

Trapper Guidelines for Placement of Ground Sets

Ground sets are traps placed on the ground to capture and hold furbearing and predatory animals. Ground sets are the most common type of trap placement and include several different trap designs. However, when using a body-gripping trap, typically a quick-kill conibear, Montana trapping regulations are rather specific as to their use. The following recommendations and state regulations are intended to focus the importance for trappers to avoid or minimize the accidental capture of non-target species, particularly pet dogs, trained hounds, and bird hunting dogs.



Two examples of "7" X 7" body-gripping" ground sets with secure enclosures that provide openings no greater than 52 square inches. When the conibear is placed inside, the trigger must be set back at least 7 inches from the opening.

FWP Recommendations To Trappers

- Use early morning trap checks to reduce the time an animal is held, reduce its chances of pulling out, and avoid theft of traps and animals.
- Use cage, box or species-specific traps near public high use areas where domestic animals may be present.
- Use traps with laminated jaws where there is a risk of non-target catches.
- Use extra swivels and center-mounted chains to better hold animals and reduce the chance of injuries occurring.
- Avoid placing trap sets and snares on public lands that are frequented by upland bird hunters with dogs, until after the season is closed Jan. 1. Post signs or flag snares on private lands used by upland bird hunters with dogs.

Montana Trapping Regulations

Ground Set – (Definition) Any trap originally set in or on the land (soil, road etc.). This includes any traps elevated less than 48 inches above the natural ground or snow level.

Ground Sets Along Public Roads and Highways - Ground sets using 7x 7 inches and larger body-gripping traps and snares are prohibited within the right-of-way of county roads, state and federal highways, and interstates. Along public roads with no defined right-of-way then these ground sets are prohibited within thirty (30) feet from the road centerline.

Public Land Ground Sets– On public, federal and state school trust lands, ground sets using 7"x7" or larger body-gripping traps must have the trigger recessed a minimum of seven (7) inches in wood, plastic and metal enclosures or cubby that provide an opening of 52 square inches or less.

Public Land Roads and Trails– On public federal and state school trust lands, ground sets including snares require a 50-foot setback from along the edge of open roads and hiking trails that are designated by administrative signs or numbers.

Public Land Trailheads – On public federal and state school trust lands, ground sets including snares are prohibited within 300 feet and lethal ground sets and lethal snares are prohibited within 1000 feet of a designated or marked trailhead that is accessible by highway vehicle.

Public Land Campground – On public federal and state school trust lands, ground sets including snares are prohibited within 1000 feet of a designated campground or recreation site that is accessible by highway vehicle.

Occupied Dwelling – Ground set traps including snares are prohibited within 1000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification of the occupant.

Landowner Permission – Resident trappers and hunters must obtain permission of the landowner, leasee or their agent before trapping or hunting private land. It is unlawful to set snares on private property without landowners permission (MCA 87-3-107).

Non-Target Captures – To improve understanding of accidental dog captures in traps and snares, trappers must report such captures, excluding trapper's dog, to an FWP regional office within 24 hours of identifying the capture.

Trapping is an important wildlife management tool in Montana and remains an active pursuit by over 4,000 license holders. No wildlife populations are threatened by trapping seasons. Ethical trapper behavior and animal welfare are important factors in regulated trapping today. Trapper education programs in the state involve hundreds of participants every year. Traps and snares are rarely encountered by bird hunters, skiers, or hikers in Montana, but it can occur. However, remember that a recreational trapper has the same right to be in an area as a hunter or recreationist. State law prohibits people from disturbing traps or trapped animals. State laws and regulations govern trappers and furbearer trapping seasons.

FURBEARER SEASONS

Beaver

Western & Southwestern: Nov. 1 - April 15
Central & Eastern: Sept. 1 - May 31

Otter, Muskrat and Mink

Statewide season dates: Nov. 1 - April 15

Marten, Fisher and Wolverine

Statewide season dates: Dec. 1 - Feb. 15

Bobcat

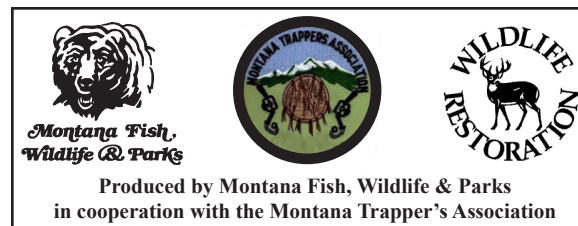
Western & Southwestern: Dec. 1 - Feb. 15
Central & Eastern: Dec. 1 - March 1

There are no season restrictions for Coyote, Red Fox, Weasel, Skunk, Raccoon or Badger. These animals can be harvested year round, but trapping for these species usually occurs between October - February.

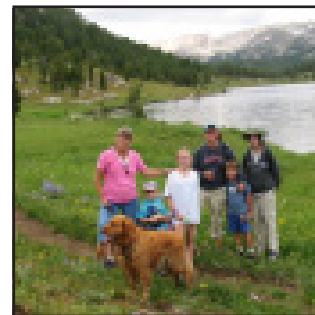
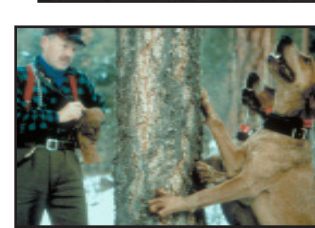
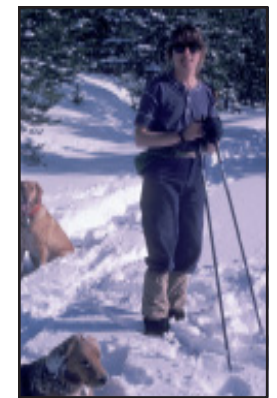
BIRD HUNTERS

When securing permission on private land, we suggest that you ask the landowner if anyone is trapping on the property - prior to hunting with your dog.

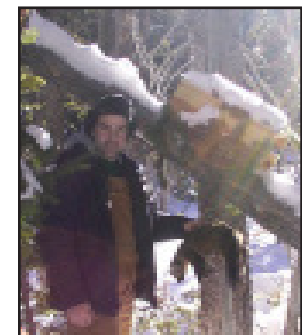
For more information on regulated trapping visit our website at www.fwp.mt.gov or call 444-2612 or contact the MTA at www.montanatrappers.org



Recreationist Guide to Releasing Traps and Snares



Trapper Guidelines for Placement of Ground Sets

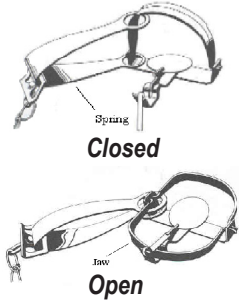


Recreationist Guide to Releasing Traps and Snares

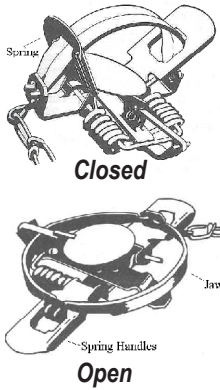
This guide is intended to serve only as a reference to familiarize you with the mechanical operation and common release techniques of traps and snares. This guide is intended for bird hunters, hound handlers, dog trainers, pet owners and hikers/skiers that are accompanied by companion animals.

Single Longspring Foothold

Use both hands to depress spring, or if trap is on solid ground, then hold onto animal and position a foot on the spring and step down on it to depress the spring. The trap jaws will relax or open so the animal can step out.

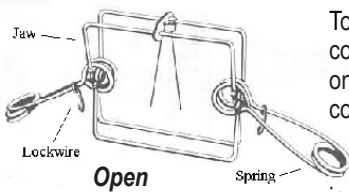


Double Coilspring Foothold



To open jaws use two hands to push down with equal pressure on spring handles. If the trap is placed on solid ground then it is easier to straddle the animal and use two feet, one on each spring, stepping down with equal pressure on spring handles at the same time. The trap jaws will relax or open, so the animal can step out.

Body-Gripping Conibear



To open the jaws of a conibear, both springs on each side must be compressed. Trap is in open position with spring eyes around jaws compressed to allow trap jaws to relax or open.

Conibears are designed to snap shut around the neck and quickly suffocate an animal. Conibear springs are heavy duty, making it extremely difficult to compress them with hands alone, although using leverage by putting one spring on a knee first and using both hands it may be compressed. In any case, you may rotate the trap jaws so they rest on either side of the neck and not on the throat.

If an animal is caught in a conibear, remember YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY, but remain calm. An animal may lose consciousness in several minutes.

Easier techniques to open a conibear include using a rope, belt, or leash. By making a loop at one end of any of these, large enough to fit around your boot, you can run rope or belt through the spring eyes to compress the springs. Use the lockwires to keep the springs compressed.



1. Using belt make a loop at buckle end that will fit around your boot. Next run the belt from boot up through both spring eyes that enclose trap jaws.



2. Bring belt down around and back up through the bottom spring eye.



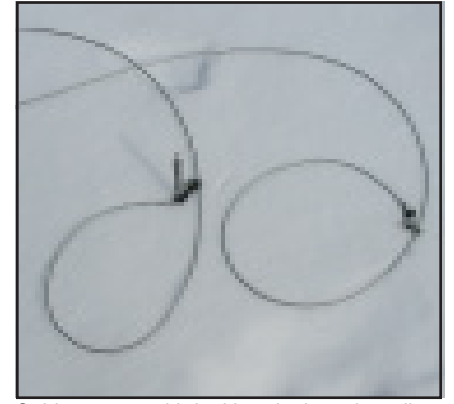
3. Pull belt up and away from the loop that is around your boot, providing the necessary leverage to compress the spring.



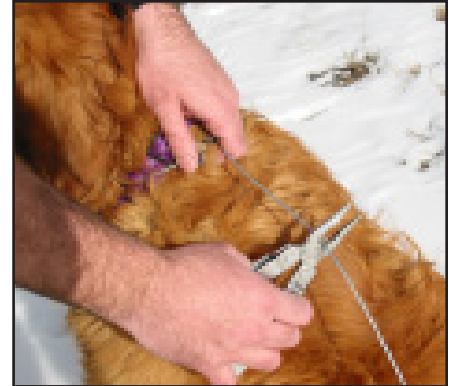
4. Tighten the belt to compress the spring completely. Use the lockwire to secure spring in closed position, or if it is missing, twist a piece of wire through spring eyes. Repeat technique on the other spring to relax trap jaws.

Cable Snares

Snares are used mainly as trail sets, designed to allow an animal to walk through the open snare loop with its head and neck, but then tighten and close around the neck to suffocate the animal quickly. Some dogs used to being on a choke collar may not pull away, and then the cable can be worked backward through the lock device to open the loop. However, if a dog struggles in the snare, the cable will close and tighten. **YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY** first to restrain the dog, or attempt to cut the cable between the dog and anchor, or if a stake is used, pull up the stake – in any case to relax the snare loop. Next you need to get your fingers or pliers on the lock device and work the cable backward to open the snare loop. Otherwise attempt to cut the cable from the neck.



Cable snares with locking devices that allow the snare loop to close one way and tighten around an animal's neck.



1. Restrain your dog immediately to relax the snare cable. If you cannot restrain your dog, attempt to cut the cable or detach the anchor.



2. Quickly get your fingers or pliers on the lock device and work the cable backward to open the snare loop, or attempt to cut the cable from around the animal's neck. However this usually requires a pair of lineman's pliers or cable cutters.