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# service in ACTION

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## Proper use of snares for capturing furbearers<sup>1</sup>

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### Quick Facts

Snaring is an effective technique to capture animals that cause economic damage and for harvesting furbearers.

Snares placed in trails or under fences can successfully capture furbearers.

Carefully select sites where snares are set to avoid capturing non-target animals such as deer and dogs.

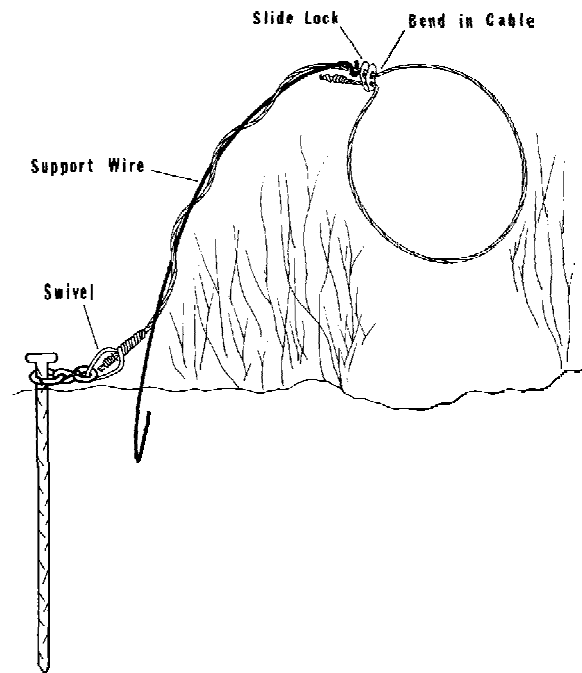


Figure 1. A snare set in a trail to capture furbearers.

### Introduction

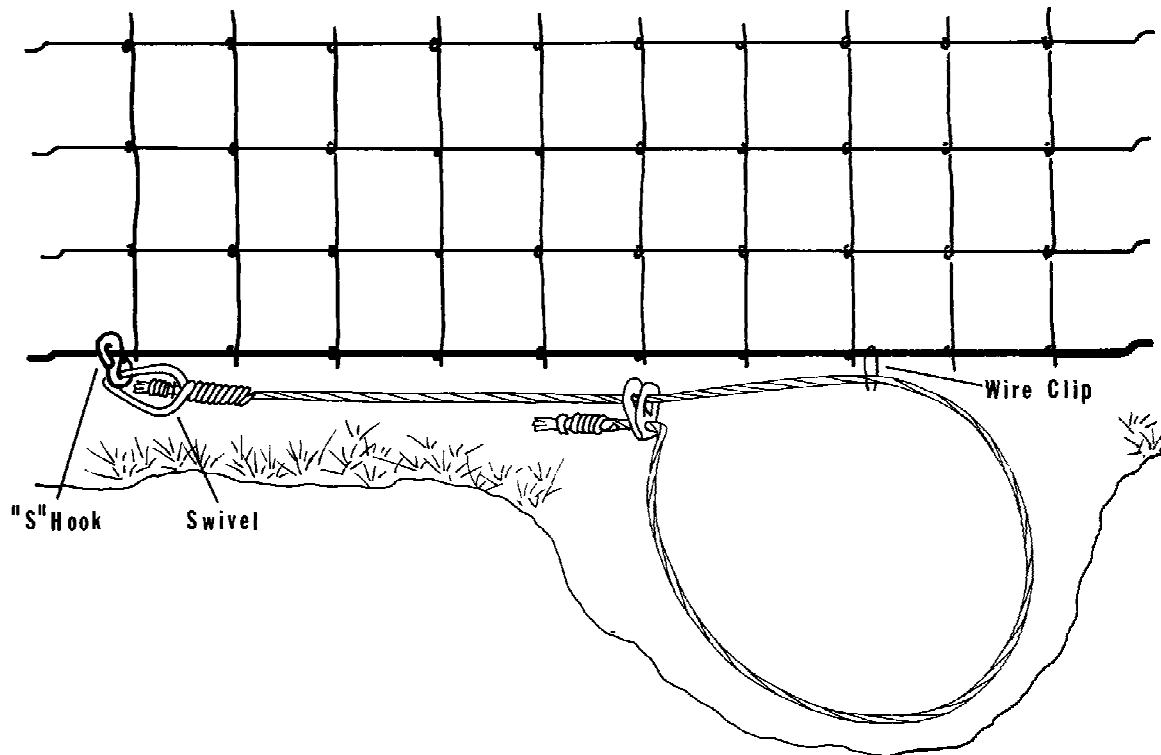
Snaring is a useful technique to capture animals that cause economic loss, such as coyotes that kill livestock and beavers that cut trees or plug irrigation ditches. Snaring also is popular for harvesting surplus furbearers, one of our renewable natural resources. Snares are effective for capturing target animals, but may capture non-target animals such as deer and dogs if used improperly.

Snaring is the technique of setting a steel-cable loop in an animal's movement path to capture the animal by the neck or leg. Snares usually consist of a 2-1/2 to 10-foot long piece of galvanized aircraft cable containing a slide lock that forms a loop in the cable (Figure 1). Attach a swivel, which prevents twisting and breaking of the cable, to the end of the cable opposite the loop.

Snares present several advantages over steel leghold traps. They are light weight, compact, simple

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**Figure 2. A snare set in a hole under a livestock fence.**

in function, affected little by weather, easy to set, low in cost, and offer a high degree of trapper safety. In a south Texas study, snares were 10 times more selective for target species (coyotes and bobcats) than steel leghold traps. However, snares can be a greater hazard to livestock and some non-target species may be killed.

### Snare Preparation

New commercial snares and extension cables can be cleaned by boiling in detergent and hanging outdoors for a few months until they turn a dull gray. Snares also can be changed to a dull gray by boiling each dozen snares in 4 tablespoons of baking soda for one hour. Darker snares can be obtained by boiling in brown logwood crystals and dye. After boiling, keep snares clean of foreign odors. Wear clean gloves when handling and setting snares.

### How to Set Snares

Snares designed to capture furbearers by the neck or leg are set directly in the center of the animal's movement path. Snares usually are held in an animal's movement path with one of several different support systems. One support that works particularly well can be constructed from a 36-inch piece of 12-gauge galvanized or 9-gauge soft wire. A "V" bend is made in the support wire about 4 inches from the end and driven into the

ground with a notched rod to prevent the support from moving in the wind. The snare is wrapped around the support about three times and held in place by a "U" configuration formed in the upper end of the snare support. Bend the snare cable upward slightly, just inside the lock, so the snare loop is not closed by the wind (see Figure 1).

Attach snares to a solid object so captured animals cannot escape. A steel 1/2-inch diameter rebar, 24 to 30 inches long (depending on soil hardness), makes a good anchor. Attach snares to the rebar with a strong swivel to prevent tangling and breaking. Use a lead cable that is at least as strong as the snare cable to attach short snares to the rebar stake. Avoid using 9-gauge wire or several strands of 14-gauge wire to anchor snares to a rebar stake because they may bend back and forth, crystallize, and break. When used for beaver, snares also can be secured to a tree that is at least 6 inches in diameter or to the base of a large shrub such as a willow.

Snares set in holes under woven wire fences should be held in place about 1 to 2 inches from the fence with the snare support system described in Figure 1. The top of the snare can be as high as 3 inches above the bottom wire of the fence. Set the snare far enough away from the fence to prevent the lock from catching on the bottom wire of the fence. Hold the snares in place by clipping them to the bottom wire of the fence with a fine U-shaped wire such as a 1 1/2-inch piece of a paper clip that allows the snare to easily release (Figure 2). The

**Table 1. Recommended loop settings for snaring furbearers.**

Furbearer	Type of set	Round loop diameter (inches)	Height of bottom of loop above ground (inches)
Coyote	Trail	9-12	10-12
Coyote	Under Fence	7-10	2
Coyote	Leg Snare	8-11	4
Fox	Trail	8-10	6-9
Fox	Leg Snare	8-11	4
Bobcat	Trail	8-10	6-8
Raccoon	Trail	8-10	3-5
Beaver	Den, underwater	8-11	Cover bottom of loop slightly
Beaver	Dryland Trail	8-11	2-4
Beaver	Slide in water	8-11	Set bottom of loop 2 inches below water

bottom of the loop should be about 2 inches above the bottom of the hole or coyotes and foxes may be caught by a front leg. With either of the above snare support systems, anchor the snares to the heavy-gauge wire on the bottom of the fence. The upper wires on a woven wire fence usually are too weak to secure a snare.

Snares occasionally are placed in the field but left unset for one to two weeks. This placement allows trappers to quickly set snares when pelts become prime and reduces human scent at the site.

Snares usually are set in the form of a round or oval loop. A round loop that is 12 inches in diameter can form an oval loop that is about 14 inches high and 10 inches wide. The following round loop diameters and heights above ground are recommended when snaring furbearers (Table 1).

A 5/64- or 3/32-inch diameter galvanized aircraft cable is recommended for snaring coyotes, beaver, and raccoons. Foxes and bobcats can be captured in 1/16- to 3/32-inch-diameter snares.

### Where to Set Snares

Animals usually follow the easiest route through heavy cover. These routes, which generally consist of trails, are excellent locations to snare furbearers. Specific locations to set snares for individual species follow.

#### **Beaver**

- \* Trails to uplands--place in water or on land along the route.
- \* Trails over dams--set on top or bottom side of water.
- \* Narrow creek passages.
- \* Den entrances: Construct a 2- to 3-inch high mound with mud and apply beaver castor. Make a V-shaped fence by placing old branches vertically in the mud. The center of the V should be open. The V should point toward the mound and be located about 1 foot from the mound. Place the snare in the opening with

the bottom of the snare about 2 inches below the water.

- \* Under ice at lodges and food caches.

#### **Coyotes and Red Foxes**

- \* Trails leading to a carcass, bone pile, or pond.
- \* Trails in the bottom of ravines.
- \* Trails under fences.
- \* Trails into thickets.
- \* Livestock trails in vacant pastures.
- \* Narrow paths inside weeds or brush.
- \* Trails can be created by driving down weeds or stubble with a pickup or by walking in snow.

#### **Raccoon**

- \* Culvert -- place lure inside.
- \* Under bridges.
- \* Holes under old buildings.
- \* Along river banks next to water.
- \* Along top of high banks next to a river.
- \* Trail along the top of beaver dams -- keep snare up to avoid beaver.
- \* Avoid setting under fences and near trees and brush because raccoons can become entangled.

### Checking Snares

Check snares regularly. Within any city limits or any areas annexed into a city, Colorado Division of Wildlife regulations require that snares be checked at least once daily unless mechanical means are provided to kill snared animals. In all other areas, snares must be visually checked at least once every other day unless mechanical means are provided to kill snared animals. However, all snares, especially those set near residential areas, should be checked once every 24 hours, preferably early in the morning, to increase the probability of releasing non-target animals unharmed and to minimize the duration of restraint.

## Methods to Avoid Capturing Non-target Animals

Carefully select sites where snares are set to avoid capturing non-target animals.

1. Avoid setting snares on public lands where hunting dogs might be captured during the upland game bird seasons.
2. Avoid setting snares in pastures with livestock.
3. Avoid setting snares within 50 yards of animal carcasses to prevent capturing birds of prey and other scavengers.
4. Avoid setting snares within major deer, elk, or antelope wintering areas. These big game animals are much less susceptible to leghold traps.
5. Avoid setting snares on any trails being used by deer, elk, and other non-target animals. Attract predators and furbearers away from trails with specific baits and lures.
6. Avoid placing a stick horizontally over the trail to encourage deer to jump over or go around the snare. This method encourages deer to lower their heads and get captured in the snare.
7. Avoid setting snares under fences where antelope, deer, or dogs are using the crawl space.
8. Although most dogs do not struggle a great deal in snares and most can be released uninjured, avoid setting snares near residences where dogs may accidentally be captured. Use a short snare cable to reduce injuries where accidentally captured dogs might jump over a fence or tree branch. Also, avoid using entangling devices, which increase the chance of killing an animal, in areas where dogs may be captured.
9. Snares are prohibited along portions of the Gunnison, Piedra, San Juan, and Dolores Rivers and some of their tributaries to protect river otters.

10. Carry a catch pole to release dogs and other non-target wildlife.
11. Use the lightest snare lock possible, such as the Gregerson breakaway lock, to capture the desired animal. If deer, elk, and antelope are captured by a leg, they usually can break a light lock but may be held by heavy home-made washer locks.
12. Avoid setting snares where people can readily view captured animals.
13. Place the location and number of snares on a map so that all can be found.
14. Remove all snares at the end of the season or when they cannot be checked frequently.

Snares are likely to remain a legal harvest tool and a legal depredation control device if they are not misused. There is no need to make a set that has high potential for capturing non-target animals. For example, most coyotes can be captured anywhere within their home range, which usually averages 1 1/2 to 10 square miles in size. Thus, select areas where non-target animals will not be captured. Before setting snares, become familiar with state wildlife regulations. Learn the proper techniques and try to accompany a proficient snareperson while learning to set and check snares. By all means, **THINK** before setting any snare. Responsible trappers have an obligation to the wildlife species as well as other trappers, so do your best to avoid problems when snaring.

## License Requirements

A furbearer license is required to snare badger, gray fox, kit fox, swift fox, beaver, marten, muskrat, mink, ringtail, long-tailed weasel, short-tailed weasel, and bobcat. A small game or furbearer license is required to snare coyote, red fox, raccoon, striped skunk, spotted skunk, hog-nosed skunk, or opossum.