

TRAPPER QUESTIONNAIRES: A SURVEY OF USES

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In 1990 I sent a questionnaire to the furbearer biologist in each of the 48 contiguous states and 12 Canadian provinces requesting information about their use of trapper questionnaires (TQ) to gather information on furbearer abundance or population trends and furbearer harvests. Including Alaska, 39 completed or partially completed questionnaires (79.6%) were returned by states and 10 questionnaires (83.3%) were returned by provinces/territories. In the U.S., 24 (61.5%) of the 39 states responding and in Canada 8 of the 10 provinces/territories (80%) responding use some form of a TQ to gather data from trappers.

Generally, reminder letters improve the return rate of TQ's. States sending out 2 or more reminders averaged 81% return (range 80%-85%, n=3). With a single reminder letter, the average return rate dropped to 61% (range 20%-93%, n=9), and with no reminder letters, the average rate dropped to 35% (range 25%-50%, n=4). Canadian jurisdictions reported a wide range of return rates from a high rate of 90% from one province that sends out reminders "sometimes" to another province that reported sending out 1 or more reminders but getting only a 30% return. This wide variance may be a reflection of cultural and economic differences among jurisdictions.

Examples of TQ's (or calendars) were received from 20 states and 8 provinces/territories. Analysis of these forms showed that questions relating to the harvest of furbearers fit into one of the following 12 categories:

*number of animals harvested	*location of harvest
*number of days traps were set	*number of traps set
*trapping effort	*kinds of traps used
*status of populations	*trends in populations
*price received for pelts	*land sets vs water sets
*size of area trapped	
*in-state vs out-of-state sale of pelts	

By asking questions about number of traps used and number of days trapped, many jurisdictions appear to be trying to assess trapper effort. However, I question the adequacy of such information to assess trapper effort.

This survey showed there is no consistent approach in the use of TQ's throughout North America. In the U.S., most states use a TQ to gather data for estimating the harvest while in Alaska and Canada the emphasis is on obtaining data on the trend and status of furbearer populations.

SIXTH NORTHERN FURBEARER CONFERENCE

AGENDA AND ABSTRACTS

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