

How to Set a Live Trap

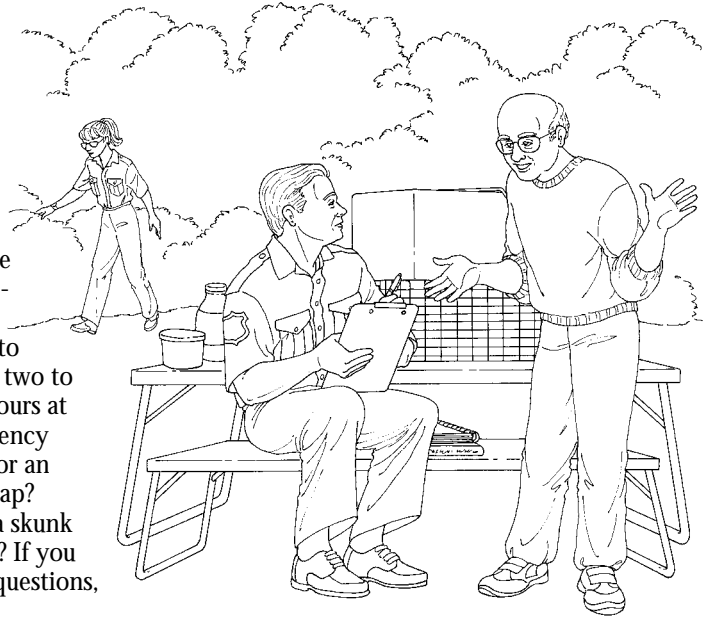
**Animal
Sheltering™**

"HOW TO" SERIES

Live traps can help field personnel provide humane solutions to conflicts between humans and urban wildlife, or capture wayward cats and dogs too wary to be restrained with a net or control pole. But as soon as you set that spring in place, you're responsible for the quality of that animal's life from that point on. So if you've determined that live trapping is the best way to solve the problem at hand, be sure the process is humane from start to finish.

1: First Things First

Before setting the trap, think ahead. Find out if any local laws prohibit the trapping of certain species. Consider the type of animal, the time of year, and potential risks involved in trapping that animal; for example, be aware of birth seasons so you don't inadvertently separate a mother from her dependent offspring. Be sure to check the traps frequently (every two to three hours ideally, every eight hours at the least). Come up with contingency plans, too. If you're called away for an emergency, who will check the trap? What will you do if you capture a skunk rather than the intended raccoon? If you don't know the answers to these questions, think twice before setting a trap.



Note: If your shelter loans traps to the public, come up with some firm policies to prevent animals and people from being harmed and to lessen your agency's liability. Establish fees and deposits for the service, prepare guidelines and release forms, and develop procedures to make sure traps are monitored and trapped animals are quickly removed and properly handled.

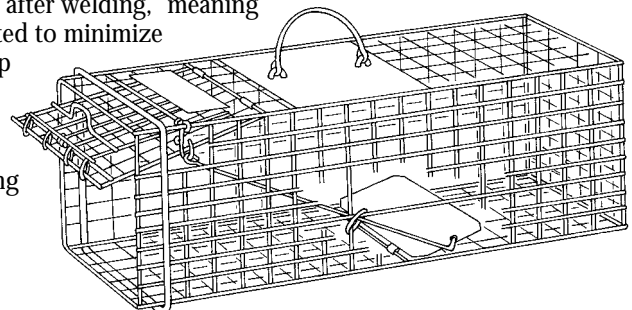
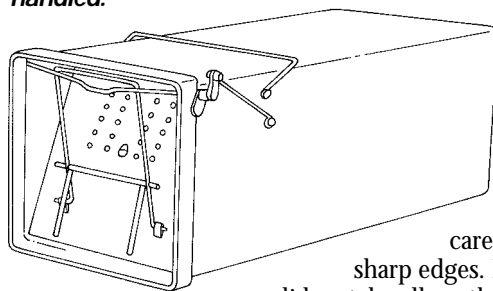
2: Gain Their Trust

Set the stage before setting the trap. Scatter samples of bait throughout the area; if animals can enjoy an appetizer, they'll be more likely to enter a trap for the main course. To capture a large number of animals or to trap animals repeatedly, consider pre-baiting. To do this, place food in a few traps and wire the doors open so animals can go in and out at will. Soon the animals will associate the traps with positive rewards, and they'll be more likely to enter "loaded" traps without fear of the possible consequences.

3: Pick a Trap... But Not Just Any Trap

Cheap traps are rarely a bargain. Animals are more likely to escape or injure themselves in a poorly constructed trap, or destroy it the first time it's used. Purchase a quality plastic trap or a metal wire trap that's been "galvanized after welding," meaning the steel has been treated to minimize rusting. Inspect the trap

carefully and file down any sharp edges. Don't use live traps with solid metal walls as they can quickly turn into death traps, becoming ovens in warm weather and pulling heat away from trapped animals in cold weather.



Anytime you restrain a wild animal, you're introducing the possibility of injury, stress, or death to the animal. And depending on the problems you're trying to solve, live trapping may not be the answer. So before setting a trap educate homeowners about tolerance, discourage them from feeding animals, and encourage the use of humane repellents. In some cases, you can simply "haze" the animals—frighten them away from an area temporarily—then remove their access to shelter, food, and water to encourage them to fulfill those basic needs elsewhere.

4: Put Everything in Its Place

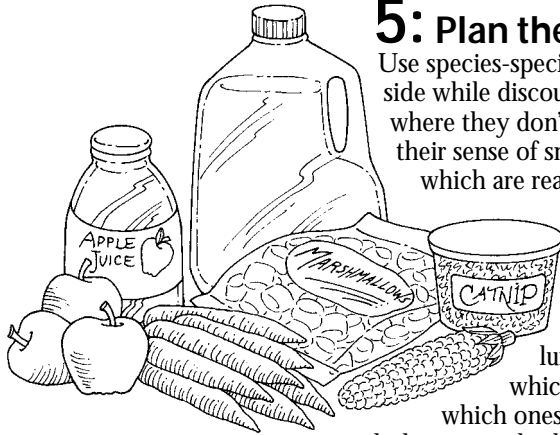
When considering where to place a trap, think about the species. If you're trying to catch a cat, place the trap on a picnic table rather than on the ground, where you're more likely to entice a skunk or woodchuck.

Make sure the trap is safe, too. Don't place the trap too close to a creek or lake's edge, a cliff, or a road, as an animal's violent attempts to escape may move the trap a short distance. Also, find a shady area near a tree or cover the trap top with a towel or sheet to protect the trapped animal from direct sunlight and rain. If unseasonably cold or stormy weather is predicted, wait for a better time to set your trap.

5: Plan the Menu

Use species-specific lures to invite the "target" animal inside while discouraging others from poking their noses where they don't belong. For dogs, use baits that tempt their sense of smell; for cats, use baits such as feathers, which are readily visible; for nocturnal animals, use white baits such as marshmallows and eggs. (See the chart at right for baits that will help lure different species.) During the hot summer months, you might simply set out a bowl of water to lure an animal into a trap. If you're not sure which bait to use, set out various kinds and see which ones are the most tempting to the "target" animal, then use only that bait.

Place the bait in cardboard french-fry holders, milk cartons, and other destructible containers; avoid metal cans of moist dog food or cat food, as their sharp edges may scrape an animal's skin or chip his teeth. Leave some "worry toys" like apples, carrots, or plastic film canisters filled with applesauce or moist cat food so trapped animals can keep busy mouthing the objects instead of destroying the cage.



EFFECTIVE BAITS

CATS: cat food, fish, catnip, soiled cat litter or hamster litter, cat toys, feathers

DOGS: dog food, rawhide bones, pork rinds, fresh rabbit droppings, butcher bones, rotten eggs

RABBITS: apples, carrots, pea pods, anise oil, peppermint, apple juice or cider sprayed over the trap bed

RACCOONS: marshmallows, sweet corn, cream corn, honey, cod liver oil, sardines, mackerel

OPOSSUMS: marshmallows, apples, melons, other fresh fruits

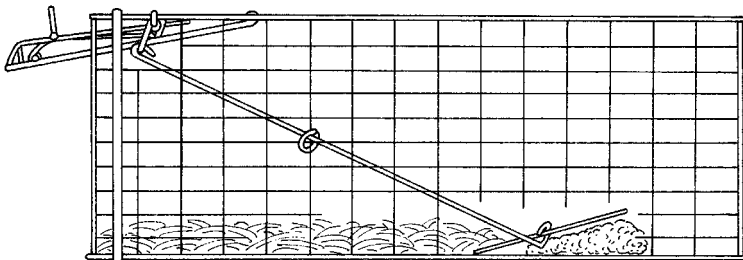
SKUNKS: chicken entrails, fish (canned or fresh), bacon, insect larvae

SQUIRRELS: nuts, sunflower seeds, a mixture of peanut butter and oatmeal

WOODCHUCKS: fresh string beans, sweet corn, lettuce, peas, bananas

6: Bury the Treasure

Just before setting the trap, leave some bait outside the trap door so the animal can get a taste of what awaits him. Rather than place the bait in the pan, place it underneath the trap pan to force the animal to hunt a little harder, making him more likely to spring the mechanism. Hiding the bait will also keep other animals from stealing it. Then "bed" the trap solidly using dirt, grass, or leaves to cover and insulate the trap floor. To make sure animals aren't confined when the trap is unattended and to prevent non-target captures, spring the trap each evening and reset it each morning, or do the reverse if you're attempting to capture a nocturnal animal.



7: Handle With Care

If you need to transport the animal, cover the cage with a blanket to minimize the animal's stress before taking the next step. Don't simply drive a few miles and relocate the animal without thinking ahead; doing so may disorient the animal, leave him without a food source, and expose him to predators or disease. Instead, transport the animal to your shelter, a wildlife rehabilitator, or a nearby veterinary clinic where someone should be standing by to take the animal in. As a last step, clean and disinfect the trap for future use.

