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The Probe
ISSUE 117
DECEMBER 1991

Evaluating Performance of the Soft-Catch® Coyote Trap

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Curt D. Mullis, USDA/APHIS/ADC, Albuquerque, NM

Increasing public awareness of both traps and trapping, along with concern among wildlife professionals and trap manufacturers about the continuing need for highly effective and selective traps, have motivated considerable research efforts to modify and improve animal traps. Researchers at the USDA's Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) have been involved in research on traps and snares for many years.

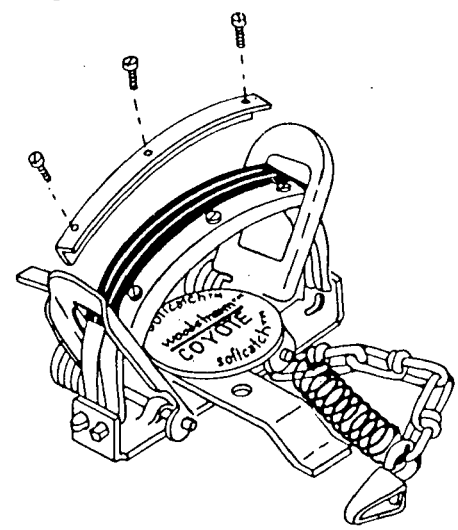
Coyote trapping research has concentrated on two major areas:

- *efficency and selectivity of different trap types and modifications used for capturing coyotes, and*
- *reducing animal injuries associated with trapping.*

Much of the DWRC's recent research in this area has focused on testing the performance of Woodstream Corporation's no. 3 Soft-Catch® trap in comparison with other traps used in predation management programs. Results of the first field study conducted in 1984 and 1985 showed that the Victor No. 3 Soft-Catch® padded trap and the Victor 3NM trap fitted with similar rubber-jaw pads substantially reduced foot injuries to coyotes but were much less efficient in capturing and holding coyotes than the unpadded 3NM traps. Follow-up studies conducted in 1986 and 1987 again showed the Soft-Catch® trap to be less effective in capturing coyotes than unpadded traps.

A fourth-generation model of the Soft-Catch® trap that was re-engineered to increase closure speed became available in 1988. Consultation with co-workers and trapping specialist W.E. "Pete" Askins from the Woodstream Corporation suggested that changes in setting procedures for the Soft-Catch® trap and specific training in the trap's mechanics and use might help to improve performance. Accordingly, in cooperation with the Texas Animal Damage Control (ADC) program, we conducted field trials in southern Texas during the winters of 1989 and 1991 utilizing the new traps and setting procedures. These tests showed no difference in the capture rates of the Soft-Catch® trap, the No. 3NM Victor, the No. 4 Newhouse, or the unpadded No. 3 Victor coil-spring trap. Results of these trials will be reported in greater detail at the 1992 Vertebrate Pest Conference in Newport Beach, California.

Despite the good performance of the Soft-Catch® trap in southern Texas, data were lacking on how the trap might perform in different soil types and under adverse weather conditions. To further evaluate the performance of the Soft-Catch® trap in different geographic areas of the west, wildlife biologists from the DWRC and ADC's Western Region, in cooperation with the Woodstream Corporation, initiated an operational field test in the fall of 1991.



Fifteen ADC specialists (ADCS) from 7 states are participating in the test. Each ADCS was issued 2-3 dozen Soft-Catch® traps for use in conjunction with ongoing coyote predation management work. Some standardized procedures were developed to facilitate comparisons. This fall (October-December) traplines were established in each ADCS's district. Study personnel accompanied each ACDS when traplines were established and provided instruction on trap setting and data collection procedures. Each Soft-Catch trap was paired by location, but at least 20 feet distant, with a standard trap that the ADCS would normally use. The same lure or scent was used with both traps at each location. In most districts, the ENM long-spring trap was used; however, some ADC personnel gathered comparable performance data on the Sterling MJ600 and the No. 4 Newhouse traps.

Continued on page 2

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

February 24-28, 1992: Ninth International Bear Conference, Missoula Montana. For further information, contact L. Jack Lyon, Intermountain Research Station, P.O. Box 8089, Missoula, MT 69807, phone (406) 329-3485.

March 2-5, 1992: 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Hyatt Newporter, Newport Beach, California. Contact: Dr. Terrell Salmon, Business Manager, c/o DANR-North Region, University of California, Davis, CA 95616-8575, (916) 757-8874; FAX (916) 757-8817.

March 27-April 1, 1992: 57th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference, Radisson Plaza Hotel Charlotte and Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, North Carolina. Contact: L.L. Williamson, Wildlife Management Institute, 1101 14th Street NW, Suite 725, Washington, D.C. 20005. Two of the session at the conference will be "Wildlife Damage Management" and "Biological Diversity in Wildlife Management". For more information about the "Wildlife Damage Management" session, contact co-chair John P. Weigand, Fish, Wildlife and Parks Bldg., Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717-0322.
INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN POSTER SESSION: Individuals interested in presenting materials at this session of the 57th North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference should request space and forward a 1-page abstract for their proposed presentations to Poster Session chair Dr. Richard Lancia, Forestry Department, Box 8022, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC 27695-8002. Session entries may deal with any aspect of natural resource management. *All proposals will be evaluated carefully, with the limited space available assigned on a first-come, first-served basis.*

September 13-16, 1992: International Conference on Avian Interactions with Utility Structures, Hotel International, Miami, Florida. Will focus on avian interactions with powerlines, towers, buildings, and aircraft. Contact: Ed Colson, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, 3400 Crow Canyon Road, San Ramon, CA 94853, (415) 866-5461; FAX (415) 866-5318.

May 17-20, 1992: The 4th North American Symposium on Society and Resource Management will be held on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus. The Symposium theme, *Integrated Resource Management*, includes many general themes such as: Managing Agricultural Production Systems and Environmental Quality; Aquatic Systems; Conservation and Sustainable Resource Development; Cultural Resource Management; Environmental Ethics; etc. For mre information contact: Donald R. Field, Program Chair, School of Natural Resources, 146 Agriculture Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

July 4-10, 1993: Sixth International Theriological Congress, Sydney, Australia. This is an international meeting of scientists interested in mammalogy, and will include symposia and workshops including such topics as population biology of mammals, the role of disease in population regulation, and wildlife management. For further information, write: The Secretariat, 6th Int'l Theriological Congress, School of Biological Science, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia 2033.

The Probe is the newsletter of the National Animal Damage Control Association, published 10 times per year.

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Your contributions to *The Probe* are welcome. Please send news clippings, new techniques, publications, and meeting notices to *The Probe*, c/o Hopland Field Station, 4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449. If you prefer to FAX material, our FAX number is (707) 744-1040. The deadline for submitting material is the 15th of each month.

President Bush Has Unique Style Of Animal Damage Control

Below is an article reptined from the October 13, 1991 ***Parade Magazine.***

First Lady Barbara Bush, who swims regularly for exercise in the White House pool, had an unexpected guest recently.

"A dark shadow swam past me," Mrs. Bush told us. "I didn't think anything of it until it passed by again. So I stopped my laps and looked up. I was sharing the pool with a huge rat."

"George was throwing horseshoes and immediately came over—yes. I screamed a time or two—and he did in the rat." No word on whether the President made a ringer.

Continued from page 1

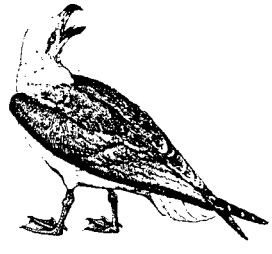
Soft-Catch® Traps...

All traps were checked daily for 10 consecutive days. Following the completion of these initial standardized traplines, each ACDS will continue to use Soft-Catch® traps in combination with traps normally used in operational control work for the next year. During this time, data will be recorded on trap performance in different weather and soil conditions, along with any miscellaneous information on malfunctioning traps, capture of non-target species, or comments on procedures. The information from this field test should provide a more complete assessment of the operational performance of the new Soft-Catch® traps. This will allow wildlife managers to make informed decisions on their use for capturing coytoes.

—Animal Damage Control in the News—

IT'S THE "GULL WAR" AT KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL

It's all out-war at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. According to an article in the September 16 *Philadelphia Inquirer*, airport employees and a team of U.S. Department of Agriculture wildlife biologists have been largely unsuccessful in their attempts to relieve the hazardous situation which threatens planes landing and taking off. A variety of methods have been tried, including inflatable owls, which "...didn't do the trick" and peregrine falcons which were introduced to the site. Unfortunately, the falcons seemed to prefer tastier birds. Cannons that fired earsplitting blanks and speakers that blared gull distress calls proved to be only "minor annoyances. "They seem to get accustomed to the deterrents pretty easily," said Sam Chevalier, who supervises seven airport employees. His team works full-time to harass the gulls, but the article stated that the "laughing gulls" have proliferated. Laughing gulls are named for their shrill call; they are smaller than common gulls. Efforts by ADC biologists to solve the problem worked temporarily. After approximately half the gulls were eliminated, collisions between gulls and planes dropped from 155 last year to 53 this year. But whether their efforts provide a permanent solution will not be known until next spring when the gulls return from winter migration.



POCKET GOPHER CONTROL EVALUATION AT ROGUE RIVER NATIONAL FOREST

Prelimimary work on a one-year evaluation of pocket gopher control in the Rogue River National Forest in Oregon has been completed by personnel from the APHIS/ADC Olympia Field Station. They were assisted by Dale Nolte of Monel Chemical Senses Center, as well as by Denver Wildlife Research Center (DWRC) statistician Heather Krupa and U.S. Forest Service staff. According to the DWRC Weekly Activity report from October 4, significant reductions in pocket gopher populations were only seen in the fall. At one month after baiting, activity on the strychnine oat bait blocks was reduced 36%. These treatments were significantly different and were different from untreated reference plots which averaged a 16% activity reduction. Six months after baiting, just after snow melt in the spring, there were no significant differences in reoccupancy of plots for any treatment. Only the strychnine oat treatment showed reoccupancy significantly less than 100% at 6 months. One year data is still to be analyzed, but populations appear to be fully recovered for all treatments.

CYANIDE BAITS MAY BE ALLOWED ON BLM LAND

According to an article in the September 16 *Rocky Mountain News*, "The eyes of public land managers throughout the West are focused on the Bureau of Land Management in Worland, Wyoming." A decision will soon be made there whether to again allow use of sodium cyanide to kill coyotes. Known as M-44s, the cyanide injectors were banned by the Environmental Protection Agency in 1972, then re-registered in 1975. Mostly used by state predator-control agents and private individuals, the devices were approved for use on federal lands in the mid-80's. The National Forest Service also allowed federal officers to use them in specific areas in the Bridger-Teton National Forest in Wyoming. Now the Animal Damage Control agency is requesting use of M-44s on BLM land. The devices are widely approved by livestock producers such as Carolyn Paseneaux, president of the Wyoming Wool Growers Association. "Some producers are taking 15% to 18% losses to predators and it's just one of those things they can't continue to take," said Paseneaux. "Predators are wiping people out." According to Paseneaux, of the 850 sheep producers in Wyoming, 70% depend upon public lands for grazing. Although the producers favor the M-44s, Paseneaux also stated that "...we're always looking for Earth-friendly ways to maintain our herds." Jim Roseberry, BLM district environmental coordinator in Worland, has received approximately 800 letters — 750 against 50 in favor — of M-44s. The Wyoming Wildlife Federation opposes M-44s because it "...doesn't want toxic substances on public lands."

"USA TODAY" LISTS PREDATOR PROTECTION TIPS

With contacts between humans and predators on the rise, defense tactics against attack are in the news. An August 11 article in *USA TODAY* listed defensive tips for people coming face-to-face with animals such as lions, bears, or wolves. According to the article, "...human contact with mountain lions, bears and other wild animals are on the rise, particularly as wilderness areas get smaller." Kathi Green, biologist with the Colorado Division of Wildlife, stated that mountain lions are "generally active during deer hours, dusk to dawn." But as Green said, "Unfortunately, these are people hours, too." Lion populations are quite stable and and favor the Pacific Northwest and western Canada. The article suggested that if confronted by a mountain lion, "...avoid eye contact. Don't run but move quietly in a safe direction. Try to look large. If you are attacked, fight back with all your power. use a sharp object. Don't play dead. Lions are usually looking for prey." It also listed a variety of suggestions if confronted with bears or wolves.

The editors of The Probe *thank contributors to this issue: Ron Thompson, Sam Linhart, Robert L. Phillips, Curt D. Mullis, and Wes Jones. Send your contributions to* The Probe, *4070 University Road, Hopland, CA 95449.*

Over Forty NADCA Members Attend 5th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference

Over forty persons attended the general meeting of the National Animal Damage Control Association at the 5th Eastern Wildlife Damage Control Conference in Ithaca, New York, in early October. The photograph above was taken during the general membership meeting.

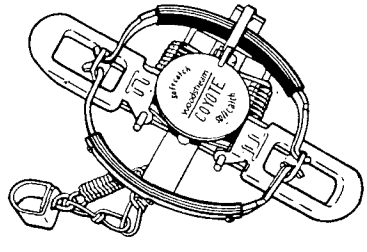
The NADCA Board also held a breakfast meeting to transact business during the Conference. Total Conference attendance was approximately 150 persons.

International Resolution Supports Regulated Trapping

At its Annual Convention on 11 September 1991, the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies adopted a resolution on traps, trapping and furbearer management. It states that regulated trapping in North America is consistent with the internationally accepted principles of natural resources conservation. Those principles stipulate that resource management activities must maintain essential ecological processes and ensure the continuing existence of species and ecosystems. Among its seven calls for action, the International Association advocates appropriate regulation of trapping and rigorous enforcement of trapping laws by responsible agencies so that optimum wildlife populations are perpectuated.

Full wording of the resolution can be requested from the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, 444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 534, Washington, DC 20001 (telephone: 202-624-7890).

From the October 1991 newsletter of the United Conservation Alliance.



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MEMBERSHIP INCENTIVE CONTEST
Strengthen NADCA and win two ways!

THE PRIZE — A handsome 12-gauge automatic shotgun, Remington Model 11-87 Special Purpose, with ventilated rib and choke tubes. New for 1991 at a suggested retail price of $605! Shipped to a USA address.

CURRENT MEMBERS — The rules are simple — pass this page on to a person you believe should be a member of NADCA. If they submit a paid membership application using this page, your name will be placed in a group from which one name will be drawn for the prize. Two-page or double-sided photocopies are legal for multiple entries; the more you hand out, the more chances for you to win. The determining factor for members — check the expiration date on the mailing label on the reverse. If it isn't the current month or later, you better get out that checkbook pronto!

NEW MEMBERS — You have a chance to win a prize also; in fact, you have two chances if you sign up early! If your membership application is the one drawn for the grand prize above, you will be refunded the amount you paid for membership. Your second chance? New members signing up before the next mailing of this newsletter will then be "Current Members" as above, and will also be competing for the Grand Prize by recruiting additional members.

CLOSING DATE — The contest will close on March 2, 1992. The drawing will be at an open meeting at the 15th Vertebrate Pest Conference, Newport Beach, California.

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USDA Is Helping to Limit Rabies Outbreak In Texas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal Plant Health Inspection Service has increased animal control efforts to help halt the spread of rabies in south Texas, reportedly the largest epidemic in the state since 1920.

Bobby Acord, deputy administrator for APHIS's Animal Damage Control (ADC) program, said Texas state and county officials report the rabies outbreak—primarily among feral dogs and coyotes—has endangered human health and resulted in the death of two people.

According to statistics gathered by the Texas Department of Health, 348 people have been exposed to rabies in 10 south Texas counties since 1988. Nearly 150 wild and domestic animals have tested positive for rabies during the last four years. The 10 counties affected are Brooks, Cameron, Duval, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kieberg, Start, and Zapata.

"Our primary goal is to prevent coyotes and other predators from infecting domestic animals and people," Acord said. "County and state officials asked for our assistance after rabies began spreading into more densely populated areas."

Acord said ADC is working in cooperation with county and state officials to set up buffer zones and reduce the coyote population where there have been documented cases of rabies. He also said that public information campaigns and domestic animal vaccination clinics have been established throughout south Texas

"ADC considers this a priority and our employees in Texas are handling it as an emergency-control situation," Acord said.

ADC professional wildlife biologists across the country help manage wildlife to minimize threats to human health and safety, reduce agricultural losses and protect threatened and endangered species.

POSITION AVAILABLE

Wildlife Biologist III, Game Mgt. M.S. or B.S. with exper. in Wildl. or related fld. Possible 2-year contract with local hire upon expiration. Responsible for directing mgt. programs & conducting research on sambar deer, feral pigs, feral water buffalo & francolin. To develop eradication programs for deer & pigs. $31,900-$40,400. Submit resume, 2 refs. to (& request application from): **Rufo J. Lujan, Chief, Div. of Aquatic & Wildlife Resources, Guam Dept. of Agriculture, Agana, Guam 96910. (671) 734-3493, Fax (671) 734-6570.**

Wildlife Veterinarians Adopt Position Statement on Oral Rabies Vaccine

A position statement on oral rabies vaccination of wildlife has been adopted by the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians (AAWV). The intent of the position statement is to allow the AAWV to comment at various hearings or in the Federal Register as needed. The AAWV Position Statement on Oral Rabies Vaccination reads as follows:

> The concept of oral rabies vaccination has been employed with measurable success in Europe. This work 'has led to oral vaccination feasibility studies with an oral modified live rabies virus vaccine in Canada and an oral vaccinia-rabies glycoprotein vaccine in the United States. The risks of using these vaccines have been extensively studied in the laboratory and the field, and to date, these products have outstanding safety records. Therefore, the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians (AAWV) considers it reasonable and rational to support further field tests with these vaccines and others that have been subjected to equivalent safety testing. Furthermore, the AAWV strongly supports the concept of oral rabies immunization of free-ranging wildlife as a safe, effective, and humane approach to rabies control.

Reprinted from the October 1991 newsletter of the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians.

NADCA Logo Contest Still On!

Rules for this contest are minimal. Send your logo sketch to the Treasurer, Route 1, Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871. The logo should be suitable for use on patches, hats, letterheads, and publications. We hope to be able to confirm the selection at the Vertebrate Pest Conference in California in March 1992. The prize for the creative winner will be a fine set of predator calls donated by Lohman Manufacturing Col. of Neosho, Missouri, along with one of the aforementioned hats plus one year's prepaid membership.

If that prize is not enough to motivate you, how about this? All the names of the persons submitting entries for the contest (but not selected) will be in a drawing for one of our official NADCA hats. Two chances at a prize — one based on creativity, the other on luck!

Terrell P. Salmon
DANR-North Region
University of California
Davis, CA 95616-8575

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Membership Application

NATIONAL ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL ASSOCIATION

Mail to: Wes Jones, Treasurer, Route 1 Box 37, Shell Lake, WI 54871

Name: _____ Home Phone: _____

Address: _____ Office Phone: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP _____

Dues $ _____ Donation $: _____ Total $: _____ Date: _____

(Underline: Student $7.50, Active $15, Sponsor $30, Patron $100)

Check or Money Order payable to NADCA

Select one type of occupation or principal interest:

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