

## Secretary's Animal Care and Ethics Committee

### Wildlife Trapping Policy Version 3

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### Background

The Secretary's Animal Care and Ethics Committee (Secretary's ACEC) has established a policy for the use of traps to capture wildlife. This policy specifies the trapping procedures the committee considers necessary to ensure that the welfare of trapped animals has been adequately safeguarded, and should be read in conjunction with the [Animal Research Review Panel's 'Animal Care Guidelines for Wildlife Surveys'](#).

The purpose of the policy is to assist applicants for animal research authorities by specifying the committee's minimum requirements for trapping. However, the committee also recognises that, occasionally, the successful carriage of a research project may be difficult or impossible under these conditions. For example, researchers may wish to increase the number of consecutive nights of trapping because the target species has a very low capture rate, or during physiological studies on wild animals where frequent tissue sampling is necessary.

Accordingly, the committee will consider applications to vary the conditions below. The only criterion for relaxing the conditions is that the welfare of individuals of the target species, and non-target species, will not be compromised by the variation. Applicants wishing to relax the conditions must then demonstrate to the committee that the proposed change will not increase the risk of harm to any individual caught during the trapping program.

Conversely, the committee may impose more stringent conditions in circumstances when it considers them necessary to protect the welfare of animals.

### General Recommendations

- Wherever possible, avoid trapping at times of the year when animals may be susceptible to greater stress such as during breeding seasons or droughts.
- Select an appropriate trapping method, imposing the least impact on the animals.
- Ensure that all traps are serviced, clean and in good working order.

- Do not trap during periods of inclement weather.
- Limit the number of traps set per field worker to that which can be cleared within two hours.
- Traps should be located to limit exposure of animals to adverse weather conditions to avoid hyper- and hypothermia.
- Avoid placing traps in areas of high ant activity.
- Mark traps to ensure that all traps are located and checked during a trapping period and removed at the end.
- Release native animals as soon as possible in the area they were caught.
- Trapping must cease after any night when there has been an unusually high mortality of animals and steps taken to determine the cause of mortality. This information must be provided to the Secretary's ACEC as soon as practicable.

## Recommendations for specific trap types

### 1. Cage Traps

Note: By 'cage traps', the policy refers both to traps composed of sheet metal (commonly known as 'Elliott' or 'box' traps) and traps of wire mesh (commonly known as 'cage' trap').

- The number of cage traps that can be set each night is limited to the number that can be cleared within two hours of sunrise to a maximum of 100 traps per investigator in the field.
- Unless justified otherwise to the Secretary's ACEC, trapping periods using these traps must not exceed four consecutive nights at any one site with a minimum of three nights between trapping periods.
- Place traps in the shade of vegetation in summer. Traps are to be closed during the daytime in periods of high temperatures. For example, in inland New South Wales, daily closing of traps may be the norm during summer months.
- Trapping is to cease during periods of extreme weather.
- Elliott traps should be provided with bedding of either dry leaves or a non-absorbent fibre (e.g. Dupont Hollofill). Cotton wool must not be used as it absorbs water and can contribute to hypothermia.
- If there is any risk of inclement weather, Elliott traps should be covered with plastic or canvas to prevent rain entering the trap. Traps of wire mesh construction should be covered with either opaque plastic or hessian except when trapping in high temperatures when they should be covered with shade cloth.

### 2. Pipe Traps

- Bedding such as dry leaf litter or non-absorbent fibre should be placed in the capture chamber of the trap.
- Traps must be cleared within two hours of sunrise.
- If cleared after sunrise, trapped gliders must be held in a secure, dark, quiet and warm place until the next evening.

### 3. Pitfall Traps

- Dry leaf litter, non-absorbent fibre, soil or 35mm PVC or other tubing should be placed in the bottom of the trap for protection of captured animals.
- To minimise the possibility of drowning if the trap is flooded, a 2-3 cm thick Styrofoam float, flat piece of wood, a piece of bark or a small stick should be placed in the base of the trap.
- Use suspended lids to reduce predation and close lids during adverse weather conditions.
- Traps must be checked at least twice daily during summer.
- Use insecticides with caution to prevent ant attacks. The trap-line must be closed down if ants are present in numbers.

### 4. Funnel Traps

- Traps must be checked at least twice daily during summer. Place under vegetation or erect a shade cloth cover over the traps in very hot weather.
- Use insecticides with caution to prevent ant attacks. The trap-line must be closed down if ants are present in numbers.

### 5. Harp Traps

- Harp traps must not be used where large numbers of bats may be caught (eg entrances to roost sites).
- Traps must be cleared within two hours of dusk and early in the morning before traps are exposed to direct sunlight.
- Traps must be furled during the day.
- If traps are cleared after sunrise, bats must be held during the day, separately by species, in suspended cloth bags in a secure, dark, quiet and warm place, unless placed in a bat box separately approved by the Secretary's ACEC.

### 6. Mist Nets

- Mist nets may only be used by trained and competent personnel.
- Mist nets must not be used where large numbers of bats may be caught (eg entrances to roost sites).
- When the target species are bats, the net must be attended at all times. When the target species are birds, nets must be checked at least every 30 minutes. Captured bats and birds must be removed immediately.
- If there is difficulty in untangling the animal, the net must be cut away to prevent undue stress.
- When the target species are bats, nets must be furled or removed when not attended and during the day.

## Lactating Animals

- Where practicable, trapping is to be conducted outside of breeding seasons.
- Lactating animals and those with pouch young should be released into suitable habitat as a matter of priority.

- If a macropod 'throws' its young, the baby should be replaced in the pouch and the pouch taped shut with a weakly adhesive cloth tape.
- Small lactating marsupials should be placed in an unfastened bag with their young and allowed to escape at their leisure.
- If a lactating bat is caught, it should be marked prior to release. On subsequent nights of trapping, harp traps must be checked within four hours of dusk, lactating bats released as a matter of priority and the trap closed for the remainder of the night. The aim is to prevent having to keep lactating bats during the day when they would usually be nursing their young. If a lactating bat is caught during the first day's morning check that is unavoidable. However, during subsequent nights, traps should be checked more frequently and importantly the traps should be closed before dawn, to avoid retaining lactating bats and starvation of young.

## Emergency Procedures

- Emergency procedures must include contingency arrangements to ensure the welfare of animals in the event that illness or injury to investigators during trapping periods prevents them from servicing traps
- Servicing the traps will require that the number and location of all traps is documented so that they can be located by a third party.
- These maps should be prepared immediately after setting the traps. When there is more than one investigator, each should have access to all the trapping maps to allow them to service any trap line should it become necessary. In the case of a single investigator, copies of the maps should be left with a responsible person with clear instructions on the actions that person is required to take to ensure the traps are serviced if the investigator becomes incapacitated.

## Revision history

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
3	November 2018	Updated on three year basis	Secretary's ACEC
3	Updated March 2025	Removed maximum 4 consecutive nights trapping from general recommendation.  Added explanation relating to lactating bats	Secretary's ACEC

## Contact

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