

Proposed trapping changes up for review

By Jim Servi
Contributing Writer

Wausau, Wis. — The DNR's
Furbearer Advisory Committee

met in June to discuss harvest quotas for different species, but also discussed potential rule changes for the trapping season that are designed to keep the department up to date with "best management practices" for trapping — and to better meet the needs of state trappers.

According to John Olson, DNR furbearer specialist, the committee "reviewed and discussed approximately two dozen potential rule proposals and agreed to move forward on a few" of those ideas. The possible changes address the beaver season, cable restraints, trapping hours, break-away limits, and the definition of foot-hold traps.

The five proposed changes will be reviewed by the DNR and Conservation Congress later this summer and fall. From there, if the proposed changes pass review, they'll be sent to the Natural Resources Board. Any proposed changes can't make it onto the spring fish and game hearing agenda without board approval. Any of the five possible

changes that do receive support throughout the process would appear on the April hearings agenda.

- Beaver and other season changes — This recommendation originally was brought forward by the beaver task force to shorten by one month the beaver and other seasons in Zone A and Zone B by one month, meaning both seasons would end March 31, rather than April 30. One exception is that the season would remain open until April 30 on priority trout waters.

"This change should allow for gradual growth in the overall beaver population in zones A and B, while maintaining and possibly

increasing beaver harvest on priority trout waters," Olson said.

The change is being considered because many northern Wisconsin trappers are concerned about low beaver numbers and the incidental catch rate of others by beaver trappers in April.

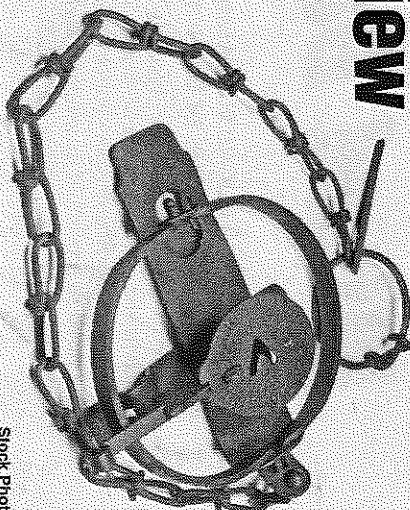
- Foot-cable restraint — The committee has been working with trapping experts and trap manufacturers to develop a pet-safe trapping system after the idea received support during the 2014 spring hearings.

- Eliminate trapping hours — Most other states have no trapping hours and haven't experienced any problems with that sys-

tem. Wisconsin currently only allows trappers to check or set traps between the hours of 4 a.m. and 7 p.m.

- Allow 350-pound "break-aways" — Wisconsin currently has a 285-pound break-away limit, while 350 pounds is the standard used by most other states that allow trapping.

- Update the definition of a foot-hold trap — Polymer-jawed foot-hold traps are now being used in some states, which



Stock Photo

spurred the committee to discuss the possible need to re-define steel foot-hold traps.

The committee will ask the DNR to review the rule book. It may be that no change is needed.