

Regulations. Since regulations may change annually, it is best to request current information from the wildlife conservation officer or other personnel who have responsibility in animal control. Trap sets should be placed to avoid livestock and other nontarget animals, and neighbors should be informed of their presence. Many states have specific regulations on the number and type of traps that can be used as well as the time periods in which they must be checked. Traps should be checked daily to be most effective.

Release of nontarget animals and prevention of unnecessary cruelty are primary reasons for these laws. Careful observation of these regulations improves efficiency of trapping and aids in avoiding opposition to the use of traps. Steel traps have been used by many generations of trappers and no other practical or better device is available to take their place. They are still considered essential to control of problem animals.

Traps. Traps should be clean with no foreign odor. New traps have a thin coating of grease and should be simmered clean in water with a little lye added, or allowed to "age" and develop a thin coat of rust before use.

Supply houses for trapping materials sell log wood chips and crystals for dyeing traps a blue-black color, a practice that adds to trap life and may aid in catching trap-shy animals. After dyeing them, some trappers also wax traps to increase their life.

The Number 3-N trap with double springs and offset smooth jaws is a good choice for trapping coyotes, foxes, and bobcats, although the Number 4 is also used. Number 2 traps are large enough to trap foxes but are usually considered too small for coyotes and bobcats. Single or double trap sets may be used, but two traps increase the chance of catching and holding the animal (see illustration).

Trap Scents. Coyote urine alone is often adequate as a trap scent, but other scents may be used. Coyote gall and anal glands added to urine also make an effective scent. Adding 1 part glycerine to 4 parts scent will prevent rapid evaporation. Dog urine may be used if necessary. One or two drops of skunk musk adds attraction to nearly any scent used. Fetid (food) scents made from fish, such as carp, buffalo, or suckers are also effective. The fish is chopped or ground into small pieces and placed in a glass jar at room temperature. Gases form rapidly as the fish decomposes, so the jar must be vented to prevent explosion. The top should be screened to prevent flies from depositing eggs in the fish, since larvae reduce scent quality. This scent can be used in 3 or 4 days, but is longer-lasting and more effective if allowed to age for a month or more.

A small amount of ground beaver castor or Tonquin musk may be added to increase its attraction. Many different scents are also available from trapping supply companies for those who prefer not to make their own. Scent should always be carried separately from other equipment.

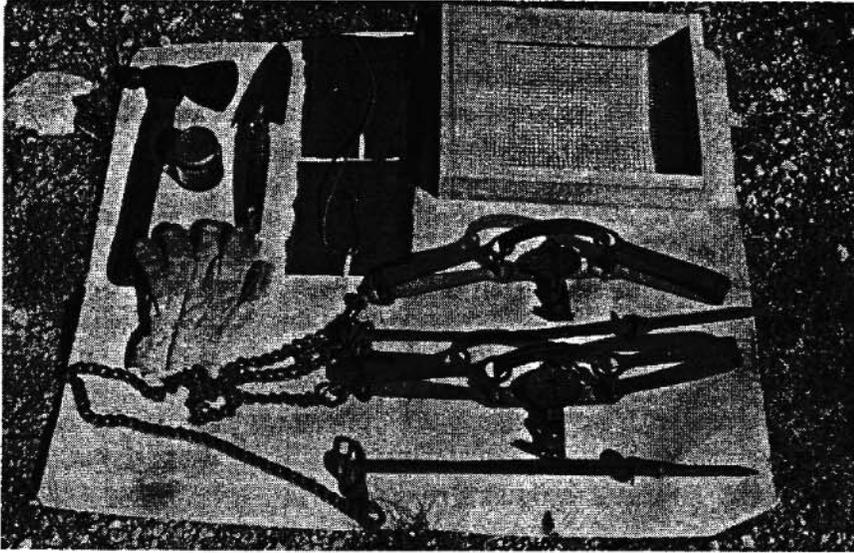


Figure 14. Trapping equipment on setting-cloth: digging tools, dirt sifter, trap pads, gloves, short wire, scent and Number 3-N traps with stakes attached.

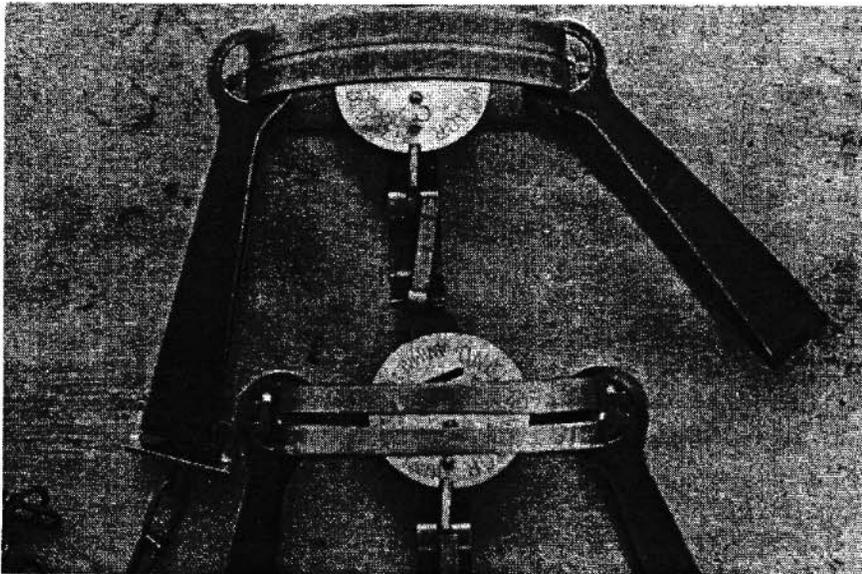


Figure 15. Number 3 Victor traps showing standard jaws (top) and offset jaws (bottom) made by using a 3/16-inch saw gumming or cutoff wheel to grind the jaws. The offset jaw is required by law in some states.

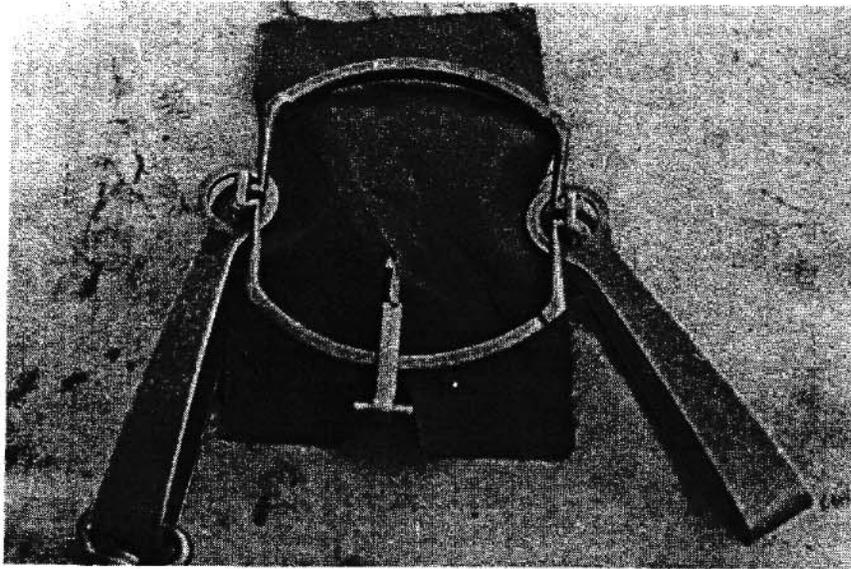


Figure 16. Number 3-N Victor trap with offset jaws showing pan cover correctly placed and slotted to clear the trigger.

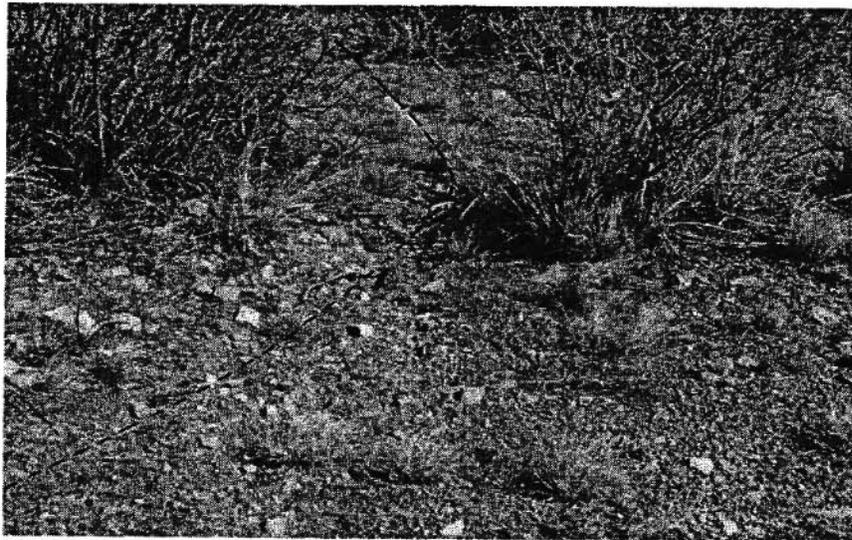


Figure 17. Coyote trail through brush (dotted line).

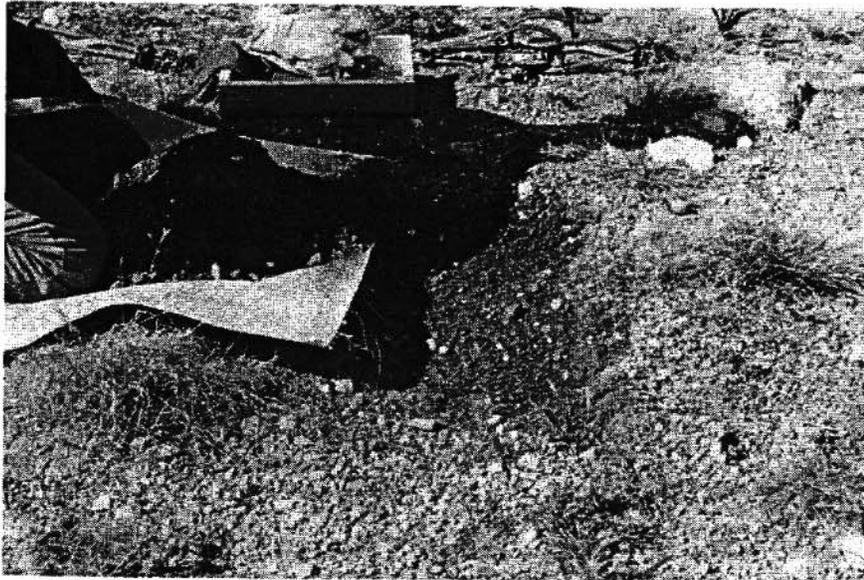


Figure 18. Digging trap bed. Dig a shallow trench about two inches deep and place dirt on the setting-cloth.



Figure 19. Driving trap stakes for double trap set. Tops of stakes should be about one inch below soil surface.

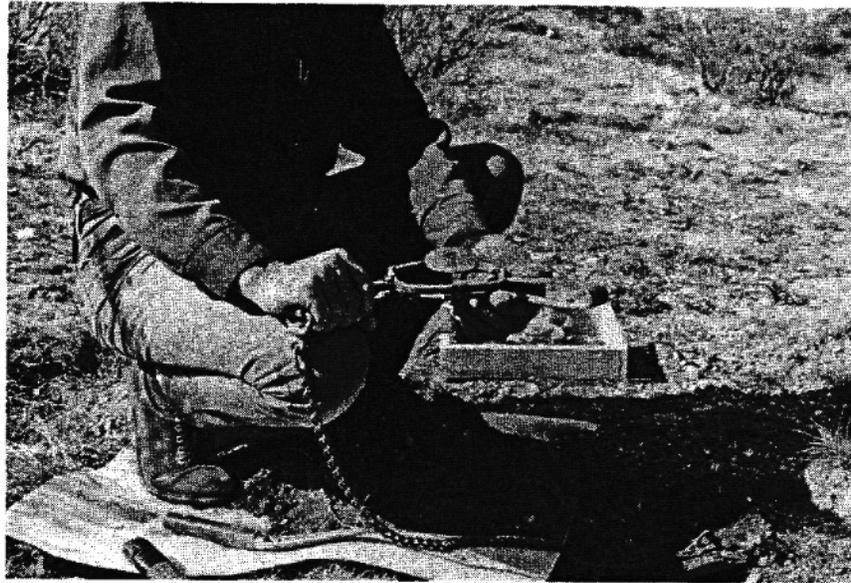


Figure 20. Setting trap. Note that springs are turned so that the jaw opposite the trigger will lie flat.



Figure 21. Double trap set in position beside bunch-grass scent post (arrow). Springs are turned about 45 degrees and traps are bedded to set flat.



Figure 22. Double trap set solidly bedded with trap pads over the pans and under trap jaws. Note that trap pads are slit over the triggers to allow traps to spring when pans are depressed. The small stone (arrow) is placed between the traps to guide the animal over the traps.



Figure 23. Double trap set in place with traps covered. Blending cover with short, curved wire has not been done.

Scent Post Sets. Natural scent posts where coyotes urinate or defecate along travel routes are good locations for trap sets. Scent posts can be established by placing a few drops of coyote urine and/or coyote droppings at the base of a tuft of grass or a small bush beside trails used by coyotes. Adults are often trapped as far as a mile from the den. Other good locations include places where animal carcasses have been present for several weeks, since coyotes regularly investigate these sites. It is best to establish scent posts a few yards from carcasses and a few feet off trails to avoid catching nontarget animals.



Figure 24. Adding scent to base of scent post. Note coyote droppings at scent post and that blending cover to camouflage traps has not been done.

Dirt Hole Sets. These sets are also effective in trapping carnivores since their attention is readily drawn by strange odors. A tuft of wool or cotton containing a few drops of fetid scent is placed in a hole a few feet off the trail and traps are set in front. Holes 3 to 5 inches in diameter and 6 to 8 inches deep are as good as natural holes dug by badgers or other animals.

Blind Sets. Trap sets made without using scent are effective where coyotes go through or under pasture fences. Traps are set 18 to 24 inches from the fence in the path the coyote uses. It is best to use double trap sets with trap pans about 10 inches apart. A small stone or stick is placed on the trail between the traps to guide the animal into the traps. Occasionally, it may be necessary to make similar type sets in trails at other locations. These are often called "blind" sets and are employed when coyotes have become wary of scent sets.

Other Locations. Elevated areas, such as cutbanks or knolls, in sight of the den and within about one-quarter mile are regularly used as observation posts by adult coyotes. These are good locations for dirt hole and scent post sets if pups are removed first, or if the den is plugged so they cannot escape.



Figure 25. Completed double trap set at scent post. Larger stones have been removed and cover over traps has been blended with short, curved wire to match surrounding area. Note location of the small stone placed between traps to guide the animal over the traps (arrow).



Figure 26. Single trap set at scent post to show location of trap pad and pan.



Figure 27. Single trap dirt hole set next to bush on coyote trail. Note that stake has not been driven. Scent will be placed in the hole after the set is completed.

Setting Traps. Gloves are not essential in trapping, but if they are used, they should not be used for other purposes. In setting traps, a shallow trench the length and width of the trap with the jaws open is dug with a trowel, hatchet, or other digging tool. While digging, the trapper stands or kneels on a "setting-cloth" about 3 feet square to avoid leaving excessive amounts of human scent. The setting-cloth of canvas, sheep hide, calf hide, or plastic is also used to hold dirt removed from the trap bed. The trap is then placed in the trench and firmly bedded to rest level with the pan about 6 to 8 inches from the scent post or the dirt hole. Experienced trappers differ somewhat in placement of traps and may prefer to set further from or closer to the scent post or hole.

Although a trap drag may be used to prevent escape of the animal, a stake to anchor the trap is more commonly used. Stakes should be long enough to prevent any possibility of escape. Sixteen-inch stakes are usually adequate in hard ground, but longer stakes are needed in soft soil. Two stakes for each trap, driven at angles to each other through the ring on the trap chain, are often used in sand. Steel rods one-half inch in diameter with nuts or washers welded on one end are good stakes. Military-surplus, steel bolts are often available and threaded ends aid in preventing stakes from pulling out. After stakes are driven below the surface of the ground, a trap pad of canvas, waxed paper, or soft plastic, about 5 by 7 inches, is placed over the pan and under the jaws. This prevents dirt from working under the pan, which would prevent the trap from springing. The pad must be slit over the trigger to allow the jaws to spring when the pan is depressed. With the trap bedded and the pad in place, the rest of the dirt, preferably dry, is used to cover the trap about one-half inch deep. A sifter made with 1/4-inch hardware cloth is useful to remove rocks and sticks. A twig or wire may be used as a brush to blend soil over the trap to match the surrounding area. A few drops of scent are applied to the scent post or into the hole and the set is complete. Surplus dirt from scent post sets should be scattered some distance away. Additional scent be added each 4 or 5 days for as long as traps are in place.

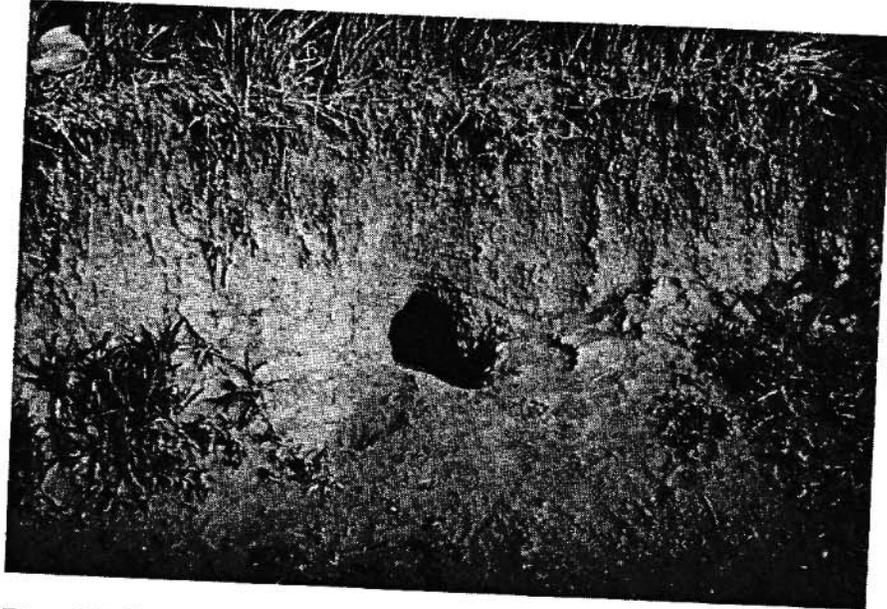


Figure 28. Typical coyote den in a sandy bank along a creek bed (Colorado).



Figure 29. Typical coyote den in a high rocky hillside with brush surrounding the den (Colorado).