

## **Mexican Wolf Recovery Program Standard Operating Procedure**

**Title:** Trap Preparation and Use

**Number:** 14.1

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**Purpose:** This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides guidelines for preparing and maintaining foot-hold traps to capture Mexican wolves. This SOP represents, in part, the “Service Approved Management Plan” referenced in the 2022 Revised Experimental Population Rule (2022 10(j) Rule, 50 CFR 17.84(k)).

**Exceptions:** None. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator must approve any exceptions to this SOP.

**Background:** Trapping is a necessary management action that enhances the Mexican wolf recovery program’s (Program) monitoring/management capabilities and addresses problem animals or wolves that have localized outside the Mexican Wolf Experimental Population Area (MWEPA). To increase trapping success, reduce capture related injury, and minimize occurrence of non-target captures, foot-hold traps must be used in accordance with approved procedures and maintained in proper working order. In addition, proper maintenance and care of traps will inevitably increase the life span and utility of the traps.

**Procedures:** Captures shall be accomplished in a manner that minimizes risk of injury to the wolf, ensures safety of personnel and maximizes likelihood of successful, expeditious captures.

### **Trap Selection:**

1. The following guidelines are based on the best management practice for wolves (<https://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/furbearer-management>) with adjustments for Mexican wolves:
  - a. Outside jaw spread should be  $\leq 7$ ”.
  - b. Traps must have either a padded jaw, laminated jaw or wide cast jaw and be offset (note: the offset may be filled by a padded jaw).
  - c. Use heavy chain (at least 3/16”).
  - d. Weld all connections shut including J-hooks, S-hooks, lap links, cold shuts, etc.
  - e. If staking traps, double stake (whether using rebar or earth anchors) and use reinforced double-stake brackets with rebar.
  - f. Staking should occur  $\sim 42$ ” from baseplate.
  - g. A backup drag system should be used when staking traps.
  - h. If using drags, use a minimum of 8’ of chain. Use large drags (coyote sized drags are inadequate).
  - i. Chain should be attached to the baseplate.
  - j. A stop shock spring can be attached approximately 26” from baseplate (chain loops around in-line spring in case spring fails).
  - k. Many traps meet the specifications above and may be used. The following is a list of some of those traps: McBride #7 and/or #4 “EZ” Grip traps; K.O. K-9 X-

Treme Coyote Trap with #3 springs, offset jaws and lamination; Victor #4 longspring, Victor #3 Coil Springs; JC Conner Coyote Jake Trap; MB550 or MB650.

#### Trap Maintenance and Use:

1. All traps must be labeled (e.g., Property of U.S. Government, Property of USDA, Property of AZGFD, Property of NMDGF, or Property of White Mountain Apache Tribe, as appropriate), with an attached tag or stamp on the trap.
2. All traps and trapping devices will be set to minimize the chances of capturing nontarget species. Nontarget animals captured will be released alive, or disposed of in accordance with any applicable federal, state, or tribal permits.
3. Capture devices used in restraining sets will incorporate an appropriate pan-tension devices, to prevent or reduce capture of nontarget animals, unless such use would preclude capture of the intended target animal(s). Pan tension  $\geq$  8 pounds is recommended for adult Mexican wolves, but slightly less during fall pup trapping ( $\geq$  6 pounds).
4. Captured Mexican wolves intended for release, relocation, or captivity will be handled and transported appropriately to achieve Program objectives.
5. The disposition (translocation, release on site, or removal) of the captured animal is at the discretion of the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. Prior to placing traps on private land, the lead trapper should obtain:
  - a. Permission, in writing if possible, to access the land, and
  - b. Understanding, in writing if possible, that the disposition of animals caught in traps will be at the discretion of the Program.
6. Appropriate warning signs will be posted on main entrances or commonly used access points to areas where foot-hold traps are in use. Signs will be checked routinely to ensure they are present, obvious, and readable. Signs must be removed when equipment is no longer in use.
7. Foot-hold traps should not be set closer than 30 feet to any exposed animal carcass, or part thereof, having meat or viscera attached that might attract nontarget animals. If an animal carcass could be dragged or moved by scavengers to within 30 feet of set foot-hold traps, the carcass should be secured to restrict movement.
8. Set traps such that captured animals will not be conspicuous to the public.
9. Use trap monitor devices in conjunction with traps as appropriate (e.g., cold or hot temperatures where multiple checks are required, trapping near food caches where captured animals may be vulnerable to other predators, etc). Motion activated cameras that transfer pictures via cell or satellite service (remote picture delivery) may be utilized in place of trap monitoring devices if personnel can respond in a reasonable time frame based on the temperatures. The determination on use of trap monitor devices or motion activated cameras will be made by the lead trapper based on the totality of circumstances.
10. Physically check traps at least once each 24 hours. Motion activated cameras with remote picture delivery can fulfill this requirement.
11. If weather might harm target animals in traps, cease trapping or check the traps and/or trap monitors every 2 hours during harmful temperature periods (or more frequently as needed), until conditions improve or until they deteriorate to the point that traps and trap monitors must be removed. Motion activated cameras with remote picture delivery can fulfill this requirement.

12. Employees whose duties involve wolf capture must be trained on relevant issues and techniques by their respective agencies.

**Approvals:** The Interagency Field Team developed this SOP and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator approved on December 19, 2022.

**References:** None