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Chapter 1

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Recognize the fur trade as one of the oldest industries in North America
- Recognize the role trappers played in exploration and controlling wild animals
- Understand that trapping still plays a role in modern society

Chapter 1

History

The history of trapping dates back to the earliest days of mankind. For as long as people have tried to protect themselves from the elements, they have used the skins of furbearing animals. When the first humans arrived in North America, during the Ice Age some 11,000 years ago, much of the continent was covered by glaciers. These people would not have survived without their fur clothing.

North America has always provided a wealth of furbearing animals. The first European settlers to reach these shores quickly observed this. Fur became an article of trade in North America in the early 1600s. In the year 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company was established in what is now Canada. The aim of this company was to buy fur pelts. This makes the harvest of furbearing animals one of the oldest industries in North America.

The furbearing animals, and the trappers who followed them, played a large role in the development of this country. In 1804, President Thomas Jefferson commissioned Merriwether Lewis and William Clarke to explore the land acquired through the Louisiana Purchase. One purpose of the Lewis and Clarke expedition was to report on the natural resources available in this region. They discovered a large number of furbearing animals in these lands.

The beaver was one of the most sought after furbearers during this period. The trappers who pursued these animals were largely responsible for opening up the western half of the United States for settlement. These were the famous "Mountain Man" trappers. These trappers were often the first non-native people to visit and explore the vast wilderness. Their travels mapped the trails that settlers would later follow.

As the country became more settled, trappers continued to harvest furbearing animals for their pelts. However, trappers began to play another equally important role. As more and more people spread out across the land, problems between humans and wildlife became more common. Trappers helped control the population of some wild animals that might otherwise have caused damage to the settlers' crops and livestock.

While the days of expansion and settlement in this country have passed, trapping still serves two important purposes. First, regulated trapping provides a method for harvesting and using the pelts of furbearing animals. These animals are a renewable natural resource. Secondly, trapping

provides a way to help control the population of certain animals. This helps reduce conflicts between these animals and mankind.

Today, trapping provides a good source of outdoor recreation for many individuals. Also, as it was for trappers in the past, the sale of pelts provides a source of income. The public also benefits from trapping because it reduces the frequency of disease and damage that may come with an overpopulation of animals.



Chapter 1 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. The first people to explore and map most of North America were _____ in pursuit of _____.
2. Modern trapping helps reduce _____ - wildlife conflicts and the frequency of _____ due to _____.



Chapter 2

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Natural resource
- Renewable natural resource
- Conservation
- Preservation
- Wildlife management
- Habitat
- Wetlands
- Carrying capacity
- Regulated trapping
- Trapping seasons
- Prime pelts
- Trapping regulations

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Identify a natural resource
- Define a renewable natural resource
- Recognize wildlife is a renewable natural resource
- Understand that conservation means wise use
- Differentiate between conservation and preservation
- Understand that wildlife management follows sound conservation principles
- Understand the history of wildlife management
- Recognize that sportsmen pay for wildlife management
- Define habitat
- Define carrying capacity
- Understand that wildlife cannot be stockpiled
- Understand what happens when wildlife becomes overpopulated
- Understand that the harvest of surplus furbearers is wise use
- Understand how regulated trapping follows good conservation principles
- Learn the current regulations that pertain to trapping

Chapter 2

Trapping, Conservation, and Wildlife Management

Natural Resources

A natural resource is something found in nature that is used to benefit people. We have a number of natural resources; oil and trees are just a couple of examples.

Using natural resources enhances the quality of our lives, but they must be used wisely so they are not wasted or destroyed. Conservation is a term used to describe the wise use of our natural resources.

Renewable and Non-renewable Natural Resources

There are two types of natural resources, renewable and non-renewable. A non-renewable resource is one that cannot be replaced once it is used up. Coal and oil are examples of a non-renewable resource. A renewable resource is one

that can be replaced. Trees are a good example of a renewable resource. As trees are cut down and used, new trees can be grown to take their place. Wildlife is another type of renewable resource. Wild animals reproduce each year to replenish their numbers.

Conservation

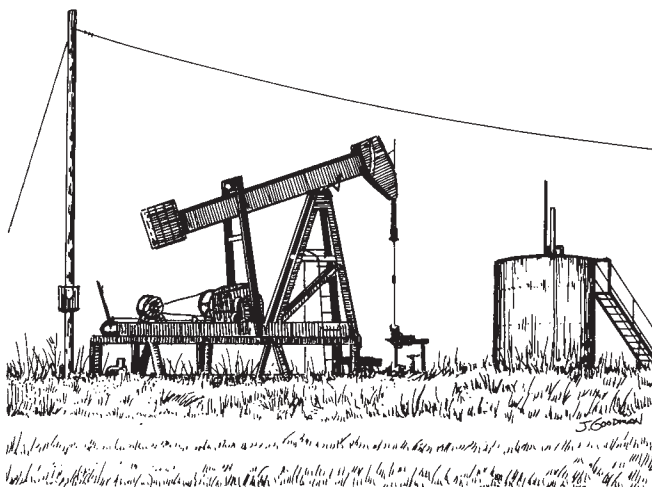
Natural resources provide us with many advantages. With good conservation measures, they can continue to serve us. Conservation means wise use. With renewable natural resources, conservation means the resources are not used up faster than they can be replaced. Trees are a good example. With good conservation practices the number of trees cut for use will be no greater than the number of trees that have grown up to replace them. If the trees were cut faster than they could grow back, we would soon run out of trees. This would not be good conservation.

Conservation is different than preservation. Preservation means to not use a resource. Renewable natural resources do not benefit greatly from preservation measures. If we did not harvest trees, they would grow to maturity, die, and rot away. Some people think that preservation measures should be applied to wildlife. This would not be wise use.

Wildlife Management

Wildlife is a renewable natural resource. It offers the greatest benefit to people when it is managed with the use of good conservation practices. In the early days of this country, there was little effort to use wildlife conservatively. Animals were killed in large numbers, year-round, without regard to maintaining the resource for the future. Because of this, populations of many species of wildlife fell to very low numbers.

Non-renewable Resources



Renewable Resources



During the late 1800s and early 1900s, some people began to recognize the value of wildlife as a natural resource and the need to manage it wisely. This movement was led mainly by the sportsmen of that day. These individuals were the founders of the wildlife conservation movement. The states began conservation programs to manage their wildlife resources. Sportsmen provided the money for these programs which were funded through the sale of licenses and permits. This continues today with sportsmen, hunters, and trappers providing most of the funding for wildlife management. Thanks to these programs and modern wildlife management techniques, we have an abundance of wildlife today.

Wildlife management is the science of regulating wildlife populations according to sound conservation principles. Before you can understand the principles of wildlife management you need to know about the things that influence populations of wild animals.

Habitat

The most important factor in determining how many animals can live in a certain area is habitat. Habitat is the amount of land available to provide water, food, and shelter for the animals. Without adequate water, food, shelter, and space animals cannot survive. Many people think that only a wilderness environment provides good habitat for wild animals. It is true that some animals like bears, wolves, elk, and other large mammals require a wilderness environment. However, other species of wildlife are abundant in settled areas. Much of this has to do with an increased food supply provided by agriculture.

Wetlands are an important type of habitat for most wild animals and especially for furbearing animals. Animals like muskrat, beaver, raccoons, and mink thrive in a wetland habitat.

Some people believe that without hunting or trapping wildlife populations would just keep growing and growing, creating a stockpile of wildlife. This is not true. Wildlife cannot be stockpiled. The amount of habitat available determines how many animals can live on the land. The number of animals that can be supported in any habitat is called the carrying capacity. If the number of animals exceeds the carrying capacity of the habitat, some will be eliminated. Some animals may starve to death if they are unable to find enough food. Others will become weak from lack of food and shelter, and be more susceptible to disease. If the animals are too densely populated, diseases can quickly spread throughout the population killing off large numbers of animals. Allowing these animals to die from disease and starvation is not good conservation.

There are other problems associated with allowing wildlife species to build up above acceptable levels. When wild animals become too numerous, some are pushed out of their habitat. They can cause problems for their human neighbors. They can do excessive damage to crops and livestock. They may be responsible for property damage as they seek new homes. They may also spread diseases to humans and domestic animals.

Trapping and Wildlife Management

The principles of wildlife management call for removing surplus animals. This is done to maintain a healthy population within the carrying capacity of the habitat and to reduce the conflicts between humans and wildlife. Trapping provides the means for managing furbearing animals. Regulated trapping controls furbearer populations following good conservation principles.

Regulated trapping establishes a time period, or season, in which the animals can be trapped and a time during which they are protected. The length of the season and other regulations are established to allow for the harvest of surplus furbearers. This helps maintain a healthy population of furbearers within the carrying capacity of the habitat. Protecting the animals during other times of the year ensures that they will be able to reproduce and renew the resource.

Trapping seasons are set for the fall and winter months. Since wild animals are born in the spring, this ensures no young animals are caught or orphaned during the trapping season. Also, at this time of year the animals grow extra fur for cold weather. Pelts in this condition are called prime. Harvesting prime pelts yields the greatest value from this resource and produces the best quality for the consumer.

Furbearing animals are a renewable natural resource. Wildlife management, based on principles of conservation, helps us to use these resources wisely. The seasons and rules established for trapping allow trappers to make an annual harvest of pelts. Following the guidelines established for using these resources, trappers are conservationists.

Trapping Seasons...

- Allow for the harvest of surplus furbearers.
- Protect animals when the young are being raised.
- Ensure that pelts are taken when they are prime.

Trapping Regulations

Trapping regulations serve other purposes besides establishing the seasons for harvesting furbearers. Some regulations help to reduce the incidence of non-target catches and ensure the safety of domestic animals. Other regulations help ensure the humane treatment of animals.

Trapping regulations may change from year to year, especially in regard to trapping seasons. You should familiarize yourself with the current regulations, as you prepare for the trapping season. A digest of the hunting and trapping regulations is published each fall and is available where hunting licenses and fur taker permits are sold.

A copy of the current hunting and trapping regulations has been included as part of this course. Study this thoroughly to learn all the regulations that apply to harvesting furbearers.

Here are just a few of the regulations:

- All traps must be tagged with the name and address of the trapper in legible English.
- All traps must be checked every 24 hours.
- Traps with teeth in the jaws are prohibited.
- No traps, including snares, may be set in a path commonly used by humans or domestic animals.



Chapter 2 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Name the two types of natural resources in North America:
_____ and _____.
2. Conservation is _____ of a natural resource; preservation is _____ of a natural resource.
3. Wildlife management practices and trapping seasons are designed to
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____.

4. The most important need for any wild animal population is good _____, which includes adequate _____, _____, _____, and _____.
5. When a species has overpopulated its habitat, the _____ of the habitat has been exceeded.
6. All traps must have a _____ with the user's _____ and _____ printed in English.
7. You must check your traps at least every _____ hours.

Chapter 3

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

Ethics
Responsibilities
Public
Landowner
Privilege
Domestic animals
Occupied dwellings
Permission
Property
Humane
Daily catch
Carcasses
Proper size trap
Commitment of time
Trap theft

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Define ethics and responsibilities
- Recognize four areas of responsibility: to the public, landowners, other sportsmen, and the resource
- Understand that trapping is a privilege granted by the public
- Understand responsibilities to the public in: avoiding and reporting illegal activities, displaying animals, disposing of carcasses, and avoiding pets
- Understand responsibilities to landowners in: obtaining permission, respecting property, acting courteously
- Understand responsibilities to other hunters and trappers in: sharing the resource, and cooperating and avoiding conflicts with other sportsmen
- Understand responsibilities to the resource in: obeying all trapping regulations and avoiding overharvest
- Understand responsibilities to the resource in trapping humanely by: checking traps early in the morning, using the right size and type of trap, using traps and sets that dispatch the animal

- Understand that trapping requires a daily commitment of time spanning several consecutive days
- Recognize the possibility of trap theft
- Learn tips for avoiding trap theft

Chapter 3

Ethics and Responsibilities

Ethics are principles of good conduct. Responsibilities are duties or obligations. Much of the criticism leveled against trapping has been brought on because of unethical and irresponsible actions by a few individuals. Trappers must fulfill certain obligations and subscribe to a code of good conduct in their dealings with the public, landowners, other trappers and outdoorsmen, and the resource.

Your privilege to trap is granted to you by the public. Landowners provide you with places to trap. The animals you trap must be harvested in a humane manner following good conservation principles. Other trappers and sportsmen and women deserve your respect because of your shared interest in the outdoor sports and wildlife resources. The continued use of our furbearer resources depends on ethical and responsible behavior when you are trapping.

The Public

You have a responsibility to conduct your activities so they do not offend the general public. Always keep in mind that trapping is a *privilege* granted by the people of the state. This privilege could be taken away if the general public decides they no longer want to allow trapping.

In granting the privilege to trap, the public requires that trappers follow the regulations established for trapping. These regulations are devised to make sure trapping follows good conservation practices. They also help ensure trapping will be conducted safely, without harming domestic animals. Violating these regulations goes against the public trust. Obey all trapping regulations. Illegal activities can get you in trouble and reflect poorly on other trappers. If you see other trappers acting illegally, report this to your wildlife officer.

Confine your trapping activities to out of the way places where there is little chance of catching a domestic animal. Avoid trapping close to occupied dwellings where someone's pet might get caught in your traps.

Don't put the animals you have caught on display. You may be proud of your accomplishments, but the average person does not like to see dead animals. Also, most people find the carcasses of dead animals offensive. After you have skinned

the animals, dispose of the carcasses properly and promptly.

A small number of people are very much opposed to trapping. You may encounter some of these people in public or as you are checking your traps. They may say things that are designed to offend you or make you angry. You should avoid getting into a debate or a shouting match with these people. You will not be able to change their minds. If you lose your temper, it makes you and all trappers look bad in the public's eye. The best thing to do is to simply tell them that you do not agree with them and walk away.

Respect the Public

- Remember trapping is a privilege granted by the public.
- Obey all trapping regulations; report illegal activities to your wildlife officer.
- Do not trap near occupied dwellings where someone's pet may be caught.
- Do not put dead animals on display.
- Dispose of all animal carcasses properly.

Landowners

Most of your trapping will probably be done on private property. You have an obligation to conduct your activities in a courteous and responsible manner according to the landowner's wishes. Always remember you are a guest. If your activities cause problems for the landowner, you may be asked to leave.

Before you trap on anyone's land, you must get written permission. This is not only a courtesy, it is the law. Make sure you know exactly where you are allowed to trap. Some landowners may not want you to trap in certain places.

You should respect the rights of landowners and their property. Be careful that you do not cause any damage to the landowner's property as you run your trapline. Do not travel across unharvested fields. If you use a vehicle, ask where you will be allowed to take it. When the ground is muddy, do not drive your vehicle across fields or dirt roads making ruts. Be careful not to damage fences when you are crossing them. Make sure you close all gates that you have opened. Be observant as you travel across the property. If you see a problem, report it to the landowner. Offer to help fix it if you can be of assistance. Be courteous in your coming and going. Try to check your traps during the daylight hours or at least at a time when you know the landowner will be awake. If you must check your traps in the dark, inform the landowner.



in an area, consider moving elsewhere. If you do trap in an area with another person, keep your traps a considerable distance away so they do not interfere with the other trapper. If you know who this trapper is, you may be able to reach a mutual agreement about who will trap where.

You may encounter people hunting in places where you have traps. It is a good idea to tell these people you are trapping, especially if they are hunting with dogs. They will be able to avoid your traps if you give them the approximate location of your sets. Also, if someone is hunting while you are checking your traps try to check your traps quickly and move on so you do not interfere with their hunt.



Respect Landowners

- Always get permission to trap.
- Do not damage crops, fences, or other property.
- Be courteous, do not disturb people as you check your traps.

Respect Other Trappers and Hunters

- Be willing to share the resource; do not assume you are the only person who has permission to be on the property.
- Do not disturb someone else's traps.
- Do not interfere with the activity of others, try to cooperate.

Other Trappers and Hunters

Anyone who purchases a hunting license and fur taker permit can harvest wildlife as long as they follow the laws. You will probably encounter other trappers and hunters in the field. Remember that we are all entitled to share in the resource. These people, as long as they are obeying the law, have as much right to be there as you do.

Often landowners will grant permission to more than one person to trap or hunt on their land. If you are uncertain about another trapper or hunter, first ask the landowner. If someone is trespassing, or otherwise hunting or trapping illegally, ask the landowner to report them to the authorities.

If you come across someone's traps, do not disturb them. Ohio's trapping regulations prohibit you from disturbing another person's traps without permission. If someone is already trapping

The Resource

As a trapper and conservationist, you have a responsibility to use our furbearer resources wisely. You also have a responsibility to the animals themselves. An ethical trapper takes care to ensure that the animals are treated humanely.

Obeying the rules and regulations for trapping is the first step in making good, conservative use of this resource. These laws are established to allow for the harvest of furbearers when they are the most valuable. They also act as a guide to help ensure that enough animals remain to replenish the population.

Within these guidelines, the trapper must also be responsible for making some decisions. Never attempt to trap all the animals from an area. Leave some animals for breeding stock. You can tell you have taken the surplus animals when your daily catch falls off sharply. If the population of a certain animal is low, you should avoid trapping it altogether.

You have a responsibility to see that the animals you catch are not wasted. The animals should be skinned or sold to a fur buyer promptly. Do not let animals lay around and spoil from lack of attention. The carcasses of some animals like muskrats, raccoons, and beaver can be used for food. Muskrats, raccoons and beaver make good table fare. Sometimes you can sell these carcasses, or give them to someone who wants to eat them. You can also eat them yourself.

A trapper must take measures to make sure the animals he catches are treated as humanely as possible. Checking your traps early in the morning is a good way to achieve this goal. Most animals are caught during the night. Checking your traps early in the morning ensures that no animal spends too much time in a trap. Ohio law requires that traps be checked at least every 24 hours.

Using the proper size and type of trap for each animal also helps you capture the animal humanely. Using a foothold trap that is too large could cause an animal unnecessary discomfort and possible injury. Some traps and sets are designed to kill the animal immediately. These may be the best choice for some animals found in areas where it is safe and legal to use them. Often when you are trapping near water, traps can be fastened so the animal enters the water and drowns. This ensures a quick, humane death.

Respect the Resource

- Obey all trapping regulations.
- Do not trap too many animals from one area.
- Do not leave animals too long in your traps, check your traps early in the morning.
- Use the proper size and type of trap for each animal.

How is Trapping Different than Hunting?

Trapping and hunting are alike in many ways. In each case, trappers or hunters are pursuing wild animals. This means that trappers and hunters have many of the same responsibilities. However, trapping is different than hunting in several ways, and trappers have a number of special rules they must follow.

The main difference between trapping and hunting is how the individual takes the animal. A hunter must be on the spot and make visual contact with the animal. A trapper, on the other hand, places the trap, then leaves. The animal is captured without the trapper present. The trapper then returns to collect the animal.

This means the trapper must make more than one trip afield to get the animal. If you are hunting, you may choose not to go out on a certain day. Maybe the weather is bad, or you have other things to do. A trapper does not have this option. If you have traps set, you must check them every day regardless of what the weather is like or what other things you might want to do.

“Hunting can be done on a day-by-day basis. Trapping requires a commitment of time every day for several consecutive days.”



Hunter Calendar

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		31



Trapper Calendar

			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Most successful trappers plan to run their traplines for several days or more. This means they must dedicate a certain amount of time each day to checking their traps. It may take only an hour or two for a short trapline, but as long as the traps are set, the trapper must go every day and check them. This is the commitment you must make as a trapper.

Trap Theft

Trappers have an obligation to behave ethically and responsibly in the field. However, it is possible that you could be the victim of unethical or illegal acts by others. Trap theft is a problem that has plagued trappers throughout history. There are unethical individuals who may steal your traps, your catch, or both.

Trap theft can occur at any time and in any location, but it is more likely to happen in areas that have greater public access. The more remote the area, the less likely you are to encounter a thief. Trapping near roads and highways, especially around bridges and culverts can expose you to a greater risk of trap theft. Nevertheless, bridges and culverts can provide some good locations for catching animals. You have to weigh this against the odds that your traps might be stolen. Catching a few extra animals could offset any loss you might experience to theft.

The following are some tips to help you avoid trap theft.

Avoiding Trap Theft

- Check your traps early in the morning and remove the animals before anyone sees them.
- Keep a low profile as you check your traps. Do not display your catch.
- Do not set traps near parking areas or other public access locations.
- Use drowning sets in water trapping to make the catch less noticeable.
- Make your sets behind areas of cover where they are not visible from roads or highways.

Chapter 3 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Define Ethics: _____

2. Define Responsibilities: _____

3. List the four things trappers have a responsibility to do:
A. _____, B. _____,
C. _____, D. _____.
4. You must have _____
_____ to trap on private property.
5. List at least four ways to avoid trap and fur theft:
A. _____, B. _____,
C. _____, D. _____.
6. Trapping differs from hunting because



Chapter 4

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Foothold trap
- Bodygrip trap
- Box trap
- Live trap
- Snare
- Restrain
- Longspring
- Coilspring
- Conibear trap
- Lethal
- Entanglement situation

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Identify the four main types of traps: foothold, bodygrip, box, live trap, and snare
- Differentiate between longspring and coilspring foothold traps
- Understand that foothold traps are restraining traps and animals can be released alive from foothold traps
- Recognize some advantages of the foothold trap
- Identify the parts of a foothold trap
- Learn to set a foothold trap
- Understand that bodygrip traps grip the animal by the body
- Understand that bodygrip traps are killing traps and animals cannot be released from bodygrip traps
- Understand that only the smallest bodygrip traps may be used on land
- Understand that live traps are used to take animals alive
- Understand that live traps are not practical for general trapline use
- Recognize the advantage of live traps in removing wild animals from buildings
- Understand that snares work like a leash

- Understand that snares can be used as restraining devices
- Recognize that snares can be lethal in entanglement situations
- Understand that a snare can be used only once
- Understand that snares work best in trail sets

Chapter 4

Traps

The most important pieces of equipment for the trapper are the traps. Getting some traps is the first step in assembling your equipment. There are four basic kinds of traps or devices for catching animals: foothold traps, bodygrip traps, live traps, and snares.

Foothold Traps

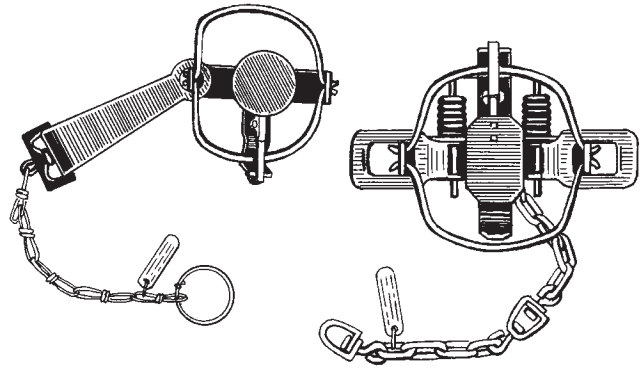
Foothold traps are designed to catch an animal by the foot. These traps are also called “leg-hold” traps. Foothold traps are used to restrain an animal. There are two types of foothold traps: coilspring traps and longspring traps.

An animal’s foot is very tough. It is made up of small bones, cartilage, and a heavy pad. There are very few nerve endings in the foot, and an animal experiences little discomfort if its foot is gripped in a trap. It is important to consider the size of the animal and select an appropriate size foothold trap to use for it. A trap that is too large could grip the animal too high on the leg and cause injury. Always use the smallest trap that will reliably hold the animal. Ohio law limits the size of foothold traps that may be used on land.

Foothold traps can be used on land or in the water. In land trapping, foothold traps offer an advantage because they restrain the animal but do not kill it. Non-target animals can be released alive from foothold traps that are set on land. This is an important factor where domestic animals are concerned. When foothold traps are used in the water, they can be fastened so the captured animal will drown.

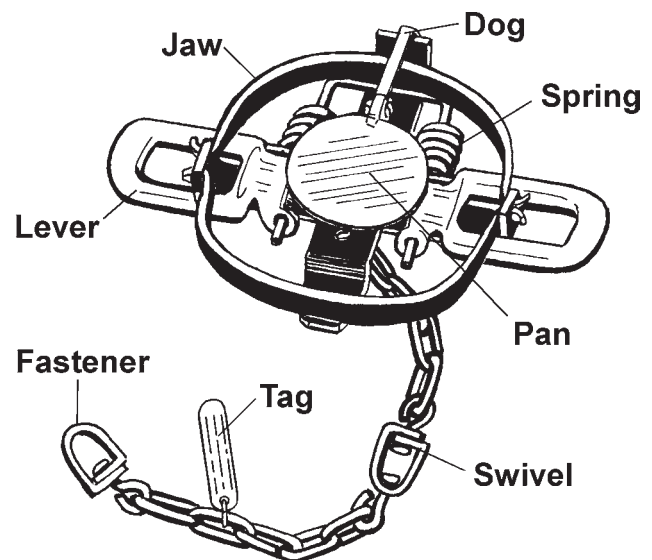
Foothold traps can be used for any type of animal on land or in the water. This is one of their advantages. They are also easy to conceal. This is another advantage. Some animals, like fox and coyote, are very wary. Foothold traps are a good choice for these animals.

Foothold Traps



These are two types of foothold traps. At the left is a longspring trap, at the right is a coilspring trap.

Parts of the Foothold Trap



Setting a Foothold Trap

The easiest way to set a coil-spring foothold trap is to stand on the levers with your feet. Then pull the jaws apart.



Once you have pried the jaws open and put the dog over the jaw, you can easily hold the trap set with your thumb.



Put the dog on top of the jaw, and push down on it with your thumb. Reach UNDER the loose jaw and raise the pan with your fingers.



Reach under the loose jaw, and raise the pan. By keeping your fingers UNDER the jaw, you will not get pinched if the trap accidentally fires.



If you are strong enough, you can depress the trap levers with your hands with the trap resting on your knee.



Bodygrip Traps

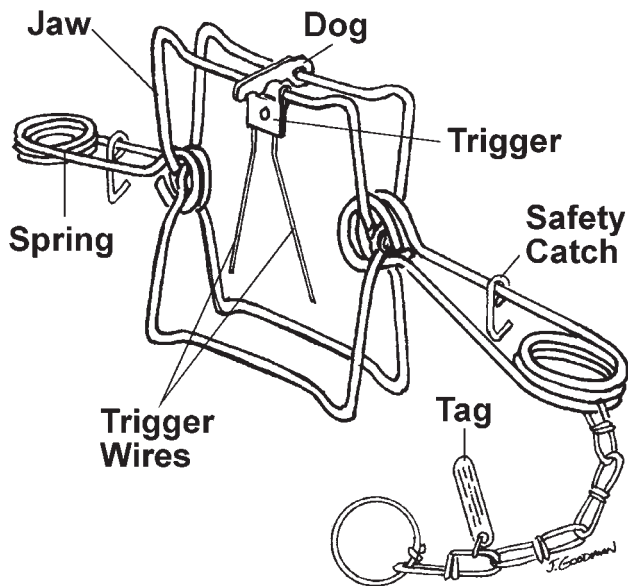
Bodygrip traps are sometimes called “killer” traps or “Conibear” traps. Bodygrip traps catch the animal around the body. These traps are designed to kill the animals they catch.

Bodygrip traps dispatch the catch, and animals rarely escape from them. This results in a quick, humane death for the animal. These are the advantages of a bodygrip trap, but there can also be disadvantages.

Animals cannot be released unharmed from bodygrip traps. For this reason, only the smaller size traps can be used on land. Ohio law limits the size of bodygrip traps that can be set on land.

The smaller size bodygrip traps are very effective for muskrats and mink. The medium size traps are good for raccoon, but they must be set in water. The largest size bodygrip traps are used for beaver and must be completely submerged under water.

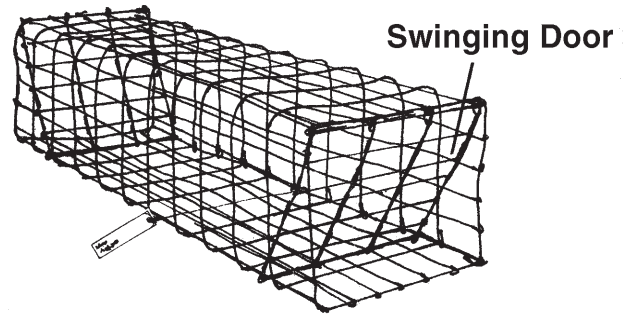
Bodygrip Trap



Box Traps

Several different kinds of box traps are popular for muskrat trapping. These box traps (also known as colony, cage, or basket traps) are constructed of wire mesh. Their size varies with a muskrat-sized opening on each end. The trap is placed under water in a runway and the muskrat and sometimes an occasional mink swim through the one-way swinging trap door. They cannot get out back through the door opening and they soon drown. Several muskrats can be captured in a box trap at one time.

Box Trap



Live Traps

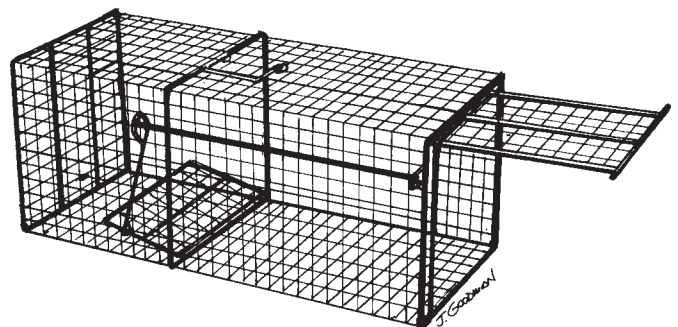
Live traps are sometimes called box traps or cage traps. They are used to take animals alive. The trap is in the shape of a box. The animal enters the box and a door closes behind it.

The advantage of live traps is they do not grip the animal. A captured animal can be released easily. Live traps can be effective where the likelihood of capturing a domestic animal is high. These traps can be used safely around houses, barns, or other dwellings.

Live traps are expensive. They are also bulky and hard to transport. Because of this, they are not practical for everyday trapline use. Some animals, like fox and coyotes, will not readily enter a live trap.

One good use for live traps is removing raccoons, opossums, and skunks from buildings. Performing this service can help establish good trapper-landowner relationships.

Live Trap



Snares

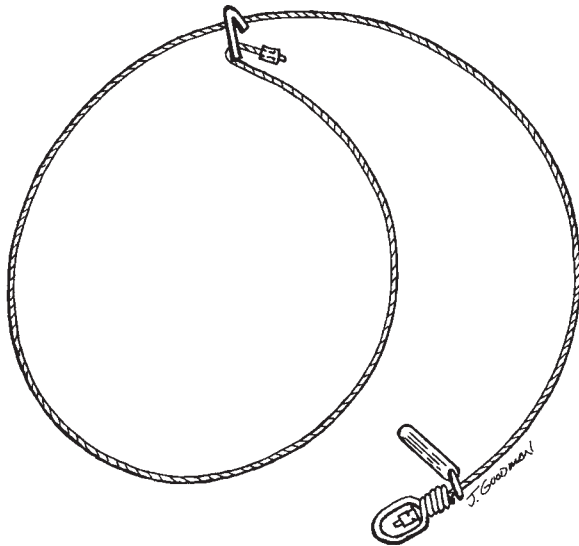
Snares are considered to be traps, but they function differently than most other trapping devices. Snares are made of multi-strand steel cable. To use a snare, you form the cable into a loop and suspend the loop over a trail the animal is using. The animal enters the loop and tightens the snare down on itself. The snare is designed to capture the animal by the neck or body and restrain it like a dog on a leash.

Snares have the advantage of being lightweight and fairly inexpensive. They are good for making trail sets. Snares can be used like foothold traps to capture animals alive. However, snares can also be lethal and dispatch an animal like a bodygrip trap. This happens if an animal gets tangled up at the set and cannot get its feet back on the ground. A situation like this is called an entanglement situation. You must be careful to avoid entanglement situations, especially when it is possible you might catch a domestic animal in the set.

While other traps can be used over and over again, a snare can be used only once. After a snare has captured an animal, it must be replaced with a new snare. Snares work best in trail sets where an animal is moving along. They do not work effectively at baited or lured sets.

Snares are most effective for the larger furbearers, especially coyote, fox, and beaver. Raccoon can also be taken effectively in snares.

Snare



Chapter 4 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Describe the differences among the three major kinds of traps:
 - A. Foothold _____,
 - B. Body gripping _____,
 - C. Box _____.
2. The two basic types of foothold traps are the _____ spring and the _____ spring.
3. Several muskrats can be captured in a box trap. True or False.
4. _____ traps are used to remove wild animals from buildings.
5. Snares _____ an animal similar to a leash on a dog.

Chapter 5

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

Stake
Annealed steel wire
Trowel
Hunting license
Fur taker permit
Trap tags
Packbasket
Gauntlets
Drowning locks
Dirt sifter

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand the use and function of other trapping equipment including: stakes, wire, trowel or shovel
- Recognize that a hunting license, fur taker permit, and trap tags are necessary items of equipment
- Identify three items for carrying trapping equipment: packbasket, bucket, or sack
- Recognize the need for proper clothing for running the trapline
- Identify equipment needed for water trapping: hip boots, chest waders, and drowning locks
- Identify equipment needed for land trapping: dirt sifter, clean gloves
- Learn options for assembling equipment on a limited budget

Chapter 5

General Trapping Equipment

Hunting License, Fur Taker Permit, and Trap Tags

You must not forget your hunting license, fur taker permit, and trap tags as part of your trapping equipment. You can get your fur taker permit after you pass this trapper education course. Both the hunting license and the fur taker permit are required for trapping. Each of your traps must have a waterproof tag attached to it showing your name and address. It is a good idea to carry a few extra tags with you in case an animal tears one off of your trap.

Hunting License, Fur Taker Permit, and Trap Tags

Your hunting license, fur taker permit, and trap tags are part of your equipment.

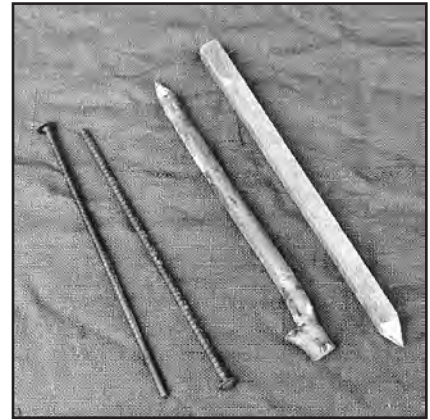


Stakes

You must fasten your traps in place to prevent the animals from escaping with them. For this, you will need stakes. Stakes can be made from wood or steel. Steel stakes are more durable and are especially good for trapping on dry land. Steel stakes are usually made of 1/2-inch or 3/8-inch steel rod or reinforcing bar. They can also be made out of angle iron. Wood stakes can be fashioned from straight growing tree limbs. They can also be made out of sawed lumber. Whether made out of wood or steel, your stakes must be long enough to hold the largest animal that will get in your traps. You will need a tool, like a hammer or hatchet, for driving stakes into the ground.

Stakes

Steel stakes (on the left) are best for land trapping. Wood stakes work better for water trapping.



Hammer and Hatchet

You will need a tool to pound your stakes into the ground. Many trappers use a hatchet for this. The hatchet can also be used to cut wood and brush on your trapline. You can use a hatchet to cut wood stakes. A straight claw hammer can be handy for trapping on land. You can use the straight claw to help you dig into hard ground or cut away roots where you want to set a trap.

Hammer and Hatchet

These tools can be used for pounding stakes into the ground. The hatchets can also be used for cutting wood stakes.



Wire

Wire is used to fasten your traps to stakes or to other solid objects, or to make a drowning set when trapping near the water. The best kind of wire to use for trapping is *annealed steel wire*. This is available from trapping supply dealers or building supply companies. **DO NOT** use copper or aluminum wire, like that found in electrical wiring, for trapping wire. It is not strong enough. An animal might break the wire and get away. **NEVER** use twine, rope, or similar materials for fastening a trap. A pair of pliers will help you in cutting and twisting wire and should be included as part of your trapping equipment.

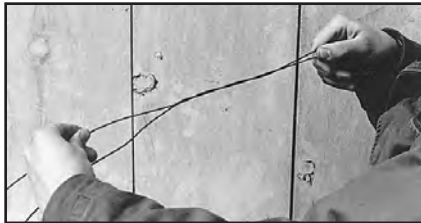
Wire and Pliers

Steel wire is an important item of trapping equipment. If you use wire, you will need a pair of pliers to cut and twist it.



Double Strength Wire

Annealed steel wire come in several sizes; 16, 14, and 11 gauge are the most common. If you use 16-gauge wire, you should double it. The following illustrations show how to double 16-gauge wire for added strength.



Cut a piece of wire twice as long as you need and fold it in the middle. Holding the folded end, start twisting the wire working towards the loose ends.



Twist the wires together until you come to the end. You now have a double strength wire. Twisting the strands of wire into a spiral gives it more strength than two separate strands of wire.

Trowel or Shovel

Another item of equipment that every trapper needs is something to dig with. It is often necessary to prepare the place where you plan to set your trap and dig out a depression to hold the trap. This can be accomplished with a small shovel or trowel.

Carrying Your Equipment

You should have something to carry your traps and equipment in as you travel your trapline. Many trappers prefer the traditional packbasket for this. A packbasket has straps so you can carry it on your shoulders. This distributes the weight making the load easier to carry and leaves both hands free for trapline chores. You could also carry your trapping equipment in a large bucket or a sack.

Trowels and Shovels

These are some typical tools you can use for digging purposes on your trapline. On the left is a short-handled garden trowel. In the middle is a standard "trappers" trowel that can be purchased from a trapping supply company. On the right is a tiling spade which is good for digging large holes.



Bucket, Bag, and Basket



These are some typical things used to carry trapping equipment. On the right is the traditional packbasket, but a bucket or a durable sack will also work.

Clothing

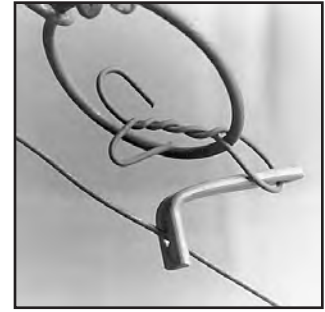
You need proper clothing to keep you comfortable on the trapline. Remember, your traps must be checked every day, so you will be out in all kinds of weather. The weather is usually cold during trapping season, and you'll need a good coat or jacket. A jacket with a lot of pockets is best. A hunting jacket makes a good trapping jacket. You will also need a good pair of boots and gloves to protect your feet and hands during the cold weather of trapping season. During rainy, muddy weather you will need waterproof boots and gloves. A good raincoat will make you more comfortable if you have to check traps in the rain.

Water Trapping Equipment

Depending on what type of trapline you intend to run, you may need some special equipment. If you will be trapping in the water, you should consider investing in a pair of hip boots or chest waders that will allow you easy access to your sets. Also, a pair of elbow or shoulder length rubber gloves will make you more comfortable as you set and tend your traps. These gloves are called "gauntlets." You may also want to invest in some specialized fasteners, called drowning locks, for your traps. These will help you make drowning sets that will quickly dispatch the trapped animals.



The lock should point toward deep water. When the animal travels toward deep water, it slides easily.



When the animal tries to return to the shore, the lock binds on the wire and holds the animal in place.

Water Trapping Equipment



These are some items you might need if you are trapping animals that live in or near the water. Waterproof boots will help keep your feet dry. Rubber gloves will help protect your hands in the cold water. The wood stakes in the middle are good for water trapping. You can probably make these yourself.

Drowning Locks

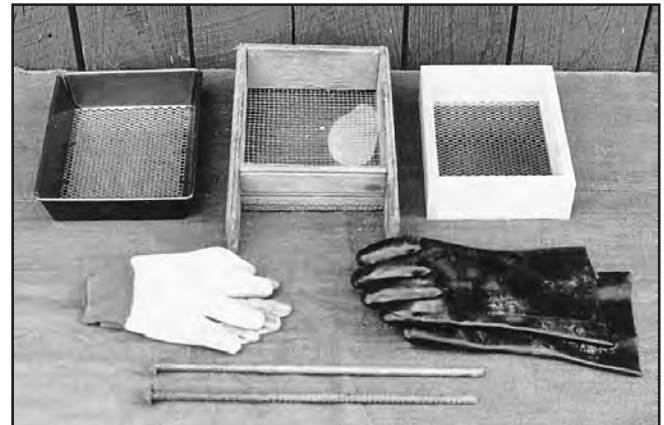


These are three types of drowning locks. They can be fastened to the end of your trap chain. They are used with a length of wire to make a drowning set. The lock slides on the wire, but only goes one way.

Land Trapping Equipment

If you will be making sets on dry land, especially for fox and coyote, you will need a sifter to sort the sticks, stones, and large clods out of the dirt you use to cover your traps. You should also have a clean pair of cloth or rubber gloves for handling your traps.

Land Trapping Equipment



These are some items you might need if you are trapping animals that live on land. At the top are three different styles of dirt sifters. The cloth gloves are for everyday use. The rubber gloves are used when the ground is muddy. The steel stakes, at the bottom, are better for land trapping because they are more durable.

Assembling Your Equipment

A limited budget is one problem most beginning trappers face in assembling their equipment. However, you may be able to gather up many of the things you need at little or no expense. You may already have some things available like pliers, a hatchet, and a garden trowel, or you may be able to borrow them. It should not be too much trouble to find a bucket or sack to carry your equipment in.

Chapter 5 Study Guide

You can also make some of your own equipment if you have the tools and materials. Wood stakes can be cut from straight growing tree limbs. You could also make your own dirt sifter with a few narrow boards and a piece of hardware cloth mesh. You may be able to find discarded pieces of steel that can be made into metal stakes.

Trap tags can be purchased with your name and address printed on them. You can also make them yourself with some thin aluminum. Cut the aluminum into rectangular pieces and use a nail or other sharp object to write your name and address in the soft aluminum. Press hard and print plainly.

Traps are somewhat harder to come by. You may be able to find them by asking relatives and friends. Sometimes, particularly in rural communities, there are a few used traps hanging in sheds, barns, and outbuildings. These can often be had for the asking.

Otherwise you will have to purchase traps. Sometimes you can find used traps for sale at auctions and flea markets. Another good place to look for used trapping equipment is at a trapper's meeting or convention. You can find the dates and locations of these meetings in most trapping magazines.

Trapping magazines can also be valuable in helping you assemble your equipment. Trapping supply dealers advertise in these magazines, and most of them have a catalog that you can request. There are many items of trapping equipment that are available only through a trapping supply dealer. New traps and packbaskets are examples.

You may be able to buy some of your trapping equipment at a reasonable price at a discount department store. You should be able to find boots and waders in the sporting goods department. You can also find tools like pliers, hatchets, shovels, trowels, and gloves there.



Review Questions

1. List the five pieces of equipment needed for water and land trapping:

1. _____, 2. _____,
3. _____, 4. _____
- _____, 5. _____.

2. To legally trap you must have a

_____ and a _____.

3. What can be used to carry all of your trapping equipment?

- A. _____,
- B. _____,
- C. _____.

Chapter 6

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Adjusting a trap
- Dye
- Wax
- Cold dip
- Animal sign
- Tracks
- Droppings
- Huts (lodges)
- Cover

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand options for securing landowner permission to trap: from landowners you know, from landowners who have given you permission to hunt, from landowners who don't know you
- Understand the importance of presenting a good first impression
- Recognize things that can help you get permission including a neat appearance and polite attitude
- Understand the need to seek permission well ahead of the trapping season
- Learn how to adjust a foothold trap
- Understand the steps in preparing foothold traps: adjusting, boiling and dyeing, waxing or dipping
- Learn how to prepare bodygrip traps: boil and dye
- Learn how to prepare snares: boil in a baking soda solution
- Understand that scouting helps you determine where to set traps
- Recognize four types of animal sign: tracks, droppings, food scraps, dens
- Learn to identify animal signs by consulting nature guides
- Recognize good places to look for animal sign: wetlands, cover patches, travel routes
- Understand that you can prepare for setting traps as the season approaches

Chapter 6

Getting Ready to Trap

You will be a more successful trapper if you get ready for trapping well in advance of the season. Being prepared will save you time when the season opens and give you more time for actual trapping. Besides this, your preseason activities can help you pass the time while you anxiously await the beginning of trapping season.

Getting Permission

One of the most important things you need to do to get ready to trap is get written permission from landowners. For beginning trappers, it will probably be easiest to get permission from people who know you or your family. If there are places where you have permission to hunt, you could ask if you might also have permission to trap. Sometimes, people who don't know you will hesitate to give you permission to trap. If you have secured permission from other landowners in the area, ask if you may use them as a reference. Then you can tell people who don't know you of other places in the neighborhood where you have permission to trap or hunt.

First impressions are important when you are asking permission to trap. Always present a neat, clean appearance. Be polite. If someone will not give you permission to trap, do not argue with them. They could change their mind and give you permission at a later date.

There are some things you can do that might help you get permission to trap. Tell the landowner you have taken the trapper education course and you are prepared to trap safely and responsibly. Ask the landowners if they are having any problems with furbearers. Muskrats can damage ponds and ditch banks. Raccoons can damage crops and gardens. Offer to help reduce the number of these problem animals by trapping them.

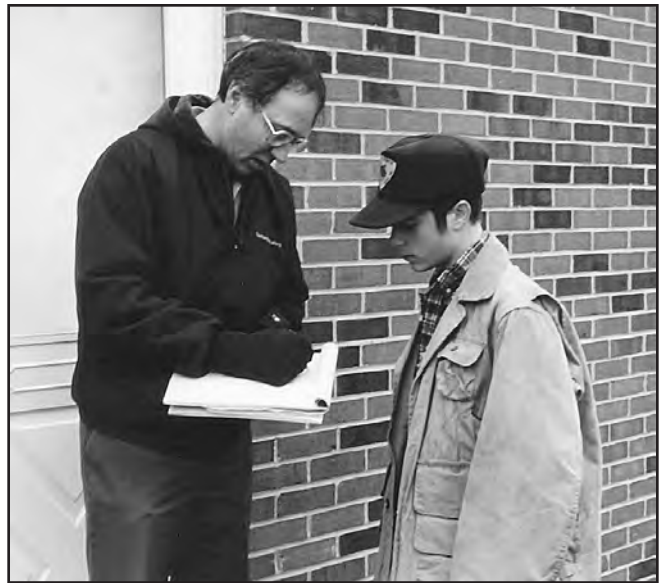
You should start seeking permission well in advance of the trapping season. Do not wait until the last minute. You may have to make several trips before you actually contact the person who can give you permission. The best time to get

permission is late in the summer, before farmers have started to harvest their crops. Try to avoid interrupting people when they are working or otherwise busy. Evenings, after the dinner hour, are usually a good time to visit landowners.

Tips for Getting Permission to Trap

- Get references from other landowners who know you.
- Present a neat, clean appearance — be polite.
- Offer to remove furbearers that are causing property damage.
- Start seeking permission well ahead of the trapping season.

Getting Permission



You must get written permission to trap on someone's property.

Getting Your Equipment Ready

You should have your trapping equipment assembled and ready to go before the season starts. A lot of the equipment you need can probably be gathered up around your home. Other equipment you may be able to make for yourself. You will have to buy some items of equipment from a trapping supply dealer, especially traps. Order your traps well ahead of the season so you can get them ready.

To get foothold traps ready for use, you should adjust each trap so the pan sets level. You can do this by bending the end of the trap frame where the

dog is attached. Bending the frame in lowers the pan, and bending the frame out raises the pan.

The traps should be boiled in a kettle of clean water to remove the dirt and oil. Young trappers should seek adult supervision when working with fires and boiling water. A cupful of unscented automatic dishwasher detergent added to the water will help get the traps clean. After this, the traps need to be dyed to make them a dark color. This will help camouflage them. Boil the traps in water containing walnut hulls, sumac bark, or commercial trap dye to color them. New, shiny traps will not take dye. These traps must be boiled clean and allowed to hang in the open air for a few weeks until they take on a light coating of rust.

Your traps should also be coated to protect them from the elements. Wax is a good trap coating. One way to wax traps is to add one or two pounds of wax to the water in your boiling kettle. The wax will melt and float to the surface. Put your traps in the kettle and let them heat up for a few minutes. Then slowly pull the traps up through the wax.

Another method for waxing traps is to melt pure wax or paraffin in a metal container, then dip clean, *dry* traps into the melted wax. You must be very careful waxing traps this way. *Melted wax is highly flammable.* DO NOT try to melt wax on an open fire. Use a hot plate or a small camp stove. Keep a metal lid nearby that will completely cover the container. If the wax container should catch on fire, you can smother it by placing the lid on the container. All waxing should be done outdoors away from combustible materials to reduce the danger of fire. Young trappers should seek adult supervision in waxing traps. NEVER dip wet traps in pure melted wax. The water on the traps can turn into steam and cause an explosion of hot wax.

Be very careful with fires, boiling water, and hot wax. Always wear protective clothing and some type of eye protection when you are handling traps around hot wax or boiling water.

Cold dip is another type of trap coating. Cold dip is mixed with gasoline, and the traps are dipped in the solution. *Gasoline is extremely flammable* and young trappers should seek adult supervision. The dip should only be used outdoors in a well ventilated area. The dip provides a protective coating for the traps as well as coloring them. It is not necessary to rust or dye traps you are going to dip. It takes several weeks of warm weather to dry this coating, so traps must be dipped well in advance of the season. You cannot successfully dip traps in cold weather because they will not dry.

After dipped or waxed traps have dried, take a small file and scrape the coating off the end of the dog and out of the notch. The coating is slippery, and the traps may not stay set unless you scrape

it away in these areas.

Preparing bodygrip traps is slightly different. They require no adjustment. It is a good idea to boil and dye bodygrip traps, but you may want to avoid coating them. Coatings like wax or dip on a bodygrip trap make them slippery and hard to keep set.

Snares do not need a great deal of preparation. They require no adjustment. New snares are shiny and they should be dulled to make them less visible to animals. Boiling snares in a trap dye solution will have no effect on them. Instead, boil the snares in clean water to which you have added several tablespoons of baking soda. This can be done in a pot on a kitchen stove. Do not coat snares. The coating may interfere with the operation of the snare.

Adjusting a Foothold Trap

The pan on a foothold trap must be adjusted so that it is level with the jaws when the trap is set. This pan is up too high.



To adjust this, use a pair of pliers to bend the end of the trap frame. Bend the frame in if the pan is too high or out if the pan is too low.



This is how the pan should set when the trap is properly adjusted.



Getting Your Traps Ready — Cold Dipping

- Adjust the traps to level the pan.
- Boil the traps to remove the oil or dirt.
- Dip the traps (allow at least three weeks of warm weather for drying.)
- Scrape the dip from the notch and dog.

Getting Your Traps Ready — Dyeing and Waxing

- Adjust the traps to level the pan.
- Boil the traps to remove the oil or dirt.
- Allow new traps to take a light coat of rust.
- Boil the traps in a dye solution.
- Wax the traps.
- Scrape the wax from the notch and dog.

Scouting

Starting a few weeks before the trapping season, you should go into the areas you intend to trap and look for animal signs. This will help you determine how many animals are present. You can also find out where they are feeding and where they are traveling. This will help you determine where to set your traps.

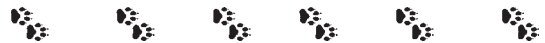
Animals leave many signs of their presence. Tracks left in muddy or dusty areas are one of the most common signs. Droppings are another common type of animal sign. Some animals leave scraps of food where they have been feeding. Sometimes you can actually find the den or lodge of an animal. The openings of muskrat dens are often visible under water along the shoreline. Muskrats and beaver often build huts or lodges that are easy to spot in shallow water.

Consult a good nature guide or manual to help you identify tracks and other sign left by different furbearers. You can find this kind of information at your school or public library.

A good place to start looking for sign is around areas of cover, especially cover that borders a creek, stream, pond, or other body of water. These wetland areas are very attractive to furbearers, and it will be easy to find tracks in the wet ground.

Other areas of cover like woodlots, brush patches, and gullies will also be attractive to furbearers. Look around the edges of these for tracks, droppings, and trails. You can also find sign along the routes that animals travel. Fence rows, brush rows, and farm lanes often guide the movement of animals. Look for tracks and droppings here.

As trapping season grows closer, you may want to do some work to prepare for setting your traps. You can decide where your traps will be placed. You can draw a rough map on a piece of paper and mark the locations where you want to set your traps. This map can also help you later during the season as you run your traps. If some of your sets require digging holes, building cubbies, or narrowing down trails, you can do this shortly before the season opens. This will save you time when you actually begin trapping.



Chapter 6 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. List four common signs which would identify furbearers:
1. _____, 2. _____,
3. _____, 4. _____.
2. Foothold traps should be _____ then _____ in boiling water and then waxed.
3. Getting _____ is the first step in preparing for the trapping season.
4. _____ will help you decide where to set your traps when the season opens.

Chapter 7

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

Target

Non-target

Noose pole (choke stick)

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand that successful trappers target their sets for a specific species
- Define a non-target animal - an animal for which the set is not targeted
- Recognize the need to avoid catching pets and domestic animals
- Learn to avoid non-target animals by: trapping away from occupied dwellings, making sets in water, using non-meat type lures
- Understand that a non-target animal must be restrained before you try to release it
- Learn how to release non-target animals using a noose pole or a forked stick

Chapter 7

Non-target Animals

Trapping is a skill. Like any other skill you will improve with experience and practice. The basic theory of trapping is simple. You must put your traps where the animals are likely to go. The place you put your trap is called a set. How you determine where the animals will go and where you put your sets are the keys to successful trapping.

Non-target Animals

Successful trappers design or “target” their sets to take a certain type of animal. There is no one set that will take all animals. An animal captured in a set not intended for it is called a “non-target” animal. The non-target animals that cause the greatest concern for trappers are pets and other domestic animals. The public takes a very dim view of trapping when pets and other domestic animals are caught by trappers.

Avoiding Non-target Animals

The best way to avoid non-target animals is to keep your traps away from houses and other occupied dwellings. Most pets and domestic animals stay close to home. Ohio regulations prohibit trapping with anything other than a live trap within 150 feet of an occupied dwelling without first notifying the occupant. This is a minimum distance, and it is better to stay even farther away. This is especially important for beginning trappers. As you gain experience, it will be easier to avoid non-target animals.

There are other things you can do to reduce non-target catches. Avoid trapping on land where domestic animals may be encountered. Sets made in the water are less likely to catch non-target animals. Baits and lures that contain meat are attractive to many domestic animals. Sweet or fruity type baits and lures are less attractive to domestic animals. Using these non-meat baits and lures will help you avoid them.

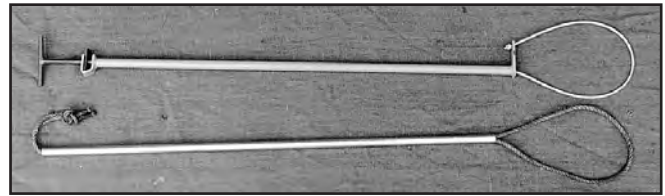
Releasing Non-target Animals

If you catch a non-target animal in your traps, it must be released. Before you try to release an animal, it must be restrained. An animal caught

in a trap can, and often will, try to bite you as you try to release it. Some animals may appear to be quite docile, but they can turn on you at any time. Never try to release an animal unless you have restrained it in some manner.

A noose pole, or choke stick, is the best tool with which to restrain an animal. This device is an adjustable noose fastened to a pole. You put the noose over the animal’s head and pull it down tightly. Then using the pole, you can steer the animal’s head away while you depress the trap springs with your feet. You can purchase a noose pole from a trapping supply dealer, or you can make one with a hollow pipe and a piece of rope.

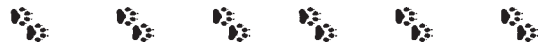
Noose Poles



You need a noose pole to help you release non-target animals. At the top is a noose pole you can purchase from a trapping supply dealer. At the bottom is a noose pole made from a piece of hollow tubing and a rope.

You can also use a forked stick to pin the animal’s head to the ground while you release the trap. With smaller animals, you may be able to cover the animal with a bucket or your pack-basket to release it.

Do not attempt to release an animal that might be too big for you to handle. Seek assistance if you catch a large non-target animal, and you are not certain that you can control it.



Chapter 7 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. As a good trapper, you will make sets for a _____ species.
2. A _____ or _____ will help to restrain a non-target animal before release.
3. Catching non-target animals in your traps can be avoided by:
A. _____, B. _____,
C. _____.

Chapter 8

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Set
- Natural set
- Constructed set
- Attractor
- Blind set
- Dirthole set
- Pocket set
- Cubby set
- Lure
- Bait

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Differentiate between a natural set and a constructed set
- Learn two examples of a natural set: trail set and den set
- Understand the importance of being able to read animal sign
- Recognize the advantages of a natural set
- Learn three examples of constructed sets: dirthole set, pocket set, cubby set
- Recognize the need to make a constructed set attractive to the animal
- Recognize advantages of a constructed set
- Understand that lure and bait can help attract animals to a set
- Recognize that lure and bait are not necessary at every set
- Understand that there are no magic lures or baits that will ensure trapping success
- Learn how to place lure or bait at the

Chapter 8

Sets

The place where a trapper puts a trap is called a “set.” There are two basic kinds of sets — natural sets and constructed sets. A natural set is one a trapper can make without doing anything special to the surrounding area. Natural sets do not require any special attractors, like lure or bait, to draw the animal into the trap. A constructed set is one that is artificially created by the trapper. Constructed sets usually require an attractor to draw the animal to the trap.

Natural Sets

Natural sets are ones a trapper can make by simply hiding a trap in a path that an animal is known to take. Natural sets are commonly called blind sets. A trail regularly used by a furbearing animal would be a good place to make a blind set. You could also make a set at the opening of a den, lodge, or burrow where the animal is living. A bodygrip trap placed in front of a muskrat den is an example of a blind set.

A good knowledge of the animal’s habits and traits is important when you are looking for natural sets. You must be able to read animal sign to determine the exact path the animal is taking. If you place your trap directly in a path that the animal is using regularly, you are likely to catch it. This is what makes a natural set very effective.

Natural sets are easy to make because the trapper does not have to do anything special to attract the animal to the set. This is the advantage in using natural sets.

Natural Sets

This trap is being set in front of a muskrat den which is a natural place to catch this animal.



This is a trail that raccoons are using. A snare has been set to take them.



Constructed Sets

There are many times when you cannot find the exact path that an animal is traveling. In this situation, a trapper can build or construct a set that will attract the attention of the animal. There are many types of constructed sets including the dirt hole set, the pocket set, and the cubby set.

Since a constructed set is not necessarily placed directly in the animal’s path, you must attract or draw the animal to the set. Many constructed sets are made by digging a hole. If the animal sees the hole, it may investigate the set out of curiosity. Using some other type of attractor like lure or bait that the animal can smell might also help draw the animal to the set.

You still must be able to read animal sign to be successful with constructed sets. A constructed set will not reliably attract an animal over a great distance. You must determine that animals are frequenting the area where you plan to make your set.

You can use a constructed set to draw animals into your trap when you are not certain of the exact path they are taking. Constructed sets can be made in many types of locations on the trapline. These are the advantages of a constructed set.

Constructed Sets

This is a dirt hole set made by digging a hole in the ground.



This is a cubby set constructed with pieces of wood.



Lure and Bait

Lure and bait can help you attract animals to your sets. Most trappers use lure and bait. Lure produces an odor that is attractive to the animal. This could be a food odor, the odor of a similar kind of animal, or simply an odor that arouses the animal's curiosity. Urine is another type of animal lure. It is especially helpful to canine trappers. Bait is some type of food that is attractive to the animal.

It is not necessary to use lure or bait at every set. Natural sets usually work best without bait or lure. Constructed sets usually benefit from bait or lure because you are trying to attract the animal to the set. You should keep in mind that lure and bait are just tools to assist you in catching animals. There are no "magic" lures or baits that will instantly make you a successful trapper. Lures and baits will not attract animals over great distances. Your ability to read animal sign and place your sets where animals are most likely to encounter them is more important than the bait or lure you use.

When you use bait or lure, place it so the animal will enter the trap or step in the trap as it tries to investigate the odor. Do not place the bait or lure on the trap itself. The animal could bump the trap with its nose and spring the trap without getting caught.



Lures and Baits

Lures and baits are an important part of any trapper's equipment and will increase your success. Many types of commercial baits and lures are available through trapping supply dealers.



A substitute for commercial baits can often be found in your home or at your grocery store. Inexpensive canned fish is attractive to meat-eating animals. You can also use scraps left over from dressing game or preparing meat for the table. Apples, other fruits, and vegetables are attractive to muskrats, raccoons, and possums.



Chapter 8 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. _____ sets are burrows, dens, lodges, and paths commonly used by furbearers.
2. _____ sets are made by trappers, who use _____ and _____ to attract a furbearer.
3. Placement of your trap set is more important than the use of lures and baits. True or False.

Chapter 9

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Drowning sets
- Slide wire drowner
- Tangle stake drowner
- Runway
- Colony trap
- Climb out

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Identify three animals generally targeted in water trapping: muskrat, raccoon, and mink
- Identify three sets used in water trapping: cubby set, blind set, and pocket set
- Recognize good places for water trapping sets: small tributaries, steep banks, washed out tree roots, culverts, bridges and dens
- Learn how to make a slide wire drowner
- Learn how to make a tangle stake drowner
- Learn how to make a pocket set
- Learn how to make a blind set
- Learn how to make a cubby set
- Understand that muskrats are a good target animal for beginning trappers
- Learn how to make a set at a muskrat den
- Learn how to make a runway set for muskrats
- Identify a colony trap and recognize its advantage in catching more than one muskrat at a time
- Learn how to make a climb-out set for muskrats

Chapter 9

Water Trapping

Some species of furbearers spend most of their time in and around the water. For the beginning trapper, the muskrat, raccoon, and mink will often be the targeted animals. The term generally applied to this type of trapping is water trapping.

The sets ordinarily used to take these animals are the pocket set, the cubby set, and the blind set. The pocket set is constructed by digging a hole into the bank at water level. Bait or lure is placed in the back of the pocket, and a trap is set in front. The cubby set is made by building a small hollow structure open on one end at the edge of the water. Again, bait or lure is placed in the back of the cubby and a trap is set in front. The blind set uses no lure or bait. It is made by placing a trap directly in a path or trail an animal is known to use.

When using foothold traps in or near the water, you have the advantage of being able to drown the animal once it is captured. This reduces the chance of escape and also yields a quick death for the animal. Special staking and fastening systems can be used to achieve this result.

Good Places for Water Trapping Sets



Where a smaller tributary stream enters a larger stream is a good place to make a set.



Washed out tree roots often make good places to locate sets.



Steep banks like this force animals to walk along the edge of the water and can provide good places for sets.



Culverts and bridges are natural funnels for animals traveling the waterways.

Where muskrats are the target animal, the construction of a drowning set is an absolute necessity if they are to be captured with foothold traps. The muskrat has a very fragile bone structure and failure to drown the muskrat immediately could cause severe injury to the animal.

The small size bodygrip traps are a good choice for mink and muskrat. These traps close on the animal's body quickly dispatching the animal.

Making Drowning Sets

One advantage in water trapping is you can make sets that will drown the catch. Drowning the animal prevents escapes and yields a quick humane death. There are two basic ways to make a drowning set. One is to use a slide wire drowner, and the other is to use a tangle stake drowner. The slide wire drowner works well for any animal, but it is especially effective for larger animals like raccoon. The tangle stake drowner works well for smaller animals like mink and muskrat. The following photo illustrations will help you learn how to make a slide wire drowner and a tangle stake drowner.

Making a Slide Wire Drowner

- Select a heavy object for an anchor or anchor with a stake.
- Tie a wire to the anchor.
- Place the anchor in deep water.
- Bring the wire to the shoreline.
- Place a stake in the bank.
- Put the wire through a sliding lock on the trap chain.
- Pull the wire tight and fasten it to the bank stake.
- The animal will slide the trap to the anchor and drown.

Making a Slide Wire Drowner

1. Select a heavy object for an anchor. Here, a half of a concrete block is used. Wrap your wire around the anchor and twist it closed.



2. Carry the anchor out to deep water. You could also use a stake in the deep water.



3. Unroll the wire as you walk back toward the bank.

4. Insert a stake in the bank near where you want to set the trap. Draw the wire tight against the anchor, bring it around the stake, and cut it leaving enough to fasten on the stake.



5. Thread the wire through the drowning lock installed on the end of the trap chain. Make sure the lock slides in the right direction, toward deep water.



Slide Wire Drowner (continued)

6. Wrap the wire around the stake and fasten it securely.



7. Push the stake into the mud. Make sure the top of the stake does not stick up or the animal might get tangled on it and not go down the slide wire.



8. Place the trap at the set. But first, pull it a little way down the wire to make sure the lock slides in the right direction. Slide the lock back towards the stake, then set the trap.



Making a Tangle Stake Drowner

- Tie a length of wire to a long stake.
- Fasten the trap chain to the wire.
- Place the stake firmly in deep water.
- Put another stake on the deep side of the first stake.
- The animal will tangle around the stakes and drown.

Making a Tangle Stake Drowner



1. Fasten the wire to a long stake and cut the wire to length.



2. Fasten the trap on the other end of the wire.

3. Put the stake out in deep water and push it in firmly.



4. Put a second stake just beyond the first one. The animal will swim out, get tangled around the stakes, and drown.



The Pocket Set

The pocket set is one of the most effective sets for water trapping. It is made by digging a hole in the bank where the water meets the shoreline. The hole will attract the attention of a passing animal. This set is good for mink, muskrats, and raccoons. Using bait, lure, or both makes a pocket set more effective.

Steps for Making a Pocket Set:

- Find a bank that is straight up and down.
- At the waterline, start digging a hole.
- Dig the hole 18 to 24 inches deep with the back of the hole above water level.

Making a Pocket Set

1. The best place for making a pocket set is in a bank that is fairly straight up and down. It will be easier to dig a hole here.



2. Dig a hole into the bank starting at the water line.



3. Dig the hole about 18 to 24 inches deep. Dig at a slight uphill angle so the back of the hole is out of the water. This will give you a dry place to put the bait.

4. Shave off the bank on both sides of the pocket. This makes animals approach the pocket from the front.



5. Put bait in the back of the pocket up out of the water. You could also put lure in the pocket.



6. Put the trap in place at the mouth of the pocket. The trap should be positioned just outside the mouth of the pocket in case an animal doesn't want to go all the way inside.



The Blind (Natural) Set

The blind set is good to use if you can find a path where animals are traveling regularly along the shoreline. To make a blind set, you should find a point where the path or trail goes through a narrow place. You can also use some natural objects like logs, sticks or rocks to narrow down the trail. A blind set can be good for any type of animal. It is not necessary to use bait or lure with a blind set.

Steps for Making a Blind Set

- Locate a path or trail the animals are using regularly.
- Find a narrow spot on the trail or use an object to narrow down the trail.
- Place the trap in the narrow spot.

Making a Blind Set



1. Animals traveling the shoreline pass between these trees. This is a good place to put a trap.

2. A small log is placed on the bank to guide the animals, and the bank is dug out to make a place to put the trap.



3. The trap is placed in a shallow depression that was dug for it.



4. Push the trap firmly into the mud so it does not wobble.



5. This extra stick placed opposite the small log will help guide animals into the trap. No lure or bait is needed at a blind set because the animals are already traveling here.



The Cubby Set

The cubby set can be effective for many animals. It is like a pocket set, except the cubby is made above ground instead of digging a hole in the bank. You can use rocks, old boards, or old pieces of wood to build the cubby. The cubby set is good for raccoon and mink, but muskrats are occasionally taken in cubby sets. Bait, lure, or both will make a cubby set more effective.

Steps for Making a Cubby Set

- Find an area of shallow water with a sloping bank.
- Build a cubby on the shoreline. The front of the cubby should be at the edge of the water. The back of the cubby should be closed.
- Put bait in the back of the cubby.
- Place a trap in front of the cubby.

Making a Cubby Set

1. Tracks on the bank show that animals are traveling here, but the bank is too flat for a pocket set and there are no guiding objects to make a blind set.



2. A cubby is built like a box. Here, two small logs make the sides of the box. The back of the box is sealed off with a chunk of wood to keep the animals from entering on that end.



3. Next, a roof is placed on the cubby. Sticks, slabs of wood, bark, or boards can be used to make the roof. Cubbies can also be built with rocks if they are available.



4. Often, you can make a place for your trap by scuffing out a hole in the mud with your boot.



5. Place bait in the back of the cubby. You could also use lure.



6. To finish the set, place the trap just outside the mouth of the cubby.



Muskrat Trapping

Musk rats are a good target animal for beginning trappers. They are very easy to catch. They leave a lot of sign, and it is easy to determine if there are muskrats living in a body of water. Muskrat sets are not hard to make and most often muskrats can be caught in simple blind sets. Good blind sets for muskrats can be made at dens, in runways, and where the muskrats climb out on the bank.

Set at a Den

Muskrat dens are often easy to locate. Look for holes in the bank just under the surface of the water. Look for chewed bits of food floating at the water's edge. This often indicates the presence of a muskrat den. In large areas of shallow water with no banks, muskrats build lodges or huts out of reeds, cattails, and other material. Look for an opening around the base of the hut.

Muskrat Dens

This is a typical muskrat den dug into the bank. Where dirt banks are available muskrats usually dig dens like this.



In marshes, muskrats build huts by piling up reeds and grasses. Inside is a hollow living chamber for the muskrats.



Set at a Muskrat Den

1. One of the easiest ways to catch a muskrat is to set a body-grip trap in front of a muskrat den.



2. Set the trap on the bottom where the muskrats are entering and leaving the den.



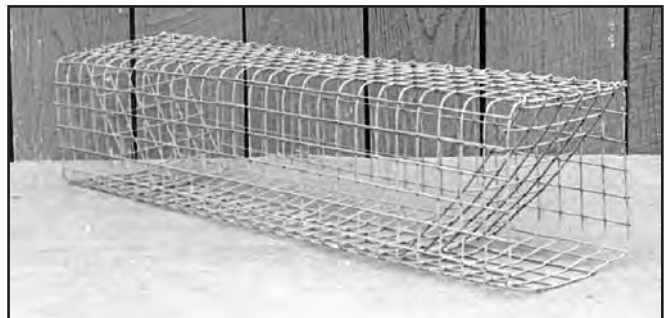
3. Use a couple of small sticks between the upper jaws of the trap to hold it in place and keep the muskrat from knocking the trap over.



Set in a Runway

As muskrats travel back and forth in shallow water, they create a small channel or runway in the mud. A runway is a good place to set a trap. A bodygrip trap works well in a runway. There is another kind of trap, called a "colony" trap, that is used only for muskrat trapping. This trap is made in the shape of a box with a swinging door in each end. It is sometimes called a "box" trap. The muskrat swims into the trap, pushing up the door, and the door falls closed behind it. If the trap is set completely underwater, the muskrat will drown. One very big advantage of the colony trap is that it will catch more than one muskrat at a time. A colony trap is very good to use in runways.

Colony Trap



This is a colony trap. It is used primarily for muskrat trapping. There is a swinging door in each end of the trap. The trap is set in a muskrat runway or in front of a muskrat den. The advantage of this trap is that it will catch more than one muskrat at once.

Set in a Muskrat Runway

This trapper is setting a colony trap in a runway that muskrats have carved out in shallow water. The muskrats will swim down the runway and enter the trap. This set could also be made with a bodygrip trap.



A Set at a Climb Out

Muskrats often leave distinct trails where they climb out of the water to feed on the shore. These trails are sometimes called "slides." A good set can be made by placing a trap just under the water at the base of a trail where the muskrats climb out. A foothold trap is the best choice for making a set at a climb-out.

Set at a Muskrat Climb Out

Here muskrats are climbing out on the bank. This is a good place to use a foothold trap.



Set the trap just under the water where the muskrats are climbing out. Stake the trap out in deep water or use a slide wire drowner to drown the muskrat.



Chapter 9 Study Guide

Review Questions

- Name the three furbearers most commonly trapped in water sets:
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
- When making a water set, trap sets must be designed to _____ the furbearer for a humane catch.
- _____ are the easiest furbearers for beginners to trap in water sets.
- The best two methods to drown your catch are the use of _____

 _____ or _____
 _____.
- The _____ set, _____ set, and _____ set are the three best water trapping sets to use.
- The _____ trap can catch more than one furbearer at a time.

Chapter 10

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Land trapping
- Flat set
- Bedding a trap
- Stabilize
- 4-point system
- Covering
- Cross staking
- Swivel
- Backing

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Recognize the major land-dwelling furbearers in Ohio: fox, coyote, opossum, skunk, and raccoon
- Recognize three sets used in land trapping: dirthole set, flat set, and cubby set
- Recognize good places for land trapping sets: brush rows, beside farm lanes, brush-filled gullies, old dumps
- Learn how to bed a trap, use the 4-point system to check for a wobbly trap
- Learn how to cover a trap with: dirt, grass, or leaves
- Understand that steel stakes are good for fastening land traps, learn cross staking
- Recognize the need for having one or more swivels in a trap chain.
- Learn how to make a dirthole set
- Learn how to make a flat set
- Learn how to make a cubby set

Chapter 10

Land Trapping

A number of furbearing animals restrict their travels to dry land. In Ohio, the major land dwelling animals are the fox, coyote, opossum, and skunk. Raccoons also are often captured in sets made on dry land. Trapping in these situations and for these animals is generally known as land trapping.

The sets most often used to take these animals are the dirthole set, the flat set, and the cubby set. The flat set and dirthole set are both made on level ground in relatively open areas. When finished, the sets are even with the surrounding area. The

cubby set is made by constructing a small, hollow shelter that is open on one end. Bait or lure is placed in the back of the cubby, and a trap is set in front of the opening.

The more wary animals like the fox and coyote are rarely captured in a cubby set. However, any of the land-dwelling animals can be captured at a dirthole or flat set.

One of the most important considerations in land trapping is covering the trap and bait. Ohio law requires that all traps and flesh baits placed on dry land must be covered. This helps keep birds of prey from spotting the bait and getting in the trap. In covering your traps, you must be careful that the covering does not interfere with the closing of the trap jaws.

You must also be careful where you set your traps. As a rule, you should avoid setting traps close to areas of human habitation. Ohio regulations prohibit setting a trap within 150 feet of an occupied dwelling without notifying the resident. Beginning trappers are advised to maintain an even greater distance with their traps. This will help you avoid catching someone's pet in a trap.

Good Places for Land Trapping Sets



Brush rows and fencerows are good places to locate sets for land animals. They act as barriers and tend to steer the movement of these animals. They are also a source of food for predators that eat mice, birds, and other small animals that live in this cover.



Farm lanes are often used as travelways by land animals. Look for places where these lanes go through another type of cover. Ohio law prohibits setting traps directly in a lane or path commonly used by humans or domestic animals. Make your sets beside these travelways.



Brush-filled gullies are attractive to animals. They provide food and shelter. The culvert in this picture also provides a funnel that narrows down the movement of the animals.



Many land animals visit old dumps where they find mice and small birds living among the junk. Sets in these locations will produce mostly opossums and raccoons

Setting Land Traps

Setting traps on land is different than setting traps in the water in several ways. Foothold traps are the best and safest choice for land trapping, and the fastening system on these traps will be used to hold the animal alive. This is usually done with steel stakes. In water trapping, traps can be pressed into the mud to hold them steady. In land trapping, it is a little more difficult to get the trap steady. The process of putting a trap in the ground and getting it steady is called “bedding” the trap. Traps set under water do not need a covering. Traps set on land must be covered to hide them from the animals. Also, Ohio regulations require that all traps used on land must be covered. All baits must be covered as well.

Bedding Traps

In water trapping, you can press a trap down into the mud to make it steady. When a trap is steady, not wobbly, it is said to be stabilized. It is more difficult to stabilize a trap in dry dirt than it is in mud. Also a trap should set level with or slightly below the area surrounding it. On dry land, this means you will have to dig a shallow hole in which to set the trap. This shallow hole is called the trap bed.

Steps for Bedding a Trap

- Dig a shallow hole for the trap.
- Put loose dirt in the bottom of the hole.
- Press the trap into the loose dirt.
- Check the trap to see that it is not wobbly - use the 4-point system.
- Pack the dirt around the outside of the trap.

Bedding Traps



1. Dig a shallow hole slightly bigger than the trap. It should be deep enough to get the trap just below ground level.



2. Put some loose dirt in the bottom of the hole. You do not have to sift this dirt, but avoid putting in rocks, sticks, or hard clods of dirt.



3. Press the trap down hard into the loose dirt. Use a slight twisting motion to make the trap pack into the dirt.



4. Use the “4-point system” to check your trap to make sure it is not wobbly. Point 1 - Press on the loose jaw.



5. Point 2 - Press on the other jaw.



6. Point 3 - Press on one lever.



7. Point 4 - Press on the other lever.



8. If the trap is wobbly at any point, pack more dirt under that part and press the trap down again.



9. The loose jaw is often a problem. You can just lift it up to pack more dirt under it.



10. When the trap is stabilized (not wobbly), pack dirt around the outside of the jaws.

Covering Traps

Traps set on land must be covered to hide them from the animals. Three things commonly used to cover traps on land are dirt, leaves, and grass or weeds. When you cover a trap, you must make sure the covering does not interfere with the action of the trap.

For less wary animals like raccoons and opossums, you can cover your trap with grass or leaves. It is not necessary to have the trap completely hidden as long as the material camouflages the trap well. If you cover a trap with leaves or grass, do not put too much of this material on top of the trap. If too much covering gets between the trap jaws, this could keep the trap from closing completely.

For more wary animals, like fox and coyote, you should completely cover your trap with dirt. Use a sifter to take the large objects out of the dirt. If objects get under the trap pan, the trap might not fire. If objects get between the trap jaws, the trap might not close.

Covering Traps with Dirt

1. Make sure your trap is stabilized (not wobbly). Pack dirt around the outside of the trap, but do not pack dirt over the levers. You do not need to sift the dirt used outside the trap, but avoid sticks, stones, or large clods of hard dirt.



2. You should put a cover over the pan to keep dirt from getting under it. You can use a piece of wax paper crumpled into a ball, then straightened out. This softens the paper and keeps it from making a noise when the animal steps on it.



3. You must sift the dirt that covers the trap. This filters out any sticks, stones, or hard clods of dirt that might get caught in the trap jaws.



Covering Traps with Leaves

1. Dig a depression for your trap and press it in place. The trap must not be wobbly. Bed and stabilize the trap as necessary.



2. Arrange one layer of leaves over your trap. Choose leaves that naturally lie flat. It is not necessary to totally cover the trap. If a few parts show through the leaves it is okay.



3. Brush a few loose leaves in next to your trap to help camouflage it. DO NOT pile a thick layer of leaves over your trap. They may plug up the trap jaws and keep the trap from closing.



Covering Traps with Grass

1. In grassy areas, grass makes a natural covering for traps. Dig a bed for the trap and stabilize it. Use short blades of grass to cover the trap. If necessary, you can tear up long blades of grass with your hands.



2. It is not necessary to completely hide the trap. If the trap shows through in a few places it is okay. DO NOT put too much grass on top of the trap. It could prevent the trap jaws from closing.



Fastening Traps

Animals trapped on land are captured alive. The fastening system used to hold these traps must be able to withstand the struggles of the animal until the trapper arrives. Steel stakes are usually used to fasten land traps. Wood stakes can also be used, but steel stakes are more durable. The stakes you use must be long enough and strong enough to hold the largest animal that may get in the trap. Sometimes using two shorter stakes to hold a trap can be easier than using one extra long stake. This is called "cross staking." Another method that can sometimes be used to fasten a trap is to wire the trap to a tree or other solid object.

While an animal is restrained in a trap, it will do a lot of twisting and turning as it tries to escape. It is important that you have at least one working swivel in the trap chain. This keeps the chain from getting tangled up. If the chain gets tangled up, the animal could escape from the trap, or it could injure itself because it cannot move freely with the trap. You need at least one swivel, but two or more swivels work even better.

Large animals, like coyotes, can pull up a single stake. If you expect to encounter coyotes, you may need to cross stake your traps.



The stakes should be driven all the way down into the bottom of the bed.

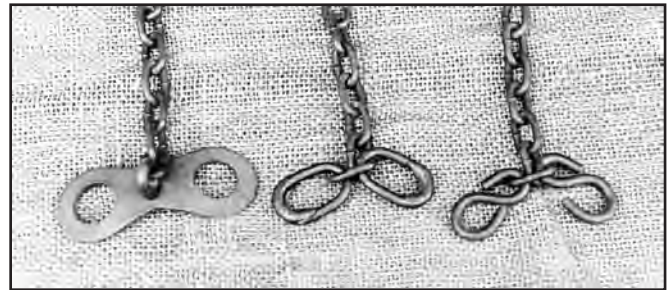


Fastening Traps with Steel Stakes

Steel stakes are best for fastening traps on dry land. They are more durable than wood stakes. One stake is usually enough to hold most animals.



These fasteners can be installed on the end of your trap chain to use with a steel stake. They will swivel around the stake and keep the animal from tangling up.



In cross staking, two stakes are driven through the fastener at an angle. This makes the fastening very strong. These fasteners are used for cross staking.

Fastening Traps to a Tree



Here, the trap is fastened to a tree to anchor it. Twist the ends of the wire together, but do not twist it tightly against the tree. With the wire loose this way, the animal can circle the tree and not get tangled up.

The Dirthole Set

The dirthole set is one of the most effective sets for land trapping. It is made by digging a small hole in the ground and hiding a trap in front of the hole. The hole itself will attract the attention of an animal. Bait and lure placed in the hole will add additional attractions to the set. Any of the land-dwelling furbearers can be taken in a dirthole set. The dirthole set is especially effective for fox and coyotes. If you are trapping for fox or coyote, some fox or coyote urine applied to the backing will help attract these animals.

Steps for Making a Dirthole Set

- Select a good backing for the set.
- Dig a hole that slants underneath the backing.
- Dig a bed in front of the hole for your trap.
- Bed the trap and cover it.
- Put bait in the bottom of the hole and cover it.
- Put lure on the edge of the hole.
- If you are trapping for fox or coyotes, put urine on the backing.

Making a Dirthole Set

1. Locate a good backing for your set. The backing steers the animal into your trap. Here a large clump of grass is used as a backing.



2. Dig a hole that slants underneath the backing. Lay your dirt sifter nearby and put the dirt in the sifter as you dig.



3. The hole should be about 3 inches in diameter, about the size of a large coffee cup. Dig the hole about 8 inches deep.



4. Just in front of the hole, dig a bed for your trap. Dig this bed about the same size as the jaws of the trap.



5. Stake your trap down in the middle of the bed. Drive the stake all the way down.



6. Put the trap in the bed. When the trap is in place, it should be slightly below ground level.



7. Put a cover over the pan of your trap, and sift dirt through your dirt sifter to finish covering the trap.



8. When you are done sifting, make sure there is not a hump of dirt on the middle of the trap. Brush some off if necessary.



9. Use a spoon or flat stick to put bait in the bottom of the hole. Be careful not to spill any bait on your trap bed.



10. Gather up some dry material and wad it into a ball. Push this into the bottom of the hole to cover the bait. This will hide the bait.



11. Apply some lure to the back edge of the hole. Dip a small twig in the lure bottle and stick it in the dirt at the edge of the hole.



12. To finish the set, apply some fox urine to the backing. A squirt bottle is very handy for applying urine.



The Flat Set

The flat set is similar to the dirthole set, except that it does not use a hole. The flat set uses an above ground object to attract the attention of an animal. This attractor also serves as the backing for the set. The trap is placed close to the attractor and lure is applied to the side of the attractor nearest the trap. This set can take all land-dwelling furbearers, but it is most effective for fox and coyotes.

One variation of the flat set is called the post set. It is made using a small post, about the size of a broom handle, and six to eight inches tall for a backing. Fox and coyotes like to urinate on objects like this to mark their territory. Urine or lure can be applied to the post on the side nearest the trap to make it more attractive.

Steps for Making a Flat Set

- Place the attracting object where the animal can see it.
- Dig a bed in front of the object for your trap.
- Bed the trap and cover it.
- Put a few drops of lure on the attractor.

Making a Flat Set

1. A flat set uses an above ground object as a backing and an attractor. A chunk of old wood makes a good attractor for a flat set.



2. Dig a bed for your trap about 6 inches from the attractor. Stake the trap and put it in the bed.



3. Cover the trap with dirt as in the dirthole set. To make the set look more natural, you can brush a small amount of ground clutter over the bare dirt.



4. To finish the set, pour a few drops of lure on the attractor. You could put urine on the attractor in place of lure.



The Cubby Set

The cubby set can be used for land trapping the same way it is used in water trapping. The cubby can be made of rocks, logs, boards, bark, or any other available material. Bait, lure, or both are placed in the back of the cubby to attract the animal. The cubby set will take less wary furbearers like raccoons, opossums, and skunks. It is not a good set for fox or coyotes.

Steps for Making a Cubby Set

- Build a cubby and make sure the back of the cubby is closed so the animals cannot enter from that end.
- Dig a bed for your trap at the opening of the cubby.
- Bed the trap and cover it.
- Place lure, bait, or both in the back of the cubby.

Making a Cubby Set

1. This cubby is built against a tree. The tree closes up the back of the cubby. Two rocks are laid down for the walls.



2. A large rock makes the roof. You can also make cubbies out of wood, logs, slabs of bark, and other natural materials.



3. Dig a bed for your trap just outside the opening of the cubby.



4. Here, the trap is fastened to a tree to anchor it. The wire is not twisted tightly against the tree. With the wire loose the animal can circle the tree and not get tangled up.



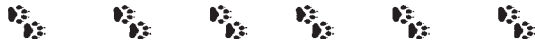
5. Put the trap in the bed. The trap should be placed just outside the opening of the cubby.



6. Here, leaves are used to cover the trap. The cubby set is for less wary furbearers, and there is no need to cover the trap with dirt.



7. To finish the set, place some bait, or lure, or both in the back of the cubby.



Chapter 10 Study Guide

Review Questions

- Name three common furbearers caught in land sets: A. _____, B. _____, C. _____.
- The three most common land sets are: A. _____, B. _____, C. _____.
- Traps set on land can be covered with: A. _____, B. _____, C. _____.
- When using dirt to cover your trap a piece of _____ should be put over the pan.
- The four-point system is used to properly _____ your trap.
- _____ stakes are best for land traps and at the least one _____ should be on the chain to avoid tangling.
- In loose soil _____ will help secure the trap.
- The _____ set is the most effective set on land.
- When using _____ an above ground object is used to attract the animal's attention.
- The _____ is not effective on coyotes and foxes.

Chapter 11

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Powering device
- Multi-strand steel cable
- Non-lethal trapping device
- Lock
- Snare swivel
- Ferrules
- Deer stop
- Immovable object
- Snare extension
- Entanglement situation
- Jump pole
- Leaning pole
- Cable cutters

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand that modern cable snares do not use a powering device, and powering devices are illegal on snares used in Ohio
- Understand a snare can be used as a non-lethal trapping device
- Recognize the parts of a snare: cable, lock, end fastener, ferrules, and deer stops
- Understand that multi-strand steel cable is used for modern snares and is the only material legal for Ohio snares
- Understand that Ohio regulations prohibit powering devices on snare locks
- Understand how a snare works
- Understand that Ohio regulations require that a snare be fastened to an immovable object or stake
- Learn different options for anchoring a snare: stakes, trees, or other large objects
- Understand that wire should never be used to extend a snare
- Learn to use wire to support and stabilize a snare loop
- Understand that a snare can be lethal if an animal gets tangled up at a set and cannot get its feet back on the ground
- Understand that conditions at a set which would allow an animal to get

tangled up is called an entanglement situation

- Identify three entanglement situations: a fence, brush, or a small sapling
- Learn to avoid entanglement by: fastening snares to large trees, staking snares in open areas, checking the set area for entanglement, using shorter snares
- Understand the need to avoid entanglement situations in Ohio because of the risk to domestic animals
- Learn how to set a snare
- Understand that some animals like canines are snared by the neck and other animals like raccoons are snared by the body
- Understand that a snare loop must be adjusted to fit the type of animal you are trying to catch
- Understand that the size of the snare loop and the height at which the snare loop is placed above the ground is determined by the size, shape, and height of the animal.
- Learn how to position snares to take different animals
- Understand that snares could be a problem around deer and livestock
- Learn to avoid deer and livestock by not setting snares in livestock pastures or on deer trails, and using jump poles or leaning poles where deer might be encountered
- Recognize that jump poles or leaning poles can create an undesirable entanglement situation if they are fastened down tightly
- Identify cable cutters as a helpful piece of equipment for snaring
- Understand that snares work best in blind sets and the use of bait or lures close to snares is undesirable

Chapter 11

Trapping with Snares

Snares Past and Present

When you mention snares or snaring to most people, they think of a bent-over pole with a noose fastened to the end of it. This is how snaring was practiced in days-gone-by. Although this outdated misconception of snaring still exists, modern snares and modern snaring methods are significantly different than those of the past.

With the modern cable snare you can hold animals alive and unharmed, and there is no need to use a bent pole or other powering device on a snare. Ohio regulations prohibit the use of any powering device on a snare.

Modern snares are made of stranded steel cable. This cable is extremely strong and resistant to abuse, yet it is flexible enough to form easily into a loop. An animal can't easily break this cable or bite it in two. The modern cable snare also has a locking device and a stop to keep the loop from opening back up once it starts to close. The modern cable snare can be used as a non-lethal trapping device.

This section has been prepared to help familiarize you with the modern cable snare. It is designed to give you the basic knowledge you need to use snares safely and efficiently.

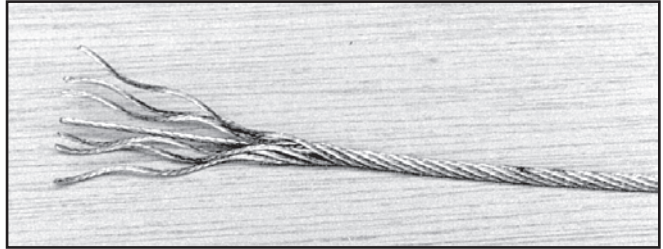
The Modern Cable Snare

The modern cable snare is made of multiple or single strand steel cable. Strands of small diameter wire are wound together to make a larger strand. Ohio regulations specify that multiple or single strand steel cable is the only material that can be used for snares. This cable comes in several different sizes. Cable measuring $\frac{3}{32}$ of an inch in diameter is the most popular size for snaring.

Another important part of the modern cable snare is a sliding lock. As the snare loop is pulled closed, the lock slides down the cable. However, the lock will not slide in the opposite direction. This is what keeps the animal from backing out of the snare or shaking the snare off. There are a number of different types of locks. Locks that use springs or other powering devices to hold them closed are not legal for use in Ohio.

Modern cable snares also have some device on the end of the snare for fastening it in place. Most snares have a swivel as a fastening device. Swivels are highly recommended. Snare swivels allow the animal some freedom of movement while it is restrained in the snare. They also help keep the cable from getting badly kinked and twisted. This could possibly cause the cable to break.

Ferrules are used to hold the lock and fastener in place on the snare. These ferrules are hammered or crimped into place on the snare cable.

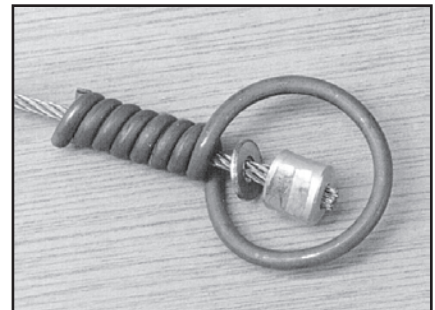


Modern snares are made of multiple or single strand steel cable. This cable is very strong. This piece of cable has been unraveled to show the individual strands.

The sliding lock is another important part of the modern cable snare. It keeps the loop from opening up after the animal is captured. On this snare you can also see a deer stop crimped to the snare cable.



This snare has a swivel for fastening it in place. You can also see a ferrule crimped on the cable which holds the snare together.



Another component that may be found on a snare is a stop crimped on the cable that prevents the snare loop from closing past a minimum diameter. These are commonly known as deer stops. They allow a deer to shake the snare off, if it gets its foot in one.

How a Snare Works

A snare does not need a powering device because the animal itself provides the power to close the snare. The snare loop is suspended above a trail or path the animal is expected to take. The animal, walking along, enters the snare loop and continues its forward progress pulling the snare down on itself.

This may sound odd, but if you take into consideration how an animal travels through its environment and the conditions it meets there, this becomes more understandable.

As an animal travels along, it regularly encounters weeds, vines, and small pieces of brush in its path. An animal does not make a detour every time it encounters one of these objects. Instead, it simply pushes its way through the obstruction. If the animal cannot muscle its way through, it will then back up and make a detour.

An animal does not recognize a snare as a danger. On encountering a snare, the animal behaves as if the snare were just another vine or weed and tries to push its way on through. When it finds it cannot break free of the “vine” the animal will try to back out. However at this point, the snare is cinched down on the animal, and the lock keeps the snare from opening up.

Fastening & Stabilizing Snares

Like any other trapping device, a snare must be fastened in place to hold the animal while it is detained in the snare. Ohio regulations require that a snare be fastened to a solid, immovable object or that it be staked.

One easy way to fasten a snare is to stake it in place as you would a foothold trap. Make sure the stake is long enough and strong enough to hold any animal that might get in the snare. Wood stakes can be used for snares, but many trappers prefer to use steel stakes because they are more durable.

Another way to fasten a snare is to anchor it to an immovable object. This could be a tree or a large log that the animal cannot move. If the path of the target animal comes close to a tree or a log, this would be a good place to construct a set. To fasten a snare to a tree or log use a piece of heavy gauge wire to go completely around the trunk. Pass the wire through the snare swivel and twist it closed.

Sometimes a snare is not quite long enough to reach the object that you want to fasten it to.

In this case, you should use an extension made of snare cable to lengthen the snare. NEVER use wire to extend a snare. A wire snare extension could easily kink and break as the animal struggles in the snare.

A snare must be supported so that the loop hangs vertically and will be in the proper position to intercept the animal. This is called stabilizing a snare. The best way to stabilize a snare is with a piece of wire. One end of the wire is fastened to the snare cable and the other end of the wire is anchored solidly. By bending the wire you can position the snare.

One way to attach the wire to the snare is to bend a small hook in the wire and crimp this onto the snare cable. However, crimping the wire to the snare may interfere with the action of the swivel. Another way to attach the wire to the snare is to bend the end of the wire into the shape of an “N” and thread the snare cable into it.

To solidly anchor the end of the support wire, you can wrap it around a stake or wrap it around a tree or log. You can also anchor the end of the support wire by spearing it into the ground.

Wire in size 11 or 12 gauge, or larger, is best for fastening down and stabilizing snares. You should not, however, use wire to extend the length of a snare.

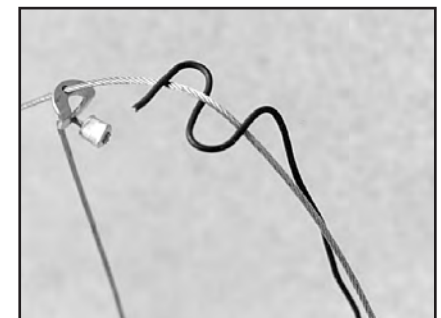
You can fasten a snare by wiring it to a tree. The tree should be large enough so the animal cannot chew it off or break it off.



Snares can also be staked in place. Make sure the stake is long enough to hold the animal.



Use a heavy piece of wire to stabilize the snare and support it.



Non-lethal Snaring

If an animal detained in a snare is given some freedom of movement, it is very unlikely that the animal can or will pull hard enough on the snare to choke itself. Here, the animal behaves much in the same manner as a pet dog that is leashed with a choker chain. However, under certain conditions and in certain situations, a snare can become a lethal device.

If an animal captured in a snare gets in a position where its feet cannot touch the ground, it could choke. This can happen if an animal gets tangled up in something at a set and cannot get its feet back on the ground. This situation is known as entanglement. By avoiding entanglement situations, you can be relatively certain that your snares will function in a non-lethal manner.

A snare set under a fence would be a good example of an entanglement situation. An animal captured in this snare could climb through or jump over the fence and become entangled. Another example of an entanglement situation would be a snare in a patch of brush. An animal could get the snare tangled up in the brush, be suspended, and choke.

A less obvious entanglement situation can occur if there is a very small sapling tree in the vicinity of the snare. An animal could get tangled around the sapling, and the snare could ride up on the sapling bending it over. The sapling would then act like a spring, constantly pulling upward on the snare and could choke the animal.

A large tree, on the other hand, does not create an entanglement situation. An animal cannot bend over a large tree, and in most instances the animal will not get tangled up on the tree because it cannot circle the tree with the snare any more than once or twice.

One of the best ways to avoid entanglement is to stake your snares in open areas where there is no brush or small trees. An animal captured here will just circle around the stake and has very little chance of being harmed.

When you get ready to place a snare, examine the area for entanglement. It is a good idea to extend the snare in its closed position and circle it around from its fastening point to make sure an animal cannot reach anything on which it can get tangled up. Using shorter snares will help you avoid entanglement. This gives the animal less opportunity to get tangled up.

Avoiding Entanglement Situations

- Do not set snares in fences.
- Do not set snares in brush patches.
- Do not set snares near small sapling trees.

In Ohio, we have a fairly dense human population. This means the chance of encountering a domestic animal is always present. For this reason, you should avoid entanglement with your snares.

Setting Snares

To set a snare, the looped end of the snare is suspended over a trail or path that the animal is expected to use. The animal enters the snare, sticking its head through the loop, and draws the snare down on itself.

Not all animals are snared around the neck. You will be more successful snaring some animals like raccoon and beaver if the snare cinches up on their body somewhere behind one or both of their front legs. If these animals are snared around the neck, they can often slip the snare off over their head using their front paws.

Other animals, like canines, have a long tapered head that is very wide just behind their ears. When a snare closes on their neck it is very unlikely they will be able to slip out of it or remove it. It is better to snare these animals by the neck.

To be successful with a snare, you must set it with a specific type of animal in mind. The loop has to be adjusted to fit the specific type of animal you are trying to catch. A snare set for one type of animal is not likely to catch another type of animal unless that animal is of similar size, shape, and height. A snare set for a raccoon might catch an opossum, but it probably would not catch a fox.

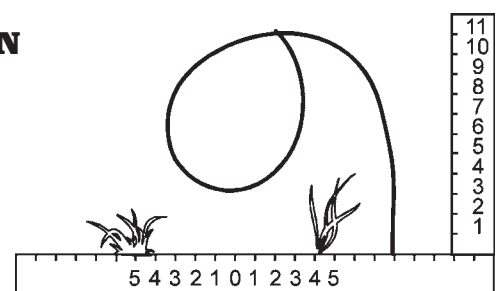
The size of the loop and the distance from the bottom of the loop to the ground must be adjusted to fit the animal you are targeting. You must consider the size of the animal and the height of the animal's head above the ground. Then you must decide whether it is best to catch the animal by the neck or by the body.

For an animal you want to snare by the neck, the snare loop should be just large enough to admit the animal's head. The snare should be positioned so that the bottom of the loop bumps the animal's chest after its head goes through the loop.

Loop Sizes and Heights for Furbearers

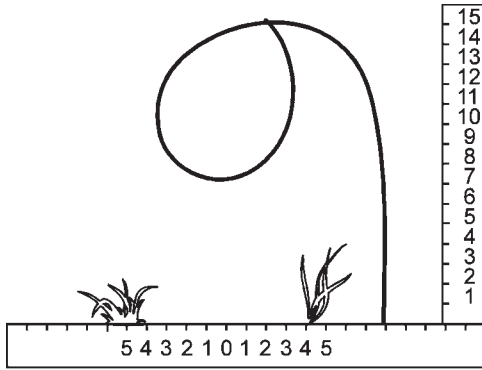
RACCOON

Loop
6" to 8"
Height
3" to 4"



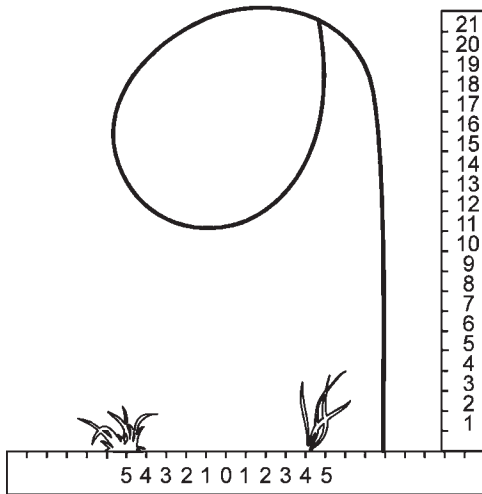
FOX

Loop
6" to 8"
Height
6" to 8"



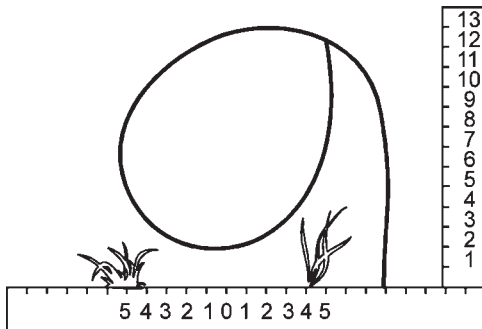
COYOTE

Loop
10" to 12"
Height
10" to 12"



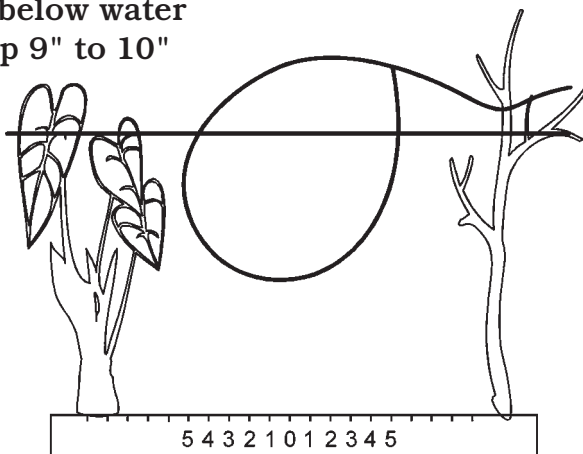
BEAVER

Loop
9" to 10"
Height
2" to 3"



BEAVER (Swimming)

Height 1/3 above water
2/3 below water
Loop 9" to 10"



To snare an animal by the body, you need a loop big enough to admit the front portion of the animal's body. The loop must be low enough to the ground so that the animal can step through it, but high enough to strike the animal's chest after the animal steps through the snare.

Avoiding Deer and Livestock

Your snares will be set to take furbearing animals, but there is a possibility that larger animals like deer or livestock could get tangled up in your snares. This is not a significant problem with other traps, like foothold traps, because the traps are not big enough to grip a large animal's foot. However, with a snare, the animal could get its foot through the snare loop.

Some of the Ohio regulations are designed to deal with this problem. Snares, or any other trapping devices, cannot be set in paths commonly used by humans or domestic animals. This means snares cannot be set in livestock trails.

The best way to avoid deer and livestock is to avoid setting your snares where these animals are likely to be encountered. You should not set snares within the confines of a pasture where livestock are present. Deer are free roaming wild animals, and you should take measures to avoid catching them in your snares. Do not set snares in trails that might be used by deer.

There are other instances when you may want to set a snare on a trail that is not used by deer, but still the possibility exists that a deer might take that trail. In this case, you can construct the set to make the deer avoid your snare.

You can do this by placing a pole over your snare. This is sometimes called a "jump pole." The pole should be about the size of your wrist or larger. You can place the pole horizontally over your snare and support it on each end. This looks like the goal posts on a football field. With the pole just above the snare, the deer will jump or step over the pole, while the target animal will go under the pole and into the snare.

A leaning pole is another way to steer the deer away from your snare. This can be done where a trail passes close to a tree. You can lean a pole against the tree at an angle with the snare between the pole and the tree. A deer will walk around the

Avoiding Deer and Livestock

- Do not set snares on trails used by deer.
- Do not set snares in pastures where livestock are present.
- Use a pole over your snare when and where deer might be encountered.

Sets with Snares



A pole placed horizontally over your snare will make deer jump over the snare. This is called a jump pole.

Leaning a pole against a tree like this will make deer walk around the outside of your snare. Make sure there is room for the deer to get around the pole.



outside of the pole and avoid the snare. Make sure there is room on the outside of the pole for the deer to detour around it.

If you use a pole, prop it up so that it will not fall down easily. Do not, however, wire or permanently fasten the pole in place. This could create an entanglement situation. An animal should be able to knock the pole over if it gets the snare around it.

Sets with Snares

Snaring requires a minimum amount of equipment for constructing sets. One special tool you may need for snaring is a set of cable cutters. These cutters are specially designed to cut steel cable. It is nearly impossible to cut this cable with any type of regular pliers.

Snares work best in trail or blind sets where animals will be walking along. The animal's forward progress is what closes the snare loop. You should not use lure or bait close to your snares. That could make an animal stop or hesitate as it approaches the snare. Snares do not work well at lured or baited sets.

Here is a set for coyote. There is a fence in the background. The snare has been set away from the fence so any animal caught in it will not be able to reach the fence.



Here is a set for fox made in the woods on a trail. A pole has been leaned over the snare in case a deer comes down the trail. There is nothing within reach of the snare for the animal to tangle up on.



This snare is set for coon in a trail through tall grass. There is no entanglement here and no danger of an animal being harmed by the snare.



Here is a snare set for beaver where the animals are climbing up over a creek bank. This is a clear area with no entanglement.



The following are examples of sets that can be made with snares. For these depictions, the snares have been painted white to make them easier for you to see. In actual practice, you would not use a white snare unless you were trapping in snow. To remove the shine from new snares and make them less visible, boil the snares for about a half-hour in a baking soda solution.



Chapter 11 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. The five main parts of a snare are:
A. _____, B. _____,
C. _____, D. _____,
E. _____.
2. Snares are made of _____
_____ and can only be used _____
_____.
3. A snare is best stabilized with the aid of a _____ and must be fastened to an _____ object or _____.
4. To catch a specific animal in a snare, the snare must be set at the proper _____ and have the proper _____ diameter.
5. Snares should be positioned to keep the animal from being _____ and injuring itself.
6. _____ pliers are needed to cut snare cable.
7. _____ devices cannot be used with snares in Ohio.

Chapter 12

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Pelts
- Skinning
- Fleshing
- Stretching
- Drying

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand that trappers have a responsibility to properly care for the animals they harvest
- Recognize three options for selling pelts: selling animals whole, selling green pelts, selling finished pelts
- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of selling: whole animals, green pelts, and finished pelts
- Learn how to store animals or pelts in a freezer

Chapter 12

Marketing Your Fur

Once you have caught an animal, it is your responsibility to see that the animal is taken care of properly. Remember, conservation means wise use of our natural resources. Letting an animal spoil from lack of attention would be a waste of the resource and an irresponsible act.

Marketing Your Fur

The fur or skins of furbearing animals are commonly called pelts. There are several options for preparing and marketing the fur of the animals you catch. You can sell the animals whole. You could do this at the end of each day, or you could freeze the animals and sell them at a later date. Another option is to skin the animals, store the pelts in a freezer, and sell them later.

The final option is to skin the animals, scrape the fat off the pelts, and dry the pelts on a stretcher. These are called finished pelts. This is how all raw fur pelts are presented when they are finally offered for sale to the large companies that process them for making garments. When a fur buyer purchases the whole animal or a skinned out pelt, he usually offers a lower price to allow for the time and effort it will take to finish the job.

Selling Animals Whole

Selling the whole animal is sometimes called selling “on the carcass” or “in the round.” If you live close to a fur buyer, you could sell the animals you catch at the end of each day. Another option is to freeze the animals whole and store them until you can take them to a fur buyer. The advantage in selling animals whole is you do not have to skin them.

However there are several disadvantages in selling animals whole. You have to live very close to a fur buyer if you are going to sell your animals at the end of each day. You must have access to a freezer to freeze animals whole. Also, whole animals take up a lot of room in a freezer, and you will not be able to store many animals this way. When a fur buyer buys an animal whole, he must complete all the steps to get the animal ready for market. Since this involves a considerable amount of work, the fur buyer will offer less money for animals bought whole.

Selling Undried Pelts

Another option for handling the animals you catch is to skin them and sell the undried pelts. Undried pelts are often called “green” pelts. These pelts can be stored in a freezer for later delivery to a fur buyer. This can be better than freezing whole animals because the pelts take up much less room in a freezer.

The advantage in this method is you do not have to flesh, stretch, and dry the pelts. This work will be left to the fur buyer. Because of this, the fur buyer will offer a lower price for these pelts. This is a disadvantage in selling undried pelts.

Selling Finished Pelts

Finished pelts will give you maximum value from the animals you harvest. There are four steps involved in processing a furbearer to get a finished pelt: skinning, fleshing, stretching, and drying. Skinning is the first step. The pelt must be removed from the carcass. After the pelt is removed, the fat is scraped off the leather side of the skin. This is called fleshing. Stretching is the next step. The pelt is placed on a wood or wire form to give it the proper shape. The final step is drying the pelt on the stretcher. This will temporarily preserve it. After the pelt is dry, it can be removed from the stretcher.

There are several advantages in marketing finished pelts. These pelts require no further processing, and a buyer will be able to give you full value for the pelts. Drying a pelt temporarily preserves it. You do not need a freezer to store these pelts during the cool weather of trapping season. You have many more options for marketing dried pelts. Frozen animals or green pelts must be sold locally, and they must be sold promptly once they are removed from the freezer. Dried pelts can be held for sale at any time. Also, dried pelts can be shipped to a fur buying company or to an auction company. This cannot be done with undried pelts.

The best way for a beginning trapper to learn about handling fur is to seek guidance and assistance from someone who is experienced in the process. Often, local fur buyers are willing to offer advice to a beginning trapper. It is to their advantage to see that the pelts they buy from you are properly handled. You might also seek help from an experienced trapper in your area.

Using Your Freezer

You can use a freezer to store an animal or an undried pelt. To do this, put the animal or pelt in a plastic bag and place it in the freezer. The plastic bag will help to prevent “freezer burn” which occurs when the animal or pelt dries out while it is in the freezer. It will also keep the animals or pelts from soiling the inside of the freezer.

If you have several animals or pelts, make sure you spread them out in the freezer. If you pile them up, the ones in the middle may not freeze fast enough and could spoil. Fur is a very good insulator.

To thaw an animal or pelt, remove it from the freezer and put it in a moderately warm room. Do not place these animals or pelts too close to a stove or other source of heat. The heat could cook the skin and ruin the pelt.

A freezer can be used to store animals or pelts for sale, but it can also be used for temporary storage. If you do not have time to completely process an animal or the pelt, you can put it in the freezer and remove it later to finish the job. This can be helpful if you catch more animals in one day than you have time to process.



Chapter 12 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Furs can be sold on the _____, _____, or fleshed, stretched, and dried.
2. If you store your animals in a freezer, they should be put in a _____ to prevent damage.

Chapter 13

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Vent
- Case skinning
- Gambrel
- Tail puller
- Tail slitter
- Disposable gloves

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Identify the tools used in skinning animals
- Understand that animals must be clean and burrs must be removed before skinning
- Learn how to skin an animal

Chapter 13

Skinning

Skinning is the process in which the animal's pelt is removed from the carcass. This is probably the most familiar step in fur handling. Animals should be cleaned and the burrs combed out of the pelt before you start skinning them.

Most Ohio furbearers are skinned following the same procedure. A cut is made from the heel of each back foot, along the inside of each leg, to the vent. Then a cut is made up the tail and around each side of the vent or anus. Next the pelt is cut free at the ankles. The skin is then pulled off the animal down towards the head, like pulling off a sock. The front legs are worked loose and cut free at the ankles. The head is carefully skinned out with cuts at the ears, eyes, and jaws. Finally, the pelt is cut free at the nose. This method of skinning is known as "case" skinning.

On raccoons, mink, skunk, fox, and coyotes, you have to skin out the tail. To do this, you make a cut about one-third of the way up the base of the tail. Pull the skin away from the tailbone until you reach the end of the cut. Then put a tail puller over the tailbone and pull the bone out of the skin. The tail skin must then be slit open so it will dry. Muskrats and opossum have a scaly tail that is of no value. The pelt can be cut away from the tail where the fur stops.

Tools for Skinning

You need a few basic tools to help you in skinning your animals. A good knife should be the first item on your list. Select a knife with a narrow blade for skinning your animals. You will also need some kind of a sharpener to help you keep a sharp edge on your knife. You cannot do a good job of skinning an animal with a dull knife. Remember to be very careful when handling a sharp knife. A comb or brush will help you remove burrs from an animal's fur. A bent dinner fork can also be used to remove burrs. A "gambrel" is used to help you hang animals up to skin them. There are a couple of tools that can help you in skinning an animal's tail. One is called a "tail puller" which will help you pull the bone out of the tail. The other is called a "tail splitter," and is used to split the tail skin open.

Tools for Skinning

A knife is one of the most important tools for the skinning. Any of these knives would work. Try to select a knife that has a narrow blade.



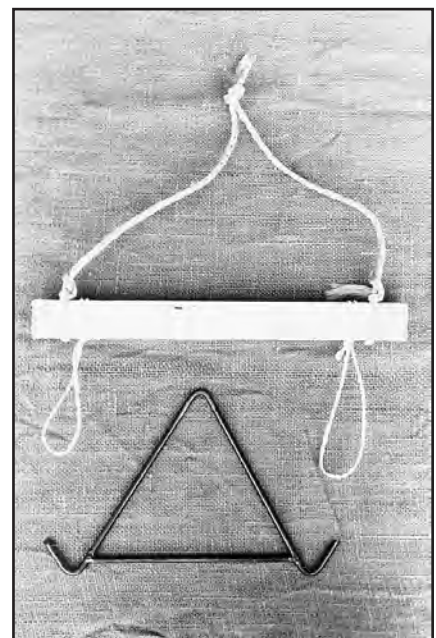
It is important to keep your knife sharp. These are two types of knife sharpeners. At the top is a stick sharpener made of ceramic. At the bottom is a whetstone. There are other types of sharpeners you can use.



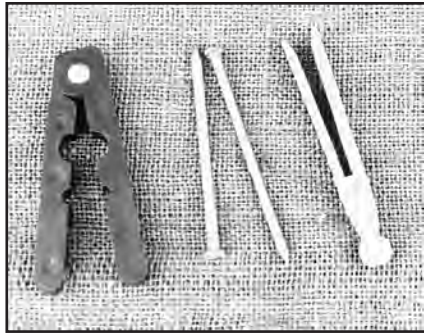
Combs and brushes are used to remove dirt and burrs from an animal's fur. At the left is a real fur comb. In the center is a pet brush. At the right is a bent dinner fork. The bent fork will do a good job of removing burrs.



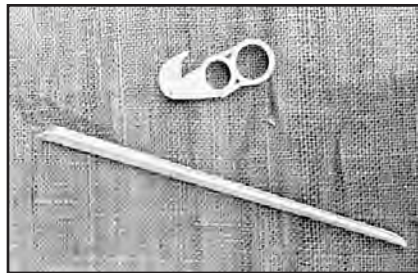
These tools are called "gambrels." They are used to hang up animals for skinning. At top is a homemade gambrel. Below is a gambrel that can be purchased from a trapping supply dealer.



These tools can be used to pull the bone out of a tail. At the left is a commercial tail puller. In the center are two large nails. These can be placed on either side of the tail bone, and squeezed with your hand while the bone is pulled between them. The clothespin works the same way.



These tools are used to slit the tail open after the bone is pulled out. At the bottom is a hollow metal guide. At the top is a commercial tail slitter.



Getting Ready to Skin

Before you skin an animal you should clean any dirt, mud, or blood from the fur. If the animal is very dirty, it is best to wash it before you skin it. Comb all the burrs out of the animal's fur. Burrs could hurt your hands. A pelt that is dirty, or holds burrs, will not bring maximum value.

Animals sometimes carry diseases that can be transferred to humans. It is a very good idea to wear rubber gloves while skinning an animal. This is especially important if you have cuts or scratches on your hands. Germs could enter your body through these cuts. You can buy thin, disposable gloves at any drug store.

Getting Ready to Skin

If an animal is muddy, you should wash it. If there is a source of clean water on your trapline, it is good to wash the animal shortly after you catch it, before the mud has a chance to dry.



Comb out all the burrs and other material that may be lodged in the animal's fur. This will be easier to do if the animal is dry.



This photo shows how to use a bent fork to remove a burr.



Disposable gloves can protect your hands as you skin. You can buy them at any drug store.



Skinning a Raccoon

The following series of photos shows how to skin a raccoon. Most other animals are skinned following the exact same procedure. On muskrats and opossums, the tail is not skinned out. The pelt is cut off at the fur line.

Skinning a Raccoon

1. The white lines show the first cuts to be made in skinning the animal. Here, a raccoon is used as an example, but most other animals are skinned using the same cuts and the same methods.



2. Hang the animal up by one leg. Holding the opposite leg, insert your knife just under the skin and cut to the bottom of the vent. Then cut the pelt free at the ankle. Repeat this procedure for the other leg.



3. Hang the animal up by both legs and cut up the bottom side of the tail. Start the cut about one-fourth of the way down the tail. Keep the point of your knife just under the skin. It is not necessary to cut the entire length of the tail.



4. Cut around the vent on both sides until the cut at the tail connects with the cuts on the legs.



5. Pull the pelt off the legs and down to the animal's crotch. Work your fingers around the crotch area and cut the pelt loose here.



6. Pull the pelt off the hips on both sides of the animal.



7. Work your fingers around the animal's back near the tail and pull the skin away from the back and partway down the tail.



8. Clamp a tail puller around the tail bone. Pull backward on the tail puller to pull out the tailbone.



9. Use a tail slitter to cut the tail open. This can also be done carefully with the point of your knife.



10. After the tail is free, pull the pelt down to the animal's shoulders. A rag can help you grip the pelt better. Don't be afraid to pull hard, there is little chance of damaging the pelt.



11. Work your fingers through the pelt at the armpit and pull the skin off the leg. If you pull upward on the leg as you pull down on the pelt, the leg will come out easier.



12. Pull the skin down the leg to the ankle. Cut the leg skin just below the claws. You do not need to leave long flaps of leg skin on the pelt. In fact, long legs can detract from the value of the pelt.



13. Pull the pelt down over the neck. You will notice the ear cartilage as a white lump on the side of the head. Cut through the cartilage close to the skull. Do not cut into the fur.



14. When both ears are cut, pull the pelt farther down on the head to cut the eyes. Follow the natural opening of the eye lids and do not cut into the fur.



15. After the eyes are done, cut the pelt free at the jaw hinge. Follow the lips to maintain the natural opening in the pelt. Try to avoid hitting the teeth. They can quickly dull your knife.



16. Once you have cut the upper lips and cheeks free, cut the nose. Cut through the nose cartilage close to the skin. Leave the actual nose on the pelt.



17. Finally, cut through the bottom lip to free the pelt. It is not necessary to skin out the entire bottom jaw. Cut the lip about halfway up.



Chapter 13 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Name five different tools needed to skin your furbearers:

1. _____, 2. _____,
3. _____, 4. _____,
5. _____.

2. Ohio furbearers are skinned in what is known as _____ skinning.

3. _____ should be worn when skinning your furs.

4. You should have an experienced trapper or fur buyer show you how to skin your furbearers. True or False.

Chapter 14

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Fleshing knife
- Fleshing beam

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand the need for fleshing a pelt
- Identify a fleshing knife and fleshing beam as tools used for fleshing animals with heavy fat
- Understand that muskrats and mink can be fleshed on a small board
- Learn about fleshing fox and coyote
- Learn how to flesh a fatty animal like a raccoon
- Learn how to flesh a muskrat or mink

Chapter 14

Fleshing

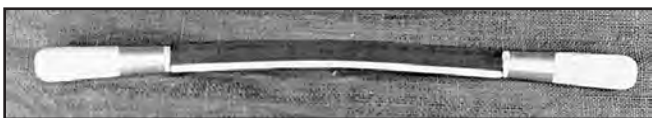
After the pelt is skinned from the animal, the fat must be scraped off the leather side of the pelt. This is called “fleshing.” This term can be a little misleading because there is usually very little muscle tissue or flesh left on the pelt. If the fat is not scraped off the pelt, the skin will not dry properly. If the skin does not dry properly, the hair roots may loosen and cause the fur to fall out. This would ruin the pelt.

Fleshing is one of the more difficult parts of fur handling to master. All the fat should be scraped off the leather side of the pelt so that only the clean leather remains. Animals like raccoons, opossums, skunks, and beaver have a heavy layer of fat and are difficult to flesh. To flesh these animals, you will need a two-handled fleshing knife. This can be obtained from a trapping supply dealer. You will also need a fleshing beam. This is a tapered board with a round top. The round top gives you a surface on which to scrape. The pelt is slipped over the end of the beam and the fleshing knife is used to scrape away the fat. It is very helpful if you can get another trapper or a fur buyer to show you how to use a fleshing knife and fleshing beam.

Mink and muskrats do not have too much fat, and they are fairly easy to flesh. You can flesh these animals by pulling the pelt over a small tapered board. For a fleshing tool, you can use a butter knife or an old soup spoon. Mink and muskrat pelts have a red membrane on the shoulders and most of the way down the back. Scrape the fat off these pelts but do not scrape away the red membrane.

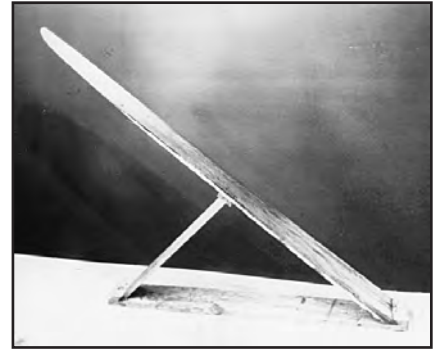
Red fox usually have very little fat on the pelt. It is often possible to flesh this animal just by pulling the fat off with your fingers. Gray fox may or may not have a lot of fat. If a gray fox is very fat, you can scrape it on a fleshing beam. Coyotes usually have quite a bit of fat, and it is easiest to flesh them on a fleshing beam.

Fleshing a Pelt

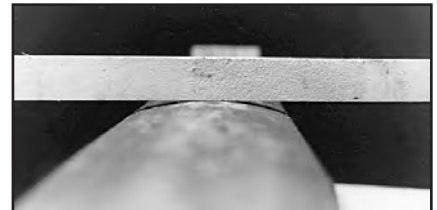


“Fleshing” is to scrape the fat off the leather side of the pelt. Above is a fleshing knife. This tool is used to scrape animals that have heavy fat like opossum and raccoon.

This is a typical fleshing beam. The pelt is slipped over the fleshing beam to hold it while it is being scraped.



The top of the beam is curved to accept the curved blade of the fleshing knife.



To begin, slip the pelt over the beam and place the animal's nose on the end of the beam. Hold the pelt in place by pushing your stomach against the beam. A rag will keep the pelt from slipping. Start scraping away the fat just behind the animal's ears.



As you work down the pelt, keep pulling the pelt up on the beam. Here the trapper is fleshing the stomach area of the pelt.



Flesh all the way down the body, then flesh each of the legs and the tail. Be careful not to tear off the tail.

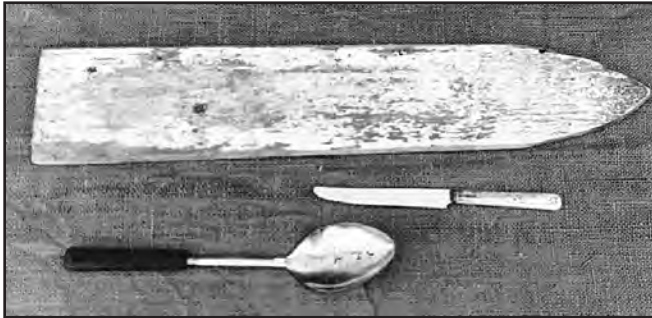


Chapter 14 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. To flesh out your pelts you will use what two tools:

1. _____, 2. _____.
2. Fleshing means to remove the _____ from the inside of the pelt.



Musk rats do not have a lot of fat on their pelts. They can be scraped with a spoon or a butter knife. The pelt can be pulled over a small tapered board to scrape it. Mink can be scraped the same way using a smaller board.



Chapter 15

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Stretcher
- Wire stretcher
- Wood stretcher
- Over-stretching
- Rodent damage

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Identify two types of stretchers: wood and wire
- Understand that pelts should not be overstretched
- Learn how to stretch a pelt on a wire stretcher
- Learn how to stretch a pelt on a wood stretcher
- Understand how pelts are dried
- Learn how to dry pelts that are sold fur side out
- Learn how to store pelts to prevent rodent damage

Chapter 15

Stretching and Drying

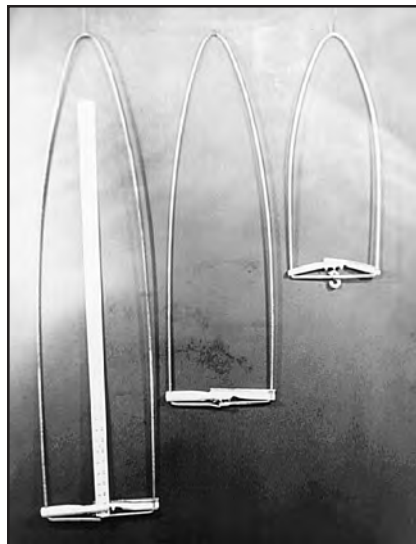
To prepare a pelt for drying, it must be put on a form to give it a certain shape. This is called “stretching” a pelt, and the forms are called “stretchers.” There are two kinds of stretchers, wire and wood. Wire stretchers are available from trapping supply dealers. Wood stretchers can be purchased, or you can make them yourself from scrap lumber. Stretchers come in different sizes for different animals. Select a stretcher that fits the animal you are processing.

Stretching is another term that can be confusing. You should not try to stretch a pelt like a piece of rubber. The pelt should not be stretched beyond its natural size. It is true that larger pelts usually bring a higher price. However, a small, overstretched pelt will not be as valuable.

Put the pelt on the stretcher with the leather side out. Most animals are marketed this way. As you pull the pelt on the stretcher, make sure that the back of the pelt is squarely on one side of the stretcher and the belly portion is squarely on the other side. Pelts that are misaligned will be devalued. Draw the pelt down on the stretcher and pull it taut, but do not overstretch it. Wire stretchers have metal hooks for holding the pelt in place. Pelts are fastened on wood stretchers with pins or small nails.

Stretching a Pelt on Wire

Wire stretchers are the most common type of fur stretcher. They are available from trapping supply dealers.



1. To start, the pelt is slipped over the wire stretcher. After the pelt is on the stretcher, make sure the pelt is adjusted squarely so all the back of the animal is on one side and all the belly of the animal is on the opposite side.



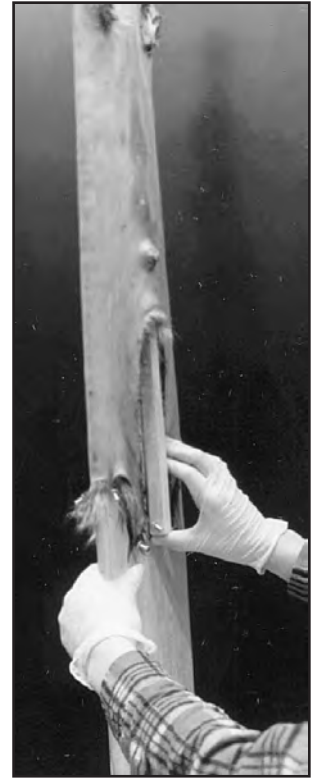
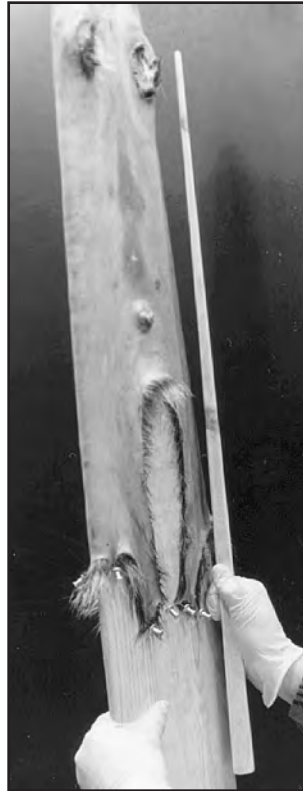
2. Use one hook of the stretcher to fasten the tail of the pelt in place. Use one or two teeth on the hook.



3. Use the other hook to fasten the back legs. Fasten both legs to this hook.



4. After the hooks are in place, pull down on the edges of the pelt to stretch it to length. Do not pull hard on the hooks, or they may tear out of the pelt. The stretched pelt should then be hung up to dry. Under good conditions, a pelt will dry in four to seven days.



Stretching a Pelt on Wood



Wood stretchers can also be used to stretch a pelt. You may be able to make them yourself. If you make your own stretchers, be sure to round off the edges.



Steel pins or small nails are used to hold the pelt. The tail is fastened on one side of the stretcher.



The feet are fastened on the opposite side of the stretcher.

A wedge must be placed under the belly side of the pelt on a wood stretcher. When the pelt is dry, the wedge is pulled out to allow some slack in the pelt so it can be removed from the stretcher.

Sizes for Wood Stretchers

D = Measurement down from the nose of the stretcher.
W = Width at measurement "D".



(Animal) (Shape) (Dimensions in inches)

Mink **B** **D**= 1½ 3 7 15 36
 (male) **W**= 1¼ 2 2½ 3 4
 (female) **W**= 1 1¾ 2 2½ 3

Fox **D** **D**= 6 9 18 35 52
 (large) **W**= 4 5 6½ 7 7
 (small) **W**= 3¾ 4¾ 6 6½ 6½

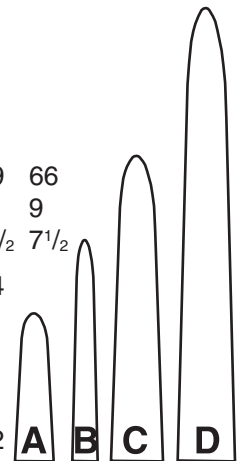
Raccoon **C** **D**= 11 30 48
 (large) **W**= 6 8 9
 (med.) **W**= 5½ 7½ 8
 (small) **W**= 5 7 8

Coyote **D** **D**= 7½ 12 17 39 66
 (large) **W**= 6 6¾ 7¼ 9 9
 (small) **W**= 5½ 6¼ 6¾ 7½ 7½

Muskrat **A** **D**= 3 5 6 24
W= 2 5 7 8

Opossum **C** **D**= 8 20 36
W= 5 6½ 8

Skunk **C** **D**= 3 12 22 42
W= 3 5¾ 7 7



Shapes

Stretching Muskrats

Animals like muskrats and opossums do not have hair on their tails. It is not necessary to skin out the tails on these animals. The pelt can be cut from the tail at the hairline.



With muskrats, fasten the tail flap to one of the hooks on the stretcher.



To fasten the belly side of the pelt, place the flap of skin in the middle of the belly on one of the hooks.



This pelt has not been squared on the stretcher properly. Note how the eye and ear holes are not centered on the stretcher.



This pelt is properly squared. If the nose tends to slip off the end of the stretcher it can be held in place with a clothes pin.

Drying

After a pelt is placed on a stretcher, it should be hung up to dry. It is best to dry pelts at a moderate temperature. A temperature of 50 to 60 degrees is about right. Do not hang pelts close to a stove or other source of heat to dry. This could damage the pelt.

Pelts can be dried in an unheated building as long as the temperatures remain above freezing. It will take longer to dry pelts this way. Using a fan to blow air across the pelts will speed up the drying process.

Under moderate conditions, a pelt will dry in four to seven days. It may take longer in an unheated building. When a pelt is dry, the leather will be stiff like cardboard. You can remove the pelt from the stretcher once it is dry.

Most animals are sold with the leather side out. Fox and coyotes are sold with the fur side out. With these animals, you must first dry the pelt partway with the leather side out. Start by fastening the pelt on the stretcher with the leather side out. Dry the pelt until the surface of the skin is dry to the touch. This may take 12 to 48 hours depending on the temperature. Remove the pelt from the stretcher, carefully turn it fur side out, and put it back on the stretcher to finish drying it. If you leave one of these pelts leather side out too long and it gets too dry to turn, wrap the pelt in a damp towel and leave it for an hour or two. This will soften the leather and allow you to turn the pelt.

After the pelts are removed from the stretchers, they should be stored in a safe place until you are ready to sell them. Rodents, especially mice and rats, can damage dried pelts by chewing on them. To prevent rodent damage, hang the dried pelts from a rafter or from the ceiling where rodents cannot reach them. Use a piece of wire to hang the pelts up. Rodents cannot climb up and down a piece of wire.

Fox and coyote are sold fur side out. The animals are first placed on the stretcher skin side out and allowed to dry overnight or until the skin feels dry to the touch. The pelt is then removed from the stretcher.



Chapter 15 Study Guide

Review Questions

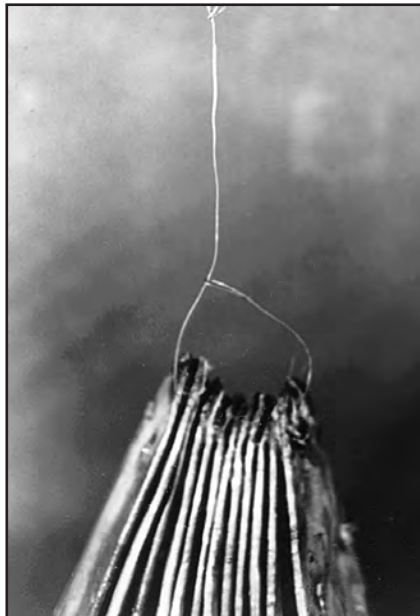
1. You can use either _____ or _____ stretcher to dry your pelts.
2. Pelts are hung until they are stiff like cardboard. True or False.
3. You should hang your fur near a hot stove to dry. True or False.
4. Dried pelts should be hung from a piece of wire hanging from a rafter to prevent _____ from damaging your fur.



The pelt is turned inside out. Then it is replaced on the stretcher, fur side out, and allowed to finished drying.



When pelts are dry, they should be hung up with a piece of wire. This will prevent rodents, like mice, from chewing on the pelts and damaging them.



Chapter 16

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Identify Ohio's major furbearers
- Identify tracks and scats of the furbearers
- Identify sets recommended for the furbearers

Chapter 16

Identifying Ohio's Furbearers

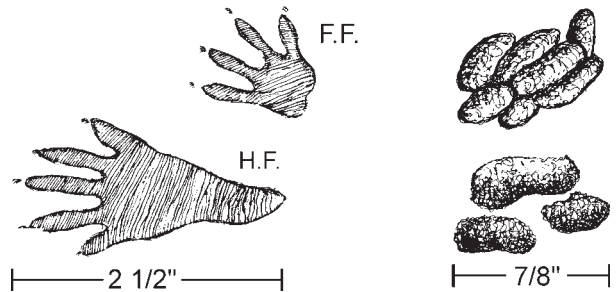
The following information will help you identify Ohio's major furbearers and help you choose the sets. Please refer to current trapping regulations for appropriate traps to use for each furbearer. A sample of the sign left by these furbearers is illustrated here. More biological data on these animals can be found at your local library.



Muskrat

Sets: Runway set, den set, climb-out set

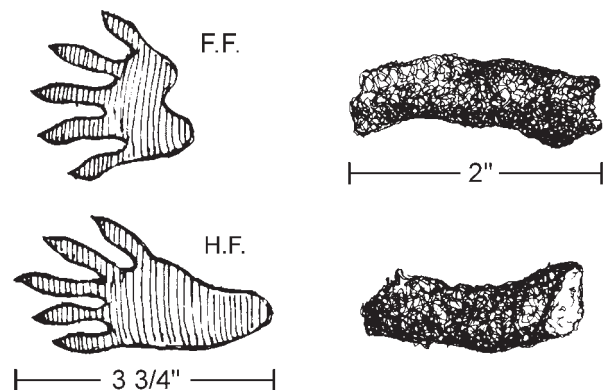
Tracks and Droppings



Raccoon

Sets: Cubby set, pocket set, dirt-hole set, blind set

Tracks and Droppings

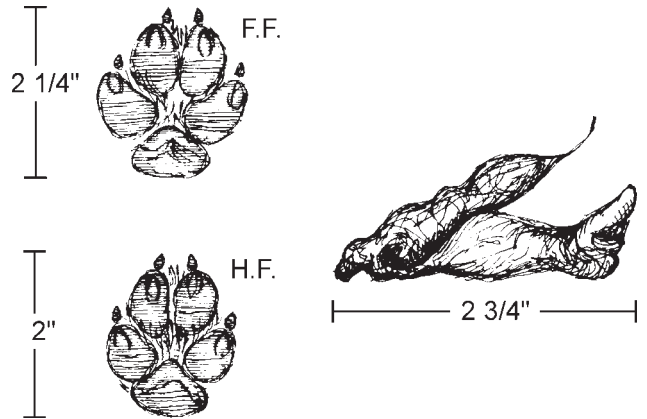




Red Fox

Sets: Dirthole set, flat set

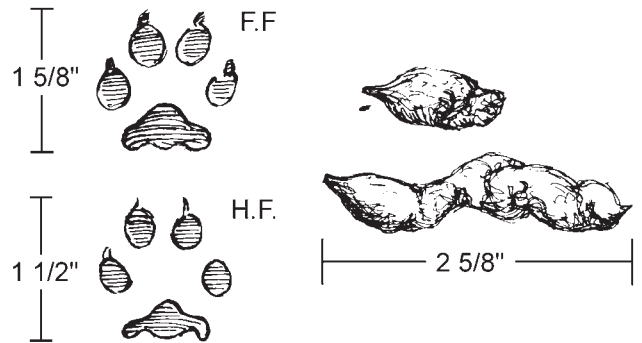
Tracks and Droppings



Gray Fox

Sets: Dirthole set, flat set

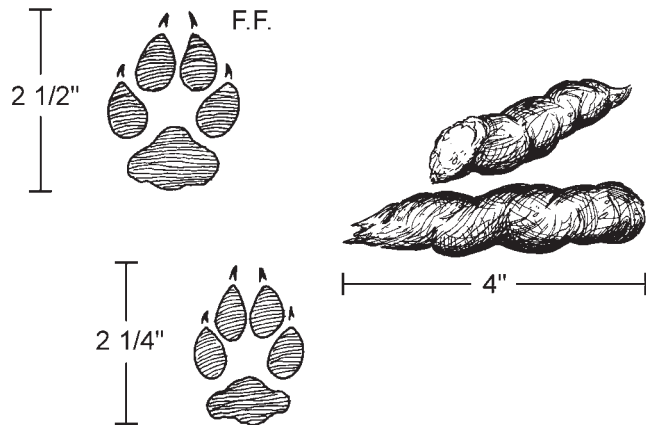
Tracks and Droppings



Coyote

Sets: Dirthole set, flat set

Tracks and Droppings

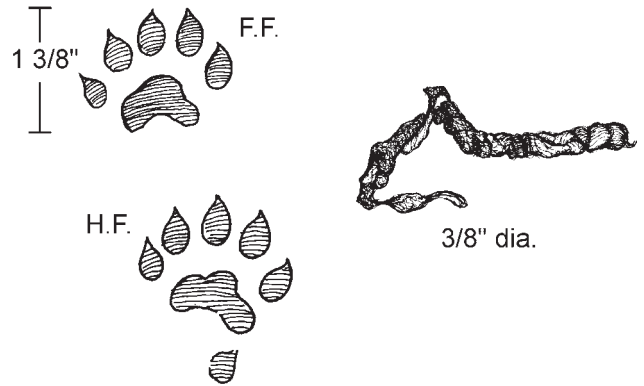




Mink

Sets: Cubby set, pocket set, blind set

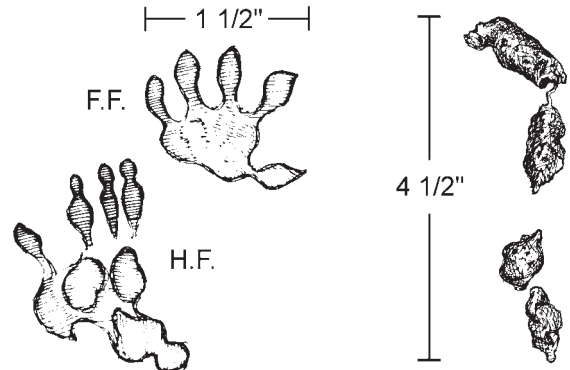
Tracks and Droppings



Opossum

Sets: Cubby set, dirthole set, blind set

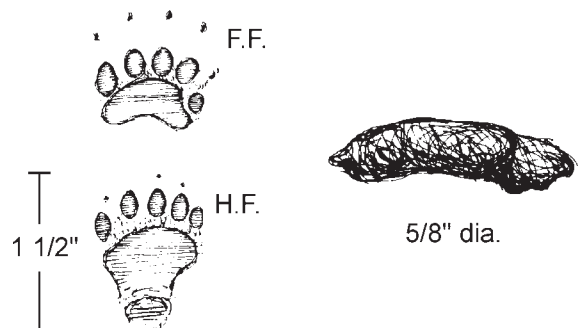
Tracks and Droppings



Skunk

Sets: Cubby set, dirthole set

Tracks and Droppings

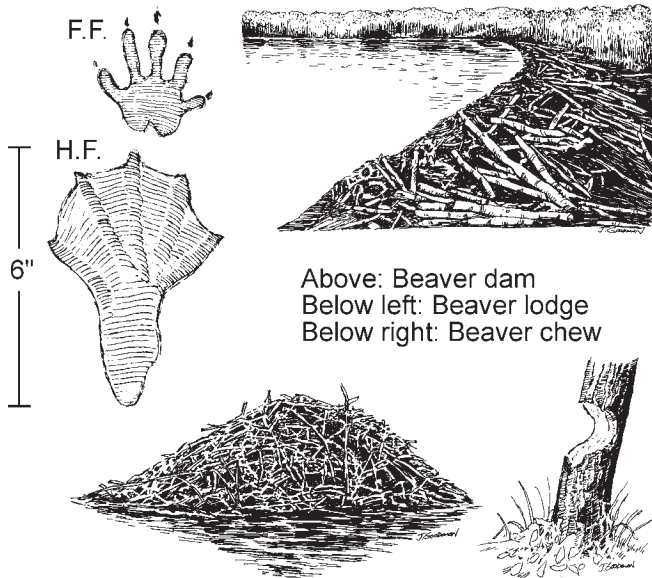




Beaver

Sets: Runway set, climb-out set, castor mound set

Tracks and Sign



Above: Beaver dam
 Below left: Beaver lodge
 Below right: Beaver chew

Chapter 16 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Name Ohio's land furbearers:

1. _____, 2. _____,
3. _____, 4. _____,
5. _____, 6. _____.

2. Name Ohio's water furbearers:

1. _____, 2. _____,
3. _____, 4. _____.

Which is commonly trapped in the water or on land? _____

3. You should be able to identify Ohio's furbearers by these two common signs:

A. _____, B. _____.

4. Name two good sets for muskrats:

A. _____, B. _____.

5. Name two good sets for raccoons:

A. _____, B. _____.

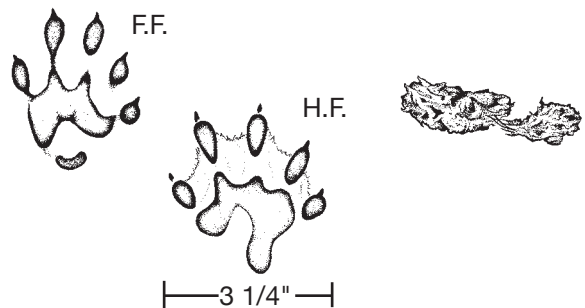
6. Name two good sets for fox trapping:

A. _____, B. _____.



River Otter

Tracks and Droppings



Chapter 17

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Recognize good sets for beaver including the castor mound set
- Learn how to handle beaver pelts
- Understand that beaver traps and beaver trapping can be hazardous
- Recognize problems associated with canine trapping
- Learn methods for dispatching animals

Chapter 17

Special Considerations

Beaver Trapping

Beaver are one of the largest furbearers in Ohio. Trapping beaver is very similar to trapping muskrats except that the traps used to catch them are much larger and stronger.

The runway set is a good set for beaver. Beaver carve channels or runways in shallow water just like muskrats. Dens and lodges are also good places to catch beaver, as are the “climb out” spots where beaver leave the water.

Another good set for beaver is the castor mound set. This is sometimes called the “mud pie” set. To mark their territory, beaver make a small mound of mud, leaves, and other bottom debris on the shoreline. They deposit a scent from their glands, called castor glands, on the mound.

If you find a natural castor mound, this could be a good place to set a trap. The trap is placed under water where the beaver are climbing out. You can also make an artificial castor mound by placing a small pile of mud on the bank and adding some beaver lure to the mound.

Beaver pelts are handled differently than other furbearers. The best way to skin a beaver is to lay it on its back on a bench or table. Start by cutting off all four of the beaver’s feet at the ankle joint and making a cut all the way around the tail at the hairline. Then make a cut from the chin, straight down the center of the belly to the base of the tail. Cut around both sides of the vent. Remove the pelt by working it sideways off the animal. You will have to use your knife frequently because the pelt sticks tightly to the beaver. When you come to the legs, pull them backwards out of the pelt.

To stretch a beaver pelt, use a plywood board. A board 32 inches wide and 48 inches long will do. Use small nails to tack the pelt on the board. The beaver pelt is stretched in a round or oval shape. Start with one nail in the nose, then pull the sides of the pelt out with a nail in each side. Then put a nail in the tail. Keep adding nails to the pelt as you form it into an oval shape. Keep the nails about one-eighth of an inch from the edge of the pelt. Use enough nails so that there is no more than an inch between the nails when you are done.

Beaver trapping is not recommended for beginning trappers and especially not for younger trappers. Beaver traps are quite heavy, large, and powerful. They can present a hazard. A certain degree of physical strength is required to handle these traps. Beaver trapping itself can be hazardous, especially trapping them under the ice. The danger of falling through the ice always exists.

Beaver Trapping

Beaver make piles of mud and debris on the shoreline to mark their territories. These are called castor mounds.



You can make a set for beaver by placing a trap underwater at a castor mound. You can also make an artificial castor mound to attract beaver.



Beaver carve channels where they swim much like muskrats do. You can make a good set for beaver by placing a bodygrip trap in the bottom of the channel.



After you have placed the trap in the channel, lay a pole on the surface of the water directly above the trap. This will make the beaver dive into the trap.

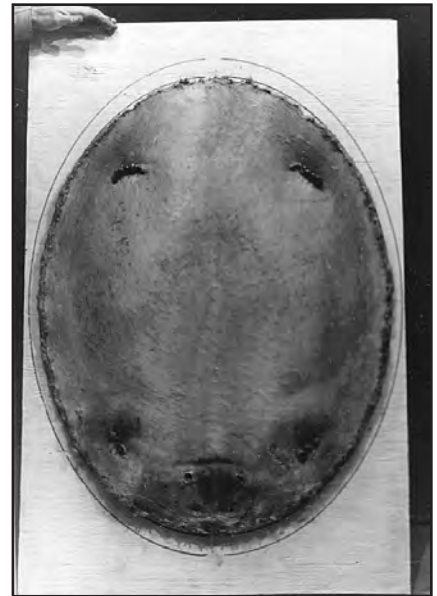


Beaver are skinned differently than other animals. Cut off all four of the beaver's feet, cut around the hairline at the tail, then cut from the chin to the tail going around the vent. Do not make cuts out to the beaver's legs.



The pelt is removed from the beaver working from the belly toward the back of the animal. When you come to the legs, work them out backwards through the holes left when you cut off the feet. It is helpful to have some kind of trough to lay the beaver in while you work on it. Beaver are very fat and require a lot of fleshing.

A piece of plywood makes a good beaver stretcher. Beaver are stretched in an oval shape and tacked on the board with small nails. Be sure to use a few nails to close up the leg holes on the pelt.



Canine Trapping

Ohio's canine furbearers include the red fox, gray fox, and coyote. There are some problems associated with canine trapping that can be of concern to a beginning trapper and especially to a younger trapper.

It is well within the means of beginning trappers and younger trappers to catch and handle fox. Coyotes, however, are much larger and can be much more aggressive than fox. Trappers who target coyotes should be sure of their ability to handle these animals.

Another problem with trapping canines is the possibility that you could catch a dog in a canine set. Since dogs are canines too, they are susceptible to canine sets. The more experience you gain in trapping, the easier it will be to avoid catching dogs. For this reason, it may be a good idea for beginning trappers to steer away from trapping canines.

Catching someone's pet dog can cause problems for the trapper and the sport of trapping in general. This can be avoided to a large extent by not setting traps close to occupied dwellings. However, there are a number of free roaming and feral dogs in Ohio. It is possible to encounter these dogs almost anywhere. Some of these dogs can be quite large and quite aggressive. Releasing a large, aggressive dog from a trap requires some degree of strength. Younger trappers may not be able to handle large dogs.

Dispatching Animals

Bodygrip traps are designed to dispatch, or kill, the animals they catch. Foothold traps used in or near the water can often be rigged to drown the animals that are caught in them. In other instances, animals will be held alive in the traps.

It is a trapper's responsibility to dispatch these animals quickly and humanely. Shooting the animal through the brain with a small caliber bullet is a good way to accomplish this. A .22 caliber firearm is suitable for dispatching animals. However, you must be at least 16 years of age to carry a firearm in the field without adult supervision.

Another humane method for dispatching an animal is to strike it at the base of the skull with a heavy, blunt object. This blow will render the animal unconscious. In this condition, the animal cannot feel pain. If this blow is delivered with sufficient force, it may dispatch the animal. If not, a subsequent blow to the skull will dispatch it while it is still in an unconscious state.

A heavy stick makes a good tool for dispatching animals. The stick must be large enough so that it does not break, and heavy enough to deliver a fatal blow. A broom handle would be too light, but an old shovel handle would work well. If you drill a hole through one end of the stick and attach a loop of cord, it will be easier to carry as you check your traps. It also makes a handy walking stick to help you get around on your trapline.



Chapter 17 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. Beaver trapping can be hazardous and should be done by experienced trappers or with the help of an adult. True or False.
2. Beaver pelts are skinned differently from other Ohio furbearers. True or False.
3. A common beaver set not used for other furbearers is the _____ mound set.
4. To humanely dispatch a trapped furbearer, a heavy blunt object can be used to strike the animal at the base of the _____ with as much force as possible.