

## Chapter 12

# Land Sets



Good Places for Land Sets.  
(With Landowner Permission)



Ohio Dow Photos

Brush rows and fencerows.



Brush-filled gullies.



Near farm lanes that intersect  
changing cover.



ASSOCIATION of  
FISH & WILDLIFE  
AGENCIES



**Content Standard** - *Students demonstrate an understanding of the procedures for making safe, effective, and selective sets on land*

## Introduction

Beginning land trappers should have considerable water trapping experience or help from an experienced mentor. You must know how to make selective sets, be prepared to humanely dispatch live animals, and know how to release non-target animals.

The dirt-hole set, flat set, post set, and cubby set are commonly used for coyotes, red fox, grey fox, raccoon, skunk, opossum, and other furbearers.



**Know that land trap locations influence animal welfare and the selectivity of trap sets**

Avoid setting traps near homes or places that are heavily used by people and their pets. Trappers should choose set locations that:

- Minimize exposure to domestic animals and human activities
- Prevent entanglement with fences or other objects that might result in injury
- Are selective to capture furbearers
- Avoid trails used by people or their pets



**Explain the benefits of using traps that meet best management practice (BMP) specifications for land sets**

Trappers, biologists, veterinarians, and researchers have studied many traps. BMP recommended traps have been tested for:



Ohio Dow Photos

Use steel stakes on land.

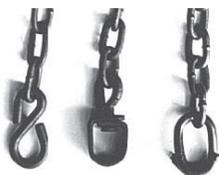


Cross-stake.



Ohio DOW Photos

Cross-stake fasten.



- Animal welfare
- Efficient ability to capture and hold animals
- Selectivity for furbearers
- Practical use in the field
- Trapper safety concerns



### **Identify three good places to make land sets**

Good places for land sets include:

- Brush rows and fencerows that guide animal movements and provide rodents, birds, or other food for furbearers
- Brush-filled gullies that provide food and shelter
- Areas near farm lanes that intersect changing cover types or pass through brush rows



### **Explain or demonstrate the proper use of stakes, cross-stakes, cable stakes, drags, and grapples for anchoring traps on land**

Trappers must know how to anchor their traps properly to hold furbearers and prevent injury. Traps are normally anchored with stakes, but sometimes drags or grapples are used.

Steel stakes are recommended. Stakes must be long enough to hold the largest animal that may be caught. Under most conditions they should be 18-24 inches in length. Even longer stakes are needed in sandy soils. For fox and coyotes a more secure method is required to prevent the animal from pulling it out. You may need to use a double-stake swivel with the cross-staking method for a better hold. Cable stakes are another choice, but cable stakes take more time to dig out when you remove your set.

In some terrain you may need to use drags or grapples. Drags and grapples allow animals to find cover nearby.

Shock springs are used on trap chains to help hold animals and prevent injuries. Use high quality shock springs of sufficient strength for animals you are trapping.

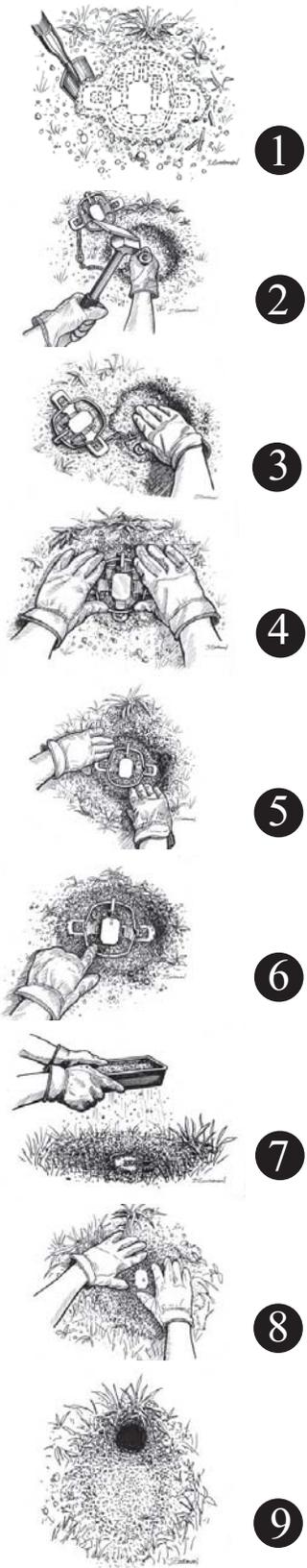
Swivels are important parts of your anchoring systems. Stake swivels and two or more chain swivels allow an animal to move freely without twisting the chain down to a point where it is easy for the animal to pull out of the trap.



### **Demonstrate the proper method for bedding a foothold trap at a land set**

Traps must be properly bedded for land sets to work. Traps should be set level or slightly below the level of the soil around it. The steps for bedding a trap are:

1. Dig a hole slightly larger than the outside profile of the trap. The depth will depend on the amount of chain you need to conceal under the trap - the longer the chain, the deeper the hole. When the set is finished, the top of the trap should be covered by 1/8-1/2 inch of soil and the pan should sit slightly lower than the ground around it.
2. Test the hole to make sure your trap will fit and make adjustments if needed. Position and drive your stake at the front of the hole (the side nearest you) where the loose jaw of the trap can rest on it.
3. Place the trap chain in the trap bed, cover it with soil and pack it with your hand or fist.
4. Place the trap in the trap bed with the loose jaw resting level on the top of the stake. Twist the trap slightly from side to side to settle it in the dirt.
5. Park dirt tightly around the outside of the trap except for over the spring levers.
6. Use your finger to apply pressure to each jaw and spring lever (one at a time). If you detect movement, add some soil or a small dirt clod under the low spot.
7. Put the cover over the pan (if used). Sift dirt over the trap until it's nearly level with the surrounding area.
8. Locate the pan by brushing away some of the dirt. When you know where it is, pack dirt around the outside of the pan using the back of your hand.



### Dirt-hole Set



Ohio DOW Photos

1. Find some backing such as a clump of grass and dig a hole that slants back under it, putting the dirt in your sifter.



2. Dig a bed for the trap in front of the hole.



3. Stake the trap down in the middle of the bed.



4. Proper trap bedding.

9. If needed, brush or sift a fine layer of dirt over the set to blend it in with the surroundings.

The four-point system check includes:

1. Press on the loose jaw.
2. Press on the other jaw.
3. Press on a lever.
4. Press on the other lever.

If the trap is wobbly at any point, pack more dirt under that area and repeat the four-point check.



### ***Demonstrate the proper method for covering a foothold trap set on land***

Generally, foothold traps set on land must be covered to hide them from furbearers. Dirt, leaves, and grass can be used to cover your traps. The covering must not interfere with the action of the trap.

Leaves and grass will work when you set a trap for raccoons or opossums, which are not as wary as fox or coyotes.

Make sure nothing gets under the trap pan, or the trap may not work. Likewise, make sure there are no objects above the jaws that might keep the trap from closing properly.

Crumple up a piece of wax paper and unfold it for a trap cover. Crumpling wax paper softens it so it won't make noise when the animal steps on it.

Use a dirt sifter to cover your trap without getting small sticks or stones in your set.



## **Explain or demonstrate the procedures for making three common land sets and name the furbearers that can be captured in them**

Three sets every land trapper should know are the dirt-hole set, the flat set, and the cubby set. A post set is a variation of a flat set.

### **Dirt-hole Set**

The dirt-hole set is popular with fox and coyote trappers but it will take other furbearers, too. To make a dirt-hole set:

- Select a clump of grass or other natural feature for a backing at your set
- Dig a small hole, about the diameter of a coffee cup, that slants back about eight inches deep under the backing and put the dirt in your sifter
- Dig a bed for your coil-spring trap in front of the hole so the trap center will be about seven inches from the hole for fox or 12 inches for coyotes
- Stake the trap down in the middle of the bed
- Set the trap and put it in the bed so that it is slightly below ground level
- Put a cover on the pan and sift the dirt on top

The hole by itself will attract a fox or coyote, but many trappers place bait in the hole. The bait should be about the size of a golf ball. If you use bait, cover it with some light vegetation. A furbearer will smell it, but the grass will prevent birds of prey from seeing it and landing in your set.

You can apply lure to the back edge of the hole and put some fox or coyote urine on the backing using a squirt bottle. Make certain you do not get any bait, lure, or urine on the trap bed.



5. Place bait in hole.



6. Put grass in hole to hide bait.



7. Put lure on hole and urine on backing.

### **Flat Set**



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A chunk of wood makes a good flat set attractor

### Cubby Set

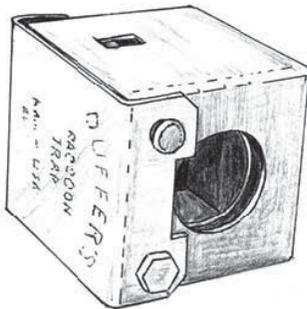


Rocks can be used for cubby sets.



Bed the trap at the cubby entrance.

Enclosed foothold traps are selective for raccoons and opossums.



Joe Goodman

Duffer's™ Trap

### Flat Set

A flat set is most effective for fox and coyotes, but it will take other land-dwelling furbearers too. The flat set is similar to a dirt-hole set, but no bait hole is dug. Instead, an attractor such as an old chunk of wood is used to get the furbearer's attention. To make a flat set:

- Place the attractor where a furbearer will see it
- Dig a bed about 6 inches in front of the attractor
- Stake the trap, bed it, and sift dirt over it
- Put a few drops of lure or a squirt of urine on the attractor

### Post Set

A post set is made the same as a flat set, except that a broom-handle sized stick is used instead of an attractor. The post should be about 8 inches tall. Use lure or urine on the side of the post nearest the trap.

### Cubby Set

The cubby set on land is made the same way as a cubby set for water trapping. Cubby sets are used for raccoons, opossums, bobcats, and other less wary furbearers. Cubby sets are generally not used for fox or coyotes. To make a cubby set:

- Build a cubby and make certain the back is secure so the furbearer will enter from the front
- Dig a bed for a coil-spring trap at the opening
- Bed the trap and cover it lightly with leaves or grass
- Place appropriate lure or bait in the back of the cubby

### Additional Land Set Information

#### Enclosed Foothold Traps

Several types of enclosed foothold traps are on the market for raccoon trappers. These traps are highly selective for raccoon and opossum, which have small feet and long legs. Enclosed footholds have a small hole, with a trigger fairly deep within the enclosure. Enclosed foothold traps are anchored and placed in the ground with baits attractive to raccoons. Selective baits attractive to raccoons include marshmallows, jam, honey, and anise. The bait



is placed in the bottom of the trap, below the trigger. Larger animals cannot get their feet through the opening. Smaller animals cannot reach the trigger. When the raccoon attempts to remove the bait from the device the trap is triggered and a small spring arm captures the foot.



Duffer's™ Trap and EGG™ Trap.



Duffer's™ Trap set in ground.



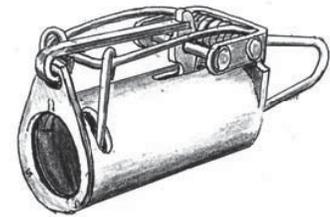
EGG™ Trap set in ground.

Procedures for setting and using enclosed foothold traps vary. Some require disassembly and special tools. Some do not need to be placed in the ground. Enclosed foothold traps made of metal may be dyed to help conceal them and reduce the chance of theft. Some trappers prefer to leave them shiny as a visual attractant for raccoons.

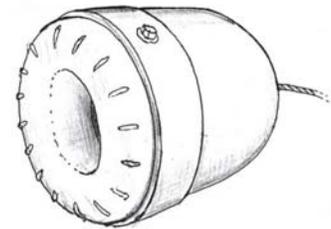
### Body-gripping Traps

The use of body-gripping traps on land is highly regulated. Even when legal, body-gripping traps should be used with care to prevent the capture of pets or non-target wildlife. *Check the Michigan Hunting and Trapping Guide for current regulations regarding the use of body-gripping traps on land.*

Body-gripping traps can be enclosed in boxes to prevent non-target animals from getting caught. The size of the box, size of the opening, and placement of the box make this a selective method of trapping.



Lil' Griz™ Trap.



EGG™ Trap.

Practice land trapping techniques before the season to hone your skills.

Practice safety when setting body-gripping traps - use setting tongs, safety latches, and a safety gripper.

Use sweet baits for raccoons to avoid non-target animals:

- Marshmallows
- Anise
- Honey
- Hard Candy
- Jam

Wooden boxes can be painted or allowed to weather so they blend in.

Some trappers camouflage their bucket while others prefer to leave them white as a visual attractant.



### Using body-gripping traps on land



Medium size body-gripping trap for raccoon.

This is a view of a body-gripping trap box during construction. Note the slots for the trap springs, and the wire hanging from the top. The wire will hold the bait. The back is covered with wood or wire mesh to keep the animal from reaching the bait without going into the trap.



Box Trap on Log.

Some trappers set box traps on logs. Raccoons often walk on top of logs. Use sweet baits for raccoon. Do not use this set in a location where dogs or cats will find the trap.



Trappers have developed several methods for setting body-gripping traps in plastic buckets to prevent non-target catches. Cut slots in the sides for the trap springs. Suspend sweet baits inside the bucket, above the trap. The small holes allow the scent to spread.



5 gallon bucket.

Wooden box for body-gripping trap wired to a tree. The box can be placed low to the ground, face down to prevent dogs from getting in. Dig a depression under the trap for an added attractant.



You can put this trap higher up the tree with the open end face up to avoid dogs.

Check with your instructor, the Michigan DNR, or a local fur buyer for details on safe, legal, and effective bucket sets that can be used in your area. This bucket is designed to mount on a tree.



Silvertip Productions

Bottom view of square bucket.

Entry holes should be no larger than six to seven inches for raccoons. Holes can be cut in the side, or the lid. Another option is to cover the opening with wire mesh that narrows near the entrance.



Bucket with lid.



Make certain the wire mesh will not interfere with the springs when they release.



Leaning pole set.

Leaning pole sets are used for marten and fisher. A #120 body-gripping trap can be enclosed in a box, or set directly on the pole for marten. Use meat, fish, or strawberry jam for bait, and skunk essence for lure.



Leaning pole set.

For fisher, use #160-#220 body-gripping traps baited with raccoon or porcupine meat. Use fisher musk, fisher urine, beaver castor or skunk essence for fisher lure. Make running pole sets under evergreen limbs to help keep snow from covering the traps

**Content Standard - Students demonstrate an understanding of the procedures for making safe, effective, and selective sets on land.**

**Know that land trap locations influence animal welfare and the selectivity of trap sets (page 87).**

- Trappers should set their land traps at locations that:

Minimize exposure to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ activities,  
Prevent entanglement with \_\_\_\_\_ or other objects that might result in \_\_\_\_\_.  
Are \_\_\_\_\_ to capture furbearers.  
Avoid \_\_\_\_\_ used by \_\_\_\_\_.

**Explain the benefits of using traps that meet Best Management Practice (BMP) specifications for land sets (page 88).**

- BMP traps have been tested for:

Animal \_\_\_\_\_  
Efficient ability to \_\_\_\_\_ animals  
Selectivity for \_\_\_\_\_  
Practical \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ safety concerns

**Identify three good places to make land sets (page 88).**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Good places for land sets include:

\_\_\_\_\_ rows and \_\_\_\_\_ rows  
\_\_\_\_\_ gullies  
Near farm \_\_\_\_\_ that intersect changing \_\_\_\_\_

***Explain or demonstrate the proper use of stakes, cross-stakes, cable stakes, drags, and grapples for anchoring traps on land (pages 88-89).***

- Be prepared to explain or demonstrate the proper ways to anchor your traps.

***Demonstrate the proper method for bedding a foothold trap at a land set (pages 89-90).***

- Be prepared to demonstrate the proper method for bedding a foothold trap at a land set.

***Demonstrate the proper method for covering a foothold trap set on land (page 90).***

- Be prepared to demonstrate the proper method for covering a foothold trap at a land set.

***Explain or demonstrate the procedures for making three common land sets and name the furbearers that can be captured in them (pages 91-92).***

- Be prepared to demonstrate or explain the procedures for making three common land sets and name furbearers found in your area that can be captured in them.