

## **ONTARIO MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **PROTOCOL FOR THE LIVE-TRAPPING OF BLACK BEARS**

#### **ANIMAL CARE CONSIDERATIONS:**

Trapped bears are susceptible to hyperthermia and to a lesser extent hypothermia. Their tolerance to extremes of temperature is affected by the way in which they react as individuals to being trapped and confined. Many suffer from physiological effects of fear, stress and intense muscular exertion within the first few minutes of being trapped.

#### **Suggested Procedure:**

- A trap with a flow-through ventilation system is preferable during hot weather. Use mesh small enough that bears cannot hook their teeth or claws through the holes. Darting holes should have smooth edges.
- Use traps with a closed in top and sides to protect the animal from the elements and reduce its exposure to dust on gravel roads.
- Set traps in the shade wherever possible, especially on hot summer days.
- Set the trap close to cover as this gives better capture success and enables the trap to be set in the shade.
- Ensure trap location is away from disturbances that could increase a trapped animal's anxiety levels.
- Traps should be set in late afternoon and may be left operable overnight. Close traps during the heat of the day. Black bears are generally active from about an hour before sunrise to an hour after sunset, but may switch to being nocturnal in built-up or residential areas, or other areas such as campgrounds where there is human activity.
- Check traps prior to mid morning. In no event, leave an animal in a trap through the day. Even during periods of relatively low ambient temperatures, a trapped bear is susceptible to hyperthermia because of its thick coat and inability to move and dissipate heat through its extremities, and because it has no access to water.
- In the event an animal displays the clinical signs of hyperthermia such as rapid, shallow, open-mouthed breathing, move the animal to the shade or provide shade by covering the trap with a tarpaulin. If possible, spray the animal with water and supply drinking water.
- Transport and relocate the animal as quickly as possible after it enters the trap.
- When transporting a bear to the relocation site, drive there as directly as possibly, maintaining a constant speed. If the release site is more than an hour away, it is a good idea to stop to let the animal void or defecate as they are often unable to accomplish this while the trap is in motion.
- Bears should be released close to a water source whenever possible as they will likely be unfamiliar with the area.
- When releasing the bear, place the trap close to cover, and ensure the released bear has a clear view of cover when the door to the trap is opened.

#### **SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:**

In addition to the safety and well being of the animal, trappers must consider their own safety and that of their clients, curious people and domestic pets. It must be remembered that the trap is a potential food source for the target animal, and that other bears may be attracted to the trap. People should avoid the area of the trap to reduce the chance of an encounter with a bear. Domestic animals or other non-target species may view the trap as a food source and get captured by the trap. Curious people, particularly children, may advertently spring the trap and get injured in the process.

A potential hazard exists for the trapper if care is not taken to stay a safe distance away from any openings in the trap. The trapper must ensure that the door is firmly shut and locked prior to handling the trap and relocating the animal. When releasing an animal, the trapper must ensure it can retreat to a safe place.

**Suggested Procedure:**

- Provide instructions to clients concerning unsafe activity around the bear trap (e.g., keep children and pets away).
- Notify or have client notify their neighbours that a bear trap has been set.
- Clearly mark the trap with a danger sign.
- Restrict public access to the area of the trap.
- Obtain the assistance of the client to watch for activity around the set trap.
- Use a trap door design mechanism that will not maim or injure.
- Monitor the trap regularly.
- Close and lock the trap and remove the bait during periods when the trap cannot be checked for a prolonged period.
- The trap should have a door release mechanism that allows the operator to open the door from a safe vantage point to release the bear.
- Ensure the released bear has a clear view of cover when the door to the trap is open during release.
- Be careful. Be alert!