

Licence to Own and Operate a Train and Trial Area*Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997***Applicant Information Package (2024)****PURPOSE**

To provide information to persons interested in applying in 2024 for a licence to own and operate a new train and trial area.

BACKGROUND

The keeping of wildlife in captivity is regulated under the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997* (FWCA), and Ontario Regulation 668/98 (Wildlife in Captivity). Hunting of wildlife in captivity, which includes tracking wildlife, is generally prohibited under section 41 of the FWCA. In the limited circumstances where it is authorized, it is strictly regulated to mitigate risks related to wildlife sustainability, animal welfare and human-wildlife health. Section 35 of the FWCA prohibits a person from owning or operating a train and trial area except under the authority of a licence and in accordance with the regulations. A “train and trial area” means an area in which wildlife is enclosed for the purpose of teaching dogs hunting skills or testing their hunting skills.

APPLICATION PERIOD

The FWCA provides a one-time opportunity in 2024 for persons interested in owning and operating a new dog train and trial area to apply for a licence. Applications for new train and trial areas may be submitted as of October 1, 2024, until December 29, 2024. After this application period, the ministry cannot accept further applications for new train and trial areas. The new train and trial area does not need to be fully constructed to apply during this application period, but the applicant must provide information regarding the proposed operations of the area. No wildlife may be kept in a train and trial area until a licence has been issued.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Applicants for new train and trial areas will be given 3 years from the time of initial application submission to meet all operating requirements to be eligible for a licence. If a potential train and trial area does not meet all requirements after 3 years, the application will be cancelled, and the applicant will no longer be eligible to be issued a licence.

Applicants are advised to notify adjacent property owners of their proposed activity. Applicants are encouraged to work with adjacent property owners to discuss concerns that may be raised and opportunities to mitigate those concerns where possible.

The application process has 2 stages:

Stage 1 Review: Submission of Application and Initial Ministry Assessment

- Applicants must complete and submit an *Application for a Licence to Own and Operate a New Train and Trial Area (2024)* form and proof of property ownership or written permission to legally occupy the property and conduct the activities requested on the application to dogtraintrial@ontario.ca
- The purpose of the application is for the ministry to collect information regarding the proposed location of the train and trial area and its operations to assess whether it would meet regulatory requirements.
- Applications may be accepted from a single individual or a corporation.
- As part of their application, applicants must also submit a preliminary site map in the form of an aerial photo or equivalent (e.g., satellite image). This map must show the property boundaries, adjacent properties, and the proposed boundaries (fencing) of the area to be used as a train and trial area. The map should include a measure of scale.
 - The ministry provides tools to make topographic maps which may benefit clients: [Topographic maps | ontario.ca](https://topographicmaps.ontario.ca)
- Applicants are responsible for ensuring their proposed train and trial area complies with local municipal zoning and bylaws. Confirmation that there are no conflicts with municipal zoning and bylaws must be attested to as part of the stage 1 application requirements.
- Once all stage 1 application requirements are completed, the ministry will conduct an initial review and consider whether the proposed train and trial area meets regulatory and operating requirements.
 - If the application is consistent with stage 1 requirements, the ministry will inform the applicant that, based on the materials provided, the application can move forward for consideration under

stage 2. A final decision on whether a licence will be issued or not will not be made until the completion of stage 2.

- If the application is not consistent with stage 1 requirements, ministry staff will work with the applicant to discuss how the proposal could be modified to meet regulatory requirements.

- **Stage 2 Review: Site Map and Site Visit**

- Following completion of stage 1, the applicant may proceed to complete any construction work required to develop the site in accordance with the application and operating standards as laid out below.
- Once the train and trial area is constructed, applicants must submit a final site map in the form of an aerial photo or equivalent (e.g., satellite image) showing the property boundary and boundaries (fencing) of the area being used as a train and trial area. The map should include a measure of scale and mark the following:
 - “o” for culverts and dens
 - “*” for feeding stations
 - “w” for watering locations
 - “_” for fences
 - “RE” for acclimatization or rehabilitation enclosures
 - “R” for location of registry
 - “L” for location of log book
- Note: The map should also show adjacent neighbouring properties.
- Once the ministry receives the completed final site map and confirmation that the site is ready, the ministry will conduct a site visit to the facility to confirm it meets operating standards. Site visits for new train and trial area applications should occur within 60 days following receipt of the final site map, or as soon as reasonably practical in consideration of the season and ability to visually inspect the site to confirm requirements
- Where a site visit finds that remedial work is required for the train and trial area to meet operating requirements, the ministry will inform the applicant in writing of the work required.
- Once the ministry confirms that the facility has been constructed consistent with the site map and that regulatory requirements are met, the ministry will proceed with a decision on whether the licence will be issued.
- Should a decision be made to issue a licence, all fees must be paid by the applicant prior to the issuance of a licence.
- Where a licence is issued, it is valid from January 1 to December 31.

FIREARMS

The possession or use of a firearm is not allowed in a train and trial area except for the purpose of humane euthanasia of sick or injured wildlife species specified in the train and trial area licence or for protection of property.

WILDLIFE

A licence to own and operate a dog train and trial area may only authorize the keeping of coyote, red fox, varying (snowshoe) hare and/or cottontail in the train and trial area. Hare or cottontail will not be authorized for the same area as fox or coyote. Coyote and fox may be authorized for the same area. Coyote will not be authorized for areas under 80 hectares (200 acres).

MINIMUM STANDARDS

Licence holders are responsible for keeping all game wildlife in a safe, sanitary and humane manner. Training and trialing areas must meet minimum standards before they will be licensed.

Minimum area size for training

- For varying (snowshoe) hare or cottontail – 4 hectares (10 acres).
- For red fox – 32 hectares (80 acres). Note: smaller areas may be permitted with more restricted conditions for habitat and number of dogs.
- For coyote – 80 hectares (200 acres).

Minimum area size for trialing

- For varying (snowshoe) hare or cottontail – 6 hectares (15 acres).
- For red fox – 40 hectares (100 acres) for basset hounds, beagles or dachshunds pursuing red fox OR 160 hectares (400 acres) for foxhounds, coonhounds, bloodhounds or harriers pursuing red fox.
- For coyote – 160 hectares (400 acres).

Habitat

- The area must simulate the natural habitat of the species kept in the train and trial area, and sufficient vegetation cover must be provided such that it does not permit sight coursing.
- For varying (snowshoe) hare or cottontail – adequate brush piles must be supplied to provide escape cover for hare/cottontail during training/trialing.
- For red fox - at least 1 den or culvert must be supplied for every 4 hectares (1:10 acres). If the area is 32 hectares or less, dens or culverts must be supplied at least 1 for every 2 hectares (1:5 acres).
- For coyote - dens or culverts must be supplied at least 1 for every 16 hectares (1:40 acres).
- Refuge areas (brush piles, culverts and dens) should generally be evenly distributed throughout the property (depending on the terrain). Artificial culverts and dens must be visually inspected by the licence holder regularly to ensure they are in a state of good repair.
- Accessible and adequate clean water and food must be available. Food and water provided shall be nutritious, palatable and of the quantity required, taking into consideration the species type and number in the train and trial area.

Fencing

- The entire perimeter of the licensed area must be fenced.
- Fencing must prevent the game wildlife being kept under the licence from entering or leaving the train and trial area.
- Fencing must be visually inspected by the licence holder regularly to ensure it is in a state of good repair.
- Should wildlife being kept in the area escape, the licence holder must immediately report the escape to the local ministry office. Unless otherwise directed, the licence holder must return the escaped wildlife to captivity or kill it as soon as practicable.

Dog Breeds and Numbers Allowed

- Only the following breeds of scent-trailing hounds are permitted inside a train and trial area:
 - American Foxhound,
 - Basset hound,
 - Beagle,

- Bloodhound,
 - Coonhound,
 - Dachshund,
 - English Foxhound, and
 - Harrier.
- Beagles, basset hounds, or dachshunds pursuing red fox, varying (snowshoe) hare or cottontail – no more than 1 dog for every 0.4 hectares (1 dog per acre), up to a maximum of 50 dogs.
- Foxhounds, coonhounds, bloodhounds, or harriers pursuing red fox or coyote – no more than 1 dog for every 1.2 hectares (1 dog per 3 acres).
- the required area per hound must be doubled for train and trial areas under 32 hectares (80 acres).

Acclimatization Periods

- After wildlife are introduced to the area, they must be given 7 days before dogs are permitted in the area.
- Wildlife may be acclimatized within an enclosure of no less than 30 square meters located inside the train and trial area in which dogs are not allowed. Time spent by the wildlife in this enclosure is not included in the 7- day acclimatization requirement in the train and trial area.

Care of Wildlife

- No alteration of tails of wildlife (e.g., no docking of the tails of red fox or coyote).
- Injured wildlife, dependent on the extent of the injury, must be:
 - treated and released within the area,
 - rehabilitated within an enclosure in which dogs are not allowed, which is not less than 30 square meters and is located within the train and trial area,
 - taken to a veterinarian for treatment at the veterinarian facility, or
 - humanely euthanized.
- Licence holders must report any suspicious wildlife deaths, where the animal is suspected of being infected with a disease, to the local ministry work centre and the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative (CWHC; 1-866-673-4781) to determine if testing of the individual is required. If testing is suggested/required, the authorization holder must submit the carcass for testing to the CWHC.

- Where wildlife may be breeding in the pen, licence holders should consider reducing activity during periods when young may be present.
- Train and trial operators must also comply with standards of care and for enclosures for captive wildlife under Ontario's *Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, 2019*.

Frequency of Training and Trialing

- Areas must be free of dogs for six different 12 consecutive hour periods each week running from Monday to Sunday.
- These periods are intended to be separate from each other, allowing for a minimum of 12 hours between them to support animal welfare.
- Areas must be free of dogs for the same number of days before and after a trial as the number of days the trial lasted.
- Three-day trials cannot be held more than 8 times per year and must be held at least 10 days apart.
- Training and trialing of red fox and coyote may not be held between leaf fall (October 31) and leaf-out (May 15) unless there is enough vegetation cover to prevent dogs from chasing wildlife by sight alone.

SOURCES OF WILDLIFE

Wildlife for train and trial areas may be obtained by one of the following means:

- natural breeding of existing animals within the area,
- buying from other persons who hold a licence to own and operate a train and trial area,
- buying a coyote or red fox from a licensed trapper,
- buying red fox from a fur farm, and
- obtaining ministry authorization to hunt/trap varying (snowshoe) hare and cottontail for the purpose of keeping in captivity. Note these authorizations are only issued to the holder of a licence to own and operate a train and trial area or a designated member of the corporation (where the licence is issued to a corporation).

No wildlife may be imported from outside of Ontario for purposes of keeping in a train and trial area.

Note: Wildlife may not be kept within a train and trial area unless a licence has been issued by the ministry.

KEEPING RECORDS

Register

Licence holders are required to keep a register containing information regarding the use of the train and trial area, including:

- the names, addresses and telephone numbers of each person who uses the train and trial area or, if a club or association uses it for a trial, the name of the club/association, and the name, address and telephone number of the representative who maintains the list of persons using the train and trial area during the trial,
- the date the area is used by each person, club or association and the time at which each person or club or association member came and left the area, and
- the number of dogs used by each person, club or association.

This register must be kept in the form of a bound book and must be accessible for guests to enter the required information when they arrive and before they release a dog into the area.

These records must be made available for inspection by a conservation officer upon request.

The register must be kept for at least two years from the date of expiry of the licence.

Log Book

Licence holders are required to keep a log book at the train and trial facility containing information regarding the wildlife kept in the train and trial area, including:

- number of wildlife, by species, released into the train and trial area and the date of each release,
- name of person from whom the wildlife was acquired, including any relevant licence numbers (e.g., trapper licence number, licence number of other licensed train and trial area) and the date of purchase or acquisition,
- name and licence number of person to whom any wildlife from the train and trial is sold to and the date of sale,
- any medical treatment of wildlife, and
- date of discharge of any firearm in the train and trial area and reason for it.

The log book must be kept in the form of a bound book and must be updated by the licence holder within 24 hours of any business transaction or event (e.g. sale, purchase, etc.), or as soon as reasonably possible.

These records must be kept on the property and made available for inspection by a conservation officer upon request.

The log book must be kept for at least two years from the date of expiry of the licence.

Annual Report

Licence holders must submit an annual report to the ministry with information on the operation of the train and trial area. This annual report information is collected through the annual licence application.

The annual report will include information regarding:

- movement of wildlife into or out of the facility,
- injuries or death of wildlife kept in the facility,
- number of trialing events (if applicable), and
- occurrences of escaped wildlife.

Annual reports must be submitted the ministry by December 15.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the licensing of train and trial areas and application requirements, interested applicants should contact dogtraintrial@ontario.ca.