

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.

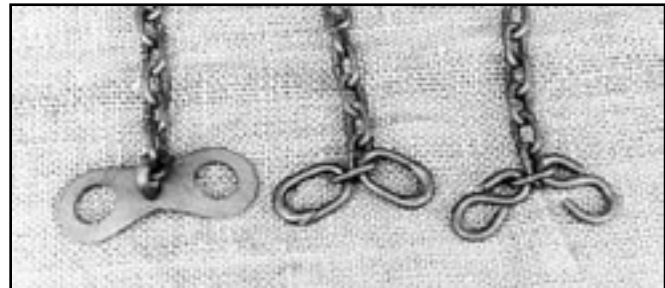


Fastening Traps with Steel Stakes

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 dirt-hole 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.



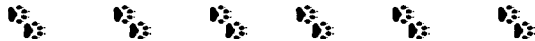
5. Put the trap in the bed. The trap should be placed just outside the opening of the cubby.



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.