Wild dog facts

Trapping

Trapping can be effective in situations where more traditional control methods such as 1080 cannot be used, or as a follow up to baiting programs. Although very labour intensive, trapping should be considered as another tool in an integrated approach to controlling wild dogs.

Best practice methods for trapping

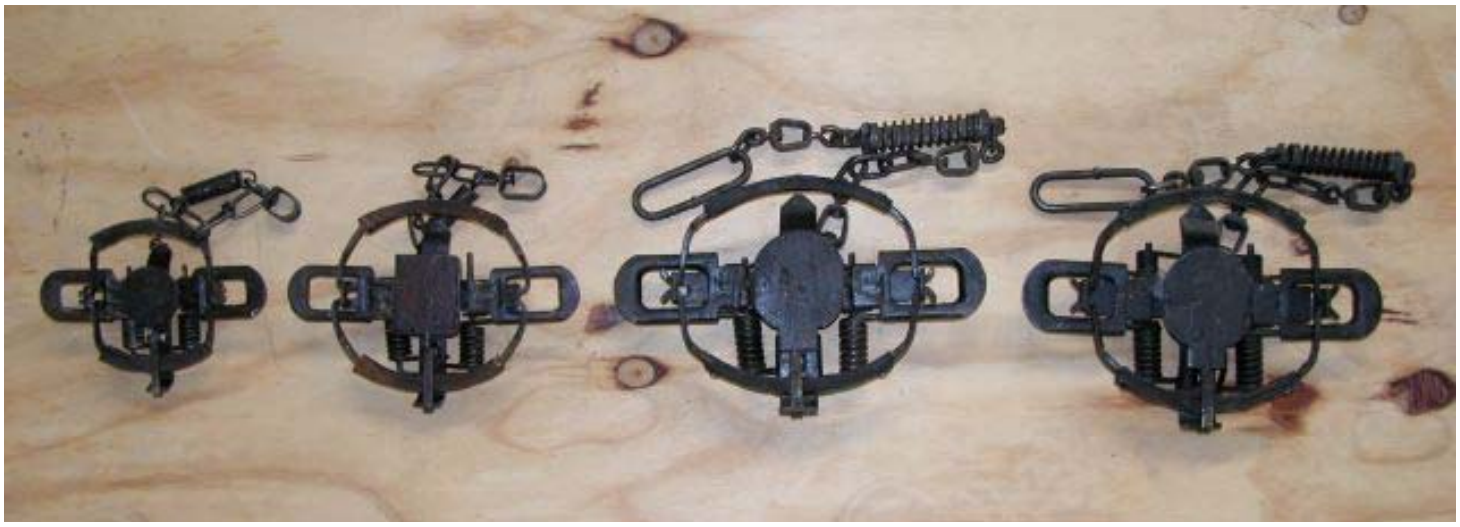
- It is preferable to set traps at the end of each day and check them each morning.
- Trap alert systems allow prompt response to a capture and should be adopted where possible.
- Traps should be set in locations protected from environmental extremes.
- Approach traps carefully and quietly to avoid stressing the captured animal.
- Destroy trapped target animals promptly. Shooting by a skilled operator is the most humane method of destruction.
- Cage traps have limitations for wild dog control but may be useful near human settlements where the dogs are used to interacting with humans.
- Match trap size to foot size (foot hold rather than leg hold trapping maximises trap specificity, efficiency and minimises injury).
- Foot hold designs should include:
  - padded/laminated/rubber jaw inserts
  - offset jaws
  - addition of drags; swivels; shock springs; provision to double stake traps
  - a mechanism to adjust pan tension
  - trap alert systems
  - base plate
- lethal traps using strychnine should be used in areas or circumstances where it is impractical to check traps daily but should not be used as a substitute for regular checking. They should not be used where there is a possibility of capturing domestic dogs.

Foot-hold traps

'Foot-hold traps' are so named because the size of the trap is matched to the foot size of the target animal, with the trap designed to catch the animal across the tougher padded area of the foot. The objective is to hold the animal firmly at the foot, but prevent damage to underlying tissue. The jaws of foot-hold traps can be rubber padded, offset, and/or laminated. All types can be used effectively to control the effects of wild dogs while reducing captures of non-target animals and limiting animal welfare concerns.

A 'leg-hold trap' is much larger and catches the animal higher on the leg. Leg hold traps are not recommended as they are less selective and less humane than foot-hold traps.

As all traps are made from steel, the term 'steel-jawed traps' applies to all traps, including those with padded jaws. Unmodified serrated jaw traps should not be used.



All three sizes of Victor Softcatch #1, 1 #1/12, #3 and #3 modified four-coiled matching the trap to the animal (Foot-hold traps) (Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)

Padded traps

Padded-jaw traps have been developed to minimise injuries sometimes caused by unpadded foot-hold traps. These traps minimise injuries, not just because they are padded, but also because of the size of the trap and the material used for padding. In all types of traps the length of the chain, its location on the trap and the number of swivels in it relate directly to the efficiency of the trap and improved animal welfare.

Offset traps

Offset jaws are a factory or after-market modification to create a 3–6 mm gap between the jaws when they are closed. This reduces the impact of the trap and allows for increased blood flow to the animal's paw. Animals caught in these traps tend to fight the trap less, thus reducing their stress and injury.

Laminated traps

Expanding the thickness of the jaw by 6–10 mm increases its surface area on the animal's trapped foot, and research has shown that this significantly reduces injury, and increases the holding-efficiency of the trap.

Lamination is normally an after-market modification where a metal strip is welded above and/or below the jaw to increase its thickness. All unpadded foot-hold traps should ideally be laminated, increasing jaw width by at least 6 mm.

How foot-hold traps work

Foot-hold traps are buried in the ground so that when an animal steps on the plate, it is depressed. This frees the tongue from the notch and allows the jaws to spring shut, holding the animal's foot until it is dispatched or released by the trapper.

All traps should be checked and maintained daily, target animals should be destroyed humanely, and non-target animals treated for any injuries and released.

How to set traps

For videos on how to set traps, see below YouTube links:

- http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDA1583B894E82C44&feature=plcp
- http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL051AB2000F33444E&feature=plcp
- http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL39A473212EF1B432&feature=plcp
- http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCF6B5E1CF04206E9&feature=plcp

The Collarum™ neck restraint

The Collarum™ neck restraint is essentially a cable loop, which is thrown over the head and around the neck of the canine by a spring when set off by a trigger. The end of the loop, which is anchored to the ground when the trap is set, enables the canine to be held as if on a leash.

The device is target specific, in that the trigger (coated with an attractant) requires a pulling action rather than a weight-bearing one, as is the case with foot-hold traps.

Advantages

The Collarum™ is much safer than traditional traps for capturing target animals in areas where people, pets and other domestic animals may come in contact with it. Animals other than canines are very unlikely to be caught even if they spring the device, and captured domestic dogs can be very easily released with no harm done. A person inadvertently springing the trap is also at little risk. Local government officers using this device have captured wild dogs in urban backyards and gardens.

Disadvantages

- Possibility that the public may not distinguish between it and snares.
- Perception that the device may be causing stress and injury to animals.
- Use is labour intensive.
- High level of training is required.
- If the trap is set the same way or in the same place each time, target animals may become trap averse or shy.
- It can sometimes be difficult to get canines to pull the trigger device.
- In some areas birds may be a problem in setting off the device.
- The device can be more difficult to set than foothold traps.
- Canines must be forced to enter the trap from the front, as entering from the side or back may cause a miss, which could result in trap shyness.
- Traps can only be set in areas where there is sufficient space to ensure that the cable won't become entangled in the bush or around other obstacles.

Best method of use

To be most effective, the device should:

- not be anchored with any type of drag—it should be set with swivels, shock springs and double staked into the earth
- not be set where entanglement can occur within the radius of the cable
- not be set on a severe slope that animals could race down to at speed—the trap is more effective if set on a slight slope
- not be used with extension cables or wire to attach it to trees or fence-posts
- be used only with factory-manufactured cables, which should be checked and maintained to ensure there is no sharp fraying.

The Collarum™
(Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)

Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland (call 13 25 23 or visit our website at www.biosecurity.qld.gov.au).

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