

Bear Trapping Frequently Asked Questions

Fact sheet applies during 2024 bear trapping season



When is the bear trapping season?

The bear trapping season in Maine opens on September 1st and closes on October 31st.

What is the bag limit?

You are allowed to take one bear by trapping. You are also allowed to take one bear by hunting, but you cannot continue to trap for bear after you have already killed or registered one in a trap.

Do I need to take the bear trapping course to trap a bear?

Effective as of January 1, 2022, to purchase a bear trapping permit you have three course options:

Option 1: Must have completed a Maine Trapping Education course (includes all furbearers and bears) dated after 1978 **or** previously held a Maine Bear Trapping permit prior to 2022.

Option 2: Must have completed the **new** Maine [Black Bear Trapping Education course](#) (online or in-person).

Option 3: A person may trap bears under the supervision of and in the presence of a licensed hunting guide who has successfully completed the Maine Black Bear Trapping Education course. **Option 3 permits are only issued from the Augusta office.**

What licenses and permits am I required to purchase to trap a bear?

Effective as of January 1, 2022, to trap a bear you have two license and permit options:

Option 1: Purchase a big game hunting license and a bear trapping permit. OR

Option 2: Purchase a trapping license and a bear trapping permit

How much do hunting and trapping licenses cost?

Resident Big Game Hunting License (16 and older) \$26.00

Nonresident Big Game Hunting License (16 and older) \$115.00

Resident Junior Big Game Hunting License (0-15) \$8.00

Nonresident Junior Big Game Hunting License (0-15) \$36.00

Resident and Nonresident Junior Trapping (10- 15 years) \$10.00

Resident Trapping License (16 and older) \$36.00

Nonresident Trapping License (16 and older) \$318.00

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How much is a bear trapping permit?

The fee for a bear trapping permit is \$10 for residents and \$67 for nonresidents.

Can I purchase my trapping license and bear trapping permit online?

First time trapping licenses (including first time bear trapping permits) must be purchased through the MDIFW office in Augusta (in person or by emailing or mailing a Trapping License Application to the MDIFW Augusta office).

Trapping license renewals, including bear trapping renewal permits, may be purchased online at **mefishwildlife.com**.

Can youths trap black bears?

You must be 10 or older in Maine to trap a black bear.

Do I need landowner permission to set a trap for a black bear?

You must have prior written permission from the landowner upon the land which the trap is set before setting traps:

- Anywhere in an organized town.
- Within 200 yards of any occupied dwelling.
- In an unorganized township, on cultivated or pastureland used for agricultural purposes if someone is living there.

In addition, if you are using bait to entice a bear to your trap, you must obtain oral or written permission from the landowner to place bait on their land, and if you want to place bait within 500 yards of an occupied dwelling you will need written permission from the owner or tenant before placing bait to entice a bear to your trap.

Can I use bait to trap a black bear even after the bait season closes?

Yes, bait can be used to assist trappers in catching a bear if bait isn't placed after October 31st and is cleaned up by November 10th. When placing bait to assist in trapping a bear, you are required to follow the same bait regulations that apply to hunting bears. For a summary of the bait regulations visit <https://www.maine.gov/ifw/hunting-trapping/hunting/laws-rules/bear.html#bait>

How many traps can I set?

You are not allowed to have more than one trap set for a bear at any time.

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How often do I need to check my trap?

All bear traps must be tended at least once per calendar day, and you must go in person to tend to the trap. The use of a cell camera is not sufficient means of tending the trap.

What type of traps can I set in Maine?

Bears may be trapped only with the use of cable traps (foothold cable restraint) or cage-type live traps.

Are there any specifications for cage-type live traps to trap bears in Maine?

Yes, whenever a cage-type live trap is used to trap for black bears, it must be enclosed and heavily constructed to prevent damage from bears, it must have adequate openings to provide ventilation and cooling inside the trap when the door is closed, it must be constructed with no sharp intrusions to injure bears, and it must be large enough for the bear to turn around inside the closed trap.

What cable foot traps are legal to use?

When set according to the parameters described in our law book ([link to deployment and design standards](#)) the following devices are legal in Maine:

- WCS Pro 12, ADAX12, or Wilson
- Aldrich
- Fremont
- Crit-r-Done
- Select a Catch 1000
- Select a Catch – Big Sky Pipe Style Trap
- Maine Bear Snare
- M-15 (if modified to an opening diameter and inside diameter no greater than 6 inches and trigger recessed at least 12 inches below the opening of the device).
- The Next Generation Bear Snare

What cable foot traps are illegal to use?

Belisle

Unmodified M-15

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What type of traps do bear researchers use to capture and mark bears?

Researchers use a variety of cable foot restraints, cage, and culvert style traps to capture bears. In Maine, our bear biologists most often set Aldrich cable foot restraints set along trails and follow the same design standards that are required for bear trappers in Maine.

How were the design and deployment standards determined for cable foot restraints in Maine?

Based on more than 45 years of setting Aldrich cable foot restraints to capture and mark black bears as part of the Department's long-term research and monitoring project, we revised our trapping regulations to require that cable foot restraints: 1) have at least one swivel located between the foot loop and anchor point, 2) that the cable be at least 3/16" in diameter, 3) that the catch circle be no greater than 8 feet and be clear of woody vegetation, debris and man-made material that can cause entanglement, 4) requiring the trap to be securely attached to a fixed anchor point, and 5) the tree that is used as the anchor point be at least 6 inches in diameter and free of limbs for the first 7 feet from the ground.

What happens if I catch a bear that I don't want to harvest?

Bears caught in traps must be killed or released on-site and not moved away from the catch site. A bear caught in a trap may not be used in conjunction with a hunt or to train a dog for bear hunting.

Can I pack out my bear or does it need to be whole when I register the bear?

Prior to registration, a bear may be dismembered for ease of transportation and all edible meat, the head and evidence of sex must be presented for registration. The viscera, hide, lower legs and rib cage, including the ribs, spine and pelvis are not required to be presented for registration but must be disposed of where they are not visible to a person traveling on a public or private way.

Where can I register my bear?

[List of Turkey, Deer, and Bear Registration Stations](#)

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Are hunters required to submit biological data when they register their bear?

Hunters and trappers are required to remove a premolar tooth from the bear they harvest and provide the tooth when they register their bear. Instructions on removing and submitting a tooth are available at registration and [online](#).

Can I get the age of the bear I harvested?

We will notify hunters of the age of the bear they harvested on the Bear Hunting page of the MDIFW [website](#) prior to the start of the next bear hunting season (late August). We cannot provide the age for teeth that we do not receive or for teeth that are damaged.

What are the registration and transportation requirements?

The same transportation & registration requirements that apply to bear hunting apply to bear trapping.

Prior to registration, any harvested bear in transit must be open to view, meaning that the animal is not concealed and can be readily observed in whole or in part from outside of the vehicle or trailer transporting it. Once the bear has been registered, it may be transported by another person.

Prior to presenting a bear for registration, a person may not possess or leave that animal in the field or forest unless they have securely attached a plainly visible tag to the animal with their name, address, and license number on the tag.

A person who kills a bear must:

1. Remain with the animal until it is registered, (with some exceptions – see Time Limits for Registering below).
 - A person may not keep an unregistered bear for more than 18 hours after the animal was harvested. A person may exceed the 18-hour limit under special circumstances, but that person must still notify a game warden within 18 hours.
 - A person on a hunting trip in an unorganized township and staying at a temporary place of lodging may keep an unregistered harvested animal at the temporary place of lodging for no more than 7 days or until that person leaves the woods, whichever comes first.
2. Present the animal for registration in that person's name at the first open registration station for that animal on their route.
3. Leave the registration seal attached until the animal is processed and packaged for consumption.
4. Pay a fee of \$5.00 to register a bear (of which \$2 is retained by the agent and \$1 is dedicated to a Deer Habitat Enhancement Fund).

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Is bear meat safe and good to eat?

Yes, bear meat, when properly cared for, is excellent table fare. For more information on caring for your bear after you harvest it, visit [our bear hunting guide here](#).

[View all of Maine's trapping laws at mefishwildlife.com/trappinglaws](https://mefishwildlife.com/trappinglaws)