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Remote monitoring of live capture traps for vertebrates

Guidelines for good practice

The use of remote monitoring technology to provide inspection of live-capture traps for vertebrates is an emerging practice in New Zealand. These systems can provide cost efficiencies and there is scope for improved animal welfare outcomes through earlier attendance to trapped animals, when compared to manual inspection systems. These guidelines are intended to support the developers and users of remote monitoring systems to adopt good practice and ensure animal welfare outcomes are better (or at least not worse) in comparison to manual inspection.

These guidelines in no way diminish any obligations you have under the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and, more specifically, nothing in these guidelines absolves users of live-capture traps from meeting their obligations under Section 36 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (see Appendix 1, but also check www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1999/0142/latest/contents.html for the most recent version of the Act).

The following is considered good practice for the use of remote monitoring systems for live capture traps in New Zealand¹:

1. Fail-safe design

Electronic trap monitoring systems need to be reliable. They must operate in a way that promptly communicates the fact that an animal has been captured. MPI recommends that your system has a fail-safe to ensure that captured animals do not go unnoticed. MPI recommends that remote monitoring systems should operate in such a way that each trap must confirm it has not been sprung (i.e. that it is assumed sprung unless the system communicates otherwise). If the unsprung confirmation is compromised in any way, the system should communicate that it should be inspected.

2. Testing and record keeping

Trap monitoring systems must be reliable and actively maintained. MPI recommends that remote monitoring systems are regularly tested to make sure they are reliable and that trap owners maintain records of testing to demonstrate compliance with the Act. The frequency of system testing may depend on the system being operated. MPI recommends keeping records of animal catch times and animal clearance times for at least a year.

3. Responsibility for systems

The Animal Welfare Act requires that electronic trap monitoring systems are monitored and maintained. Where traps are being electronically monitored by a company or a

¹ The 2020 revision of these guidelines was carried out in consultation with organisations involved in the use of remote monitoring systems.



group of people, MPI suggests that a nominated individual is identified who is responsible for determining the status of all traps via the system and physically inspecting the traps as required. The system should allow for immediate escalation or delegation if the nominated individual is unable to carry out their duties.

4. Backup capacity

Sufficient capacity for adequately trained people to physically 'check and clear' all traps within the timeframes stipulated in Section 36 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 must be available as a contingency in the event of a complete system failure or in the event that all traps capture animals.

5. Disposing of trapped animals

All trapped animals must be dealt with in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999. The monitoring system must work in such a way to allow you to meet your obligation to remove, care for, or kill the animal within the trap within 24 hours of that animal being caught in the trap. If killing the animal, the Act requires that you do so in a way that ensures the animal does not suffer unnecessary pain or distress.

Other useful resources

The Bionet website (www.bionet.nz) holds a number of useful best practice documents regarding pest control, including guidance on best practice for using many types of traps.



Appendix 1

NB: Please check online at: www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1999/0142/latest/contents.html for the most up-to-date version of the Animal Welfare Act. The text below was saved in September 2020.

36 Obligations relating to traps

- (1) A person who, for the purpose of capturing alive a mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian, sets a trap or causes a trap to be set must—
 - (a) manually inspect that trap, or cause a competent person to manually inspect that trap, within 12 hours after sunrise on each day the trap remains set, beginning on the day immediately after the day on which the trap is set; or
 - (b) manually inspect that trap, or cause a competent person to manually inspect that trap, within 24 hours after the capture of an animal in the trap, but this paragraph applies only if—
 - (i) the person monitors the trap with an electronic monitoring system (such as a system of capture sensors and a wireless communication network) that is maintained by the person and that is reliable; and
 - (ii) the monitoring system operates in such a way that it promptly communicates the fact that an animal has been captured in the trap and enables the person to meet the person's obligations under subsection (2) within that 24-hour period.
- (2) A person who, for the purpose of capturing alive a mammal, bird, reptile, or amphibian, sets a trap or causes a trap to be set must—
 - (a) remove, or cause to be removed, any live animal found in that trap; or
 - (b) attend properly to the care of the animal or, without delay, kill the animal.
- (3) A person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with subsection (1) commits an infringement offence.
- (4) A person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with subsection (2) commits an offence and is liable on conviction,—
 - (a) in the case of an individual, to a fine not exceeding \$5,000; or
 - (b) in the case of a body corporate, to a fine not exceeding \$25,000.