



Trapping Position of FACE

1. Introduction

This paper reviews the issue of trapping within the European Union (EU). It further presents the FACE policy regarding this issue. In this context, traps are defined as mechanical capturing devices, designed for killing or restraining wild animals. This definition does not include snares. Trapping methods are defined as ways these traps are used to capture wild animals.

2. Trapping in the EU today.

In most EU Member States, the right to hunt also includes the right to trap certain mammal species which are classified as either “game” or “pests”, while in other Member States it is, partly or completely, a separate activity. Since many of these mammal species are predominantly nocturnal, their populations are difficult to regulate or to harvest using firearms, and therefore trapping is often the most appropriate method.

Trapping is a legitimate means for the sustainable management of wildlife populations:

- in the interest of public health and safety (e.g. Muskrat);
- for the protection of public and private property (e.g. Badger);
- for the conservation of breeding birds and other indigenous species (e.g. Raccoon dog);
- for harvesting mammal species for their fur, skin or meat (e.g. Pine Marten or Beaver).

In many cases, particular animal species are trapped for a combination of the reasons mentioned above.

In the EU, trapping is generally subject to specific legal provisions and rules. These can include the types of trap, the conditions under which these may be used, methods required to avoid capture of non-target species (selectivity), as well as the elimination of avoidable suffering (regular inspections). Several Member States require that trappers must have taken and passed mandatory training courses in hunting and/or trapping. In addition, trappers are often required to obtain a valid trapping and/or hunting license along with landowner permission where they wish to trap.

An overview of Member State regulations in the EU15 was undertaken in 1999-2000 by FACE for D.G. ENV. On the basis of this survey, FACE estimates today that there are several hundred thousand trappers within the territory of the current EU.

3. Internationally agreed trapping standards.

FACE is in favour of international standards for trapping within the EU.

Following the adoption in 1991 by the Council of Ministers of the “Leghold Trap” Regulation 3254/91, work was undertaken by the *International Organization for Standardization ISO* through its *Technical Committee TC 191* (where FACE had observer status) to agree acceptable trapping standards from a point of view of animal welfare. Although good progress was made, no international agreement was concluded on humane trapping standards due to obstruction and lobbying by certain countries and NGOs.

The excellent work of ISO-TC 191 resulted nevertheless in 1999 in an agreement on *Methods for testing restraining traps, respectively for killing-trap systems used on land and underwater*.

In the meantime, however, an *Agreement on International Humane Trapping Standards (AIHTS)* was negotiated between the EU, Canada, Russia and the US and concluded successfully in 1998. The EU and its Member States have therefore an international obligation to comply with the standards set by AIHTS.

Do we need a legal instrument at the EU-level to regulate these standards? Not necessarily as compliance might be reached through national implementation in each of the 25 Member States, and the Commission could adopt a *Recommendation* along those lines. It chose, however, to use a *Proposal for a Directive COM(2004) 532 final* to implement AIHTS standards for certain mammal species.

4. Which EU policy on trapping?

It is important for the EU and Member States to recognise that trapping is a legitimate and indispensable activity for regulating wildlife populations. Without trapping, overpopulation of certain “pest” and other species can occur, with serious potential consequences for human health, private property, and/or ecosystems.

Moreover, trapping is a legitimate activity for harvesting wildlife resources, and can and should therefore – just as is the case for other hunting methods – be performed by people with the necessary competence.

FACE is fully aware of the fact that all persons acting as trappers need to be fully qualified and that they have in particular an obligation to ensure that their trapping methods will reduce the risk for animal suffering to an absolute minimum. This same precept applies equally to any activity involving the harvest or lethal control of animal species.

Legal and administrative provisions regulating trapping should:

- 1) be based upon the best available knowledge regarding efficient trap types and methodology that minimize animal suffering,
and where knowledge is not sufficient,
- 2) encourage research which addresses practical solutions for meeting standardised criteria regarding animal suffering and practical usage,
and
- 3) not result in unjustified restrictions of this activity.

5. Conclusion.

Trapping is a widespread and legitimate activity in the EU and it is important that legislation at either the EU or Member State level does not impose impractical and/or unreasonable restrictions.

FACE is very much in favour of a European certification system for trap types based upon international standards within the framework of the AIHTS. Such a system should allow for the possibility of individuals to build and use traps that conform to stringent guidelines for their construction and use. To this end, FACE strongly advocates the creation of a platform of competence for an efficient international cooperation in the certification of trap types and offers its expertise in this field.

(Adopted by the FACE Board
on 03.09.2005)