***Suggested interim topic***

Wyoming Statute 23-2-203 (d) regulation, decreasing required time for checking traps

***Name of Joint Interim Committee***

Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Culture Resources Committee

***Name of Committee Member Requesting the Topic***

To Be Announced

***Please summarize your recommended priorities for the Committee to consider.***

W.Y. Stat 23-2-203 (d) requires trappers to check their traps at least every 72-hours and snares at least every 13 days. Current regulations were adopted before technology making trap checks less onerous for trappers became available. Today, Wyoming can reduce animal suffering and increase the survival rate for unintended species by adopting regulations consistent with 36 other states and best practice recommendations from Wyoming Game and Fish.

* **Scientific studies** show that reducing trap-check regulations to 24-hour reduces the number and severity of injuries to captured animals. Restraint time in excess of 24 hours is associated with struggling, injury, dehydration, starvation, and exposure to the elements. Current regulations needlessly expose wildlife, including threatened, endangered, protected animals (black-footed ferret, fisher, lynx, otter, pika or wolverine), game animals (elk and mule deer), trophy game animals (mountain lions - 8 reported killed between 6.2017 and 1.2019), small and non-game animals, and dogs and cats, suffering, and death. These animals have a better chance of surviving with 24-hour trap checks.

Devices such as remote trap monitors have been developed in order to reduce the amount of time an animal spends in the trap or snare, thus minimizing injury to animals that are captured. Darrow and Shivik 2008 (citing Larkin et al. 2003, O‘Neill et al. 2007).

Further, daily trap inspections are a widely recommended and adopted standard. In 1999, Andelt et al. noted that Boggess and Henderson (1981) and the Fur Institute of Canada (1989) recommended that all live-holding devices set on land should be checked daily. As of 2007, the U.S. Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies found that daily or 24 hour trap check is required for traps set on land in most states. (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group, Summary of Trapping Regulations for Fur Harvesting in the United States (2007), p. 17)

Indeed, daily (i.e., once each 24 hour period) inspection appears to be a minimum accepted world-wide standard to reduce trapping injury. (Review of Welfare Outcomes in Victoria, p. 76.) The longer an animal remains in a snare or trap, the higher the likelihood of injury or death. As one report on the impacts of snaring explains: The extent of injuries and distress experienced by a trapped animal is strongly influenced by the length of time it is restrained in the trap. A long restraint time is a factor in the development of dehydration (Powell 2005, Marks 2010), starvation, effects of exposure (e.g., hypothermia), and capture myopathy. Females may be prevented from returning to their offspring, who will subsequently die of starvation. Likewise, increased periods of confinement in leg-hold traps are associated with correspondingly larger exertion, struggling, and injury. Thus, using daily or almost daily (1.4 days), early-morning checks have reduced injuries to trapped animals. Andelt et al. 1999 (citing Novak 1987, Saunders et al. 1988, Proulx et al.)
* **Precedents for 24-hour trap checks** can be found throughout the U.S. Thirty-six states have adopted 24-hour or daily trap inspection requirements. Western states, including Washington, California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Colorado, have these laws.
* **Consistency with WYGF recommended best practice**: Wyoming Game and Fish Department recommends 24-hour trap checks on their online hunting education course.
* **Wildlife professionals support daily trap inspections**. The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) Trapper Education Manual urges trappers to "make a commitment to check your traps at least once every day" to reduce suffering, more quickly release non-target animals, and improve success (by, for example, reducing the chance of predation on an animal caught in a trap). Likewise, in its online trapping course, AFWA treats daily trap checks as a cornerstone of ethical trapping practice and consistently instructs trappers to perform them. The National Trappers Association recognizes the significance of AFWA as one of the “largest international organizations representing professional wildlife conservation employees and governmental wildlife agencies.”

**Contrary Discussion Points**: Some trappers contend that a 24-hour trap check requirement would unfairly limit trapper opportunity.

* **Fair Access to Commerce:** According to a 2015 Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies survey, 22% of Wyoming trappers responded that trapping as a source of income was only "somewhat important," and 64% answered that it was "not important at all." These results indicate that trapping in Wyoming is predominantly a recreation, not a livelihood.
* **Precedence**: Other Wyoming laws and regulations strike a balance between recreational opportunities and wildlife protection and conservation.
* **Proposed Solution: Camera traps have been used in the field for over a century**. Equipment available today, including used equipment, is readily available and convenient. Field challenges encountered in the use of camera traps include theft and damage to equipment from wildlife and environmental factors. "A snapshot of camera traps reveals user frustrations and hopes” by Sue Palminteri (1965-2019) on 14 February 2019 describes field challenges and the methods being used to overcome them. While these challenges are significant to researchers who need sophisticated photographs and videos, the use of cameras by trappers conducting a visual check of their equipment are well-served.

***What do you believe should be the goal or result of the Committee's consideration of the topic?***

* **Demonstrated support of legislation that protects public safety, wildlife, and family pets.** To minimize stress, struggle, exertion, injury, and unnecessary mortality to target and non-target species, we respectfully request that our Legislative leaders adopt a draft bill requiring all restraining traps and snares set for all species in Wyoming be visually inspected at least once each day or every 24 hours to reduce and prevent unintentional injury and death to incidentally captured wildlife—particularly those species designated as “protected animals”.
* **To implement a 24-hour trap and snare inspection requirement, we urge the Committee to propose adopting the following new rule:** *Chapter 4: Title 23, Section 9. Check Period for Leg-hold Traps, Live Traps, Snares, and Quick-Kill Body-Grip Traps. a) All leg-hold traps, live traps, snares, and quick-kill traps shall be checked by the owner a minimum of once during each 24-hour period.*

***How much time do you estimate the Committee will need to devote to this topic?***

All resources needed for discussion can be provided, and the time estimated to discuss this issue is no more than 2 hours of the Committee's time.

***What resources do you recommend the committee review before considering the topic?***

1. Scientific studies supporting 24-hour checks
Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Furbearer Conservation Technical Work Group, Summary of Trapping Regulations for Fur Harvesting in the United States (2007), p. 17.

1999, Andelt et al. noted that Boggess and Henderson (1981) and the Fur Institute of Canada (1989)

Review of Welfare Outcomes in Victoria, p. 76.

Andelt et al. 1999 (citing Novak 1987, Saunders et al. 1988, Proulx et al.)
2. <https://wyominguntrapped.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Trapper-letter-supporting-24-hour-trap-checks.docx>
3. [A snapshot of camera traps reveals user frustrations and hopes by Sue Palminteri (1965-2019) on 14 February 2019](https://news.mongabay.com/2019/02/a-snapshot-of-camera-traps-reveals-user-frustrations-and-hopes/)
4. Survey of Trap Check Requirements in the United States - 2018
The number of states which have adopted:
	1. 24-hour or daily check requirements for at least some traps: 36
	2. 48-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for at least some traps): 44
	3. 72-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for at least some traps: 47
	4. 24-hour or daily check requirements for all traps: 16
	5. 48-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for all traps: 25
	6. 72-hour (or more frequent) check requirements for all traps: 30
	7. Check requirements for all traps: 33
	8. No general check requirements: 3