.
- No wolf trap may be set within 30 feet of an exposed carcass or bait that is visible from above. This is the same baiting restriction found in the furbearer regulations.
- It is our recommendation that wolf traps be set at least 100 feet back from an animal carcass to:
  - Decrease the incidence of non-target catches, particularly raptors.
  - Increase effectiveness of the set (wolves will associate the carcass with the trap if you’re too close and may not return to it).
  - Placing or dumping an animal carcass out on public land is illegal.

***Check traps at least once every 48 hours.***

- Wolf traps are required to be visually checked at least once every 48-hours. The trap check rule is 48-hours. That is a regulation, not a guideline. Wolves are the highest profile species you will likely ever trap, so use good judgment on how often you check your traps. Even 24-hours is not too often! Respecting the animal and animal welfare, a trap check minimizes the length of time a wolf could remain in the trap. *Don’t push the 48-hour regulation!*

***Always be prepared to handle a lynx, wolverine, mountain lion, bear, etc when wolf trapping.***

- We recommend you always carry a catchpole to safely release non-target species. Approach any trapped animal slowly to avoid their excessive movement. The animal may allow the catchpole loop to be placed over its head, but it can be expected to react when the loop is tightened. Tighten the catchpole loop only sufficiently to restrain the non-target species without cutting off its air supply. It is important to keep the head of the animal pinned to the ground so that the front end of the body is restrained.
- With lynx, once the head is down, quickly place a foot with light pressure only, on the hindquarters to restrain the rear legs. A heavy canvas is also useful to protect the trapper from claws. Once the lynx is immobilized, the canvas can be placed over the prone animal to quiet it as the trap is removed quickly. Then the catchpole loop should be relaxed and removed to allow the lynx freedom to escape. If a catchpole is not available, an alternative method to release lynx is to cut a strong forked stick to allow the pinning of the animal’s neck and shoulder to the ground while the trap is removed. Wearing thick gloves to release trapped animals is always wise. Never attempt to render a trapped animal unconscious with a blow to the nose or head or by any other means. Life threatening injury to the animal may result.

***Report any non-target catches that cannot be legally possessed.***

- If an incidental catch happens and you cannot release the animal or otherwise need help releasing a non-target species, FWP wants to help you with the release of any non-targets unharmed. Please contact FWP regional offices during business hours. After hours or on weekends contact local wildlife biologists, game wardens, or wolf specialists. Those phone numbers are available at FWP regional offices. It is a good idea to establish FWP contacts prior to wolf trapping!
- Incidental captures of non-target wildlife such as protected birds or mammals, that cannot be legally possessed and that are uninjured, shall be released immediately on site and immediately reported to an FWP regional office. Trappers that incidentally capture protected animals that cannot be legally possessed and that cannot be released uninjured, must immediately notify a designated FWP employee or an FWP regional office, to determine disposition and/or collection of the animal.
- To improve the understanding of accidental domestic dog captures in traps, trappers must report such captures, excluding a trapper's dog, to an FWP regional office within 24 hours of identifying the capture.