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Nebraska Trappers' Guide: A Handbook on the Taking of Muskrat, Mink, Beaver, and Coyote and the Handling of Pelts

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Nebraska

Trappers

Guide



REPRINT

NEBRASKA TRAPPERS' GUIDE

A Handbook on the Taking of
Muskrat, Mink, Beaver, and Coyote
and the
Handling of Pelts

by

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Biologist, Fur Investigations

and

George Hytrek
Trapper

NEBRASKA GAME AND PARKS COMMISSION
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FUR MANAGEMENT

Management of any game or fur animal is an effort to insure an annual harvestable surplus. Much of this effort must be placed upon the land. The development and maintenance of habitat--the place where the animals can live--constitutes a large portion of this effort. The objective of habitat development is the increase and improvement of homes for wildlife and thereby the increase in numbers and improvement of the quality of the animals produced. Another important and continuous job of game management is the annual check on populations--their ups and downs. Information on the numbers of animals is necessary if only the harvestable surplus is to be taken and a seed crop left on the land.

The development and maintenance of wildlife habitat is largely in the hands of land owners and operators, and, in most instances is a part of good land management. The trapper has an important job in regulating the take of fur. The maintenance of seed stock is his contribution to the management of fur bearers--and it is a good investment.

Here are a few suggestions on the management of muskrats and minks:

1. Start trapping muskrats as late in the fur season as possible, regardless of the opening of the trapping season as set by administrative agencies. Early trapping results in a relatively high percentage of "kits" in the take. The breeding season of the muskrat has a definite termination in northern United States, including Nebraska. The take of kits, therefore, falls off perceptibly as winter progresses. This is possible because of the continued activity and growth of the muskrat throughout the winter. A plentiful food supply means better growth of the young animals. In sandhill marshes where the 'rats get plenty to eat there will be practically no kits after the first of January.

Early trapping also produces less prime grades of pelts, the so-called "fall" and "winter" pelts. "Spring" pelts, those having the greatest degree of primeness, are more heavily furred. In Nebraska the percentage of fall and winter skins is quite high in the take until the last two weeks of December. Spring skins usually do not exceed 50% of the take until about the first of February.

The trapping of muskrats should usually begin in Nebraska about December 1 to 15. In the sandhills of Nebraska 3 to 4 percent of the pelts taken will be kits and poor skins if trapping is begun in mid-November.

2. When to quit trapping depends on several factors:
 - a. Abide by the legal season.
 - b. A good "rule of thumb" on when to quit taking muskrats from a given marsh or stream is the law of diminishing returns--or more specifically, when the daily catch is down to about half of the highest daily take on the basis of the same number of traps or sets used. For example, in a sandhill muskrat marsh, when all possible sets are being made, if the daily take is about forty 'rats for the first two or three weeks--when the take falls off to twenty 'rats per day, quit trapping.
3. While there are doubtlessly many possible factors in fur habitat improvement in Nebraska that are as yet unrecognized, here are a few practices that can be followed which appear to be of potential benefit in the development of good muskrat waters:

- a. Keep livestock, and especially cattle, out of the marsh or lake and back from the margins of such water areas by fencing. Livestock damage bank dens by breaking through. Ranchers who want to let their cattle feed on scattered hay on the mowed flats next to muskrat marshes can do so by turning the cattle into these areas after the ground is frozen very hard. Den destruction by the cattle will then be almost eliminated.
- b. Mink should be taken as soon as prime and after the legal season opens. Minks prime early; they start to lose value in the latter half of January, especially if the weather is relatively warm. The pelts will become reddish and their value decrease as much as 25%.
- c. Minks feed upon many items, including muskrats. It is a common, if not universal belief among trappers that mink materially deplete muskrat populations. Many muskrat trappers therefore like to "trap out" the mink in the vicinity of a 'rat marsh as soon as possible in the fall as a means of saving muskrat pelts for harvesting later in the trapping season. That mink predation upon muskrats does cause a significant economic loss to trappers may still be questionable. It appears that trapping on a sustained yield basis of both minks and muskrats, is practical in Nebraska. In other words, ordinary harvesting of the mind as a fur bearer should usually afford sufficient mink control in a program of muskrat management.

COYOTES

Many people are convinced that the coyote is in large measure accountable for reduced game bird populations in Nebraska, and should therefore be subjected to state-wide, and even nation-wide control. To be sure, the coyote does feed upon some kinds of wild birds and mammals which are valued by man either for pleasure or profit. But whether the coyote materially reduces the harvestable surplus of these species is problematical--that he reduces them uniformly over an area as large as Nebraska is improbable. On the other hand, it would be ridiculous to try to convince a poultryman, a sheep raiser, or a cattle rancher that coyotes can not or do not constitute a threat to his economics. It must be remembered, however, that coyotes, like all predators, are largely governed in their choice of food by availability--that is, a coyote eats what is easiest to get. Studies over much of the west, including Nebraska, show that more than half of the coyote's food is made up of jack rabbits and cottontails. Coyotes eat large numbers of meadow mice; in the summer they make entire meals on wild fruits and insects. In the sandhills of Nebraska they eat great numbers of pocket gophers.

The problem of coyote control boils down to this: Damage by coyotes is local in extent; therefore control of coyotes should be local. Local damage is known to be done usually by individual "killer" coyotes which acquire a taste for chicken or turkey or calf, or because of injury or age must turn to these food sources because they are more readily captured than wild prey.

The manner in which local control of the coyote is effected is important in wildlife management. It has been demonstrated many times in many states that bounties, regardless of how high they are set, are not the answer. The bounty system is an expensive attempt at blanket control which not only increases coyotes but increases the percentage of crippled "killers". Coyote roundups--the so-called "wolf hunts"--do not reduce coyote depredations, principally because of excessive killing of rabbits (the coyote's main food item) during

such roundups. Remaining or incoming coyotes must turn for food to pheasants or the farmer's chickens. Exhaustion of pheasants, known to be an almost certain aftermath of "wolf hunts", contributes to the availability of this game bird--not only to coyotes that escape the hunt but to other predators. Pheasants that die from exhaustion following a coyote roundup may be eaten as carrion. Actual numbers of coyotes on a given area are reduced by an organized coyote hunt, but damage by those coyotes which "get through the lines" is doubtlessly increased.

Coyote control can be carried on locally and effectively by (1) the paid, full time, professional trapper or (2) by the man on the land. Both of these men get to know coyote habits and are able to concentrate their efforts on taking the "killers" first. These men do not release female, "golden goose" coyotes that they may produce more high bountied young; they do not decimate rabbit populations, thereby depriving coyotes of their most available natural food; they can carry out effective local control.

TRAPPING MUSKRATS

The presence of muskrats is usually pretty obvious, especially in marshes where large populations occur. Houses built of aquatic vegetation, bank dens, tracks, feeding platforms, cut vegetation, landing places, trails, slides, and droppings are all muskrat sign.

Sets

In a marsh or lake habitat when the water is open, sets for muskrat are best made:

1. On feeding platforms (Fig. 1)
2. On the edges of houses (Fig. 1)
3. In the runs to or entrances of bank dens (Fig. 2)

Sets in the runs to the bank dens can be made after the area freezes over until the ice becomes more than about 6 inches deep or until snow covers the ice. Over much of the heavy muskrat producing regions of Nebraska it is necessary to place traps in the 'rat houses (Fig. 3) after the lakes and marshes are frozen.

It is considered advisable to trap in only the smaller houses. The larger ones, of which there are usually relatively few, should be left undisturbed. Extra care should be taken in all house trapping to not destroy the house. This can be done by replacing all of the house material that is removed in making the sets. If the procedures outlined here for trapping muskrats in their houses are closely followed, neither mutilation nor destruction of the 'rat house will result. By trapping in the houses the trapper can expect a good take; by not destroying the house he insures for himself a continued good take.

On feeding platforms or edges of houses place the trap in one to three inches of water.

Place four or five traps on a large house.

Place the trap stake as far from the feeding platform or the house as possible to insure drowning the 'rat.

In trapping bank dens it is best the trap be placed at or just inside the den entrance, whether the entrance is at the bank proper or out some distance from the water's edge (Fig. 2).

Stakes of willows 3/4 to 1 inch thick at the big end and 6 to 8 feet long are good, especially in marshes where the cattails and rushes are heavy. The tops of the stakes stick up above the vegetation making it easy to find the sets.

The use of stop-loss traps is preferred by many experienced muskrat trappers. It is the opinion of some fur management men that no other type of trap should be used in trapping muskrats. Stop-loss traps are designed to prevent escapes. When the trap springs, a guard device moves high up on the body of the animal holding it in such a way that it can neither twist off or gnaw off. It is not necessary to make drowning sets when using stop-loss traps.

TRAPPING IN RUNS UNDER THE ICE.

Before a lake or marsh freezes over to a depth greater than about 6 inches, and the ice is not covered with snow, muskrats can still be trapped in their runs. The runs can be located by walking on the ice parallel to the shore at about 30 to 40 feet from the shore line; the position of a run is recognized by a "trail" of bubbles frozen into the ice. Chop through the ice and place the trap in the run. Four or five traps can be set in the very long runs, and here the traps should be 3 to 4 feet apart. Where runs are heavily used by muskrats small areas of open water may persist until heavy freezing occurs.

TRAPPING IN SMALL HOUSES

Using a digging tool (Fig. 3), dig into house from one side to the feeding chamber. Be sure to save all house material that you remove in digging. The floor of the feeding chamber is nearly always at water level.

In mild weather set the trap at water level in the feeding chamber, so that only the spring of the trap is under water (Fig. 3). Stake the trap inside the house with the tall stake projecting through the hole you have dug. Refill the hole fairly tightly with the original house material.

In freezing weather when it is quite cold remove the material which forms the floor of the feeding chamber so that water becomes four to five inches deep at that point. Set the trap under this depth of water, and stake it and plug the hole as above.

In extremely cold weather (15 degrees below zero Fahrenheit or colder) do not open any new houses--that is, do not make any new sets in houses. Continued house trapping at these temperatures results in damage to the muskrat population--and you take the loss.

ALWAYS PLUG THE HOLE YOU HAVE MADE IN A 'RATS HOUSE WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED TRAPPING THAT HOUSE

STREAM TRAPPING

In streams and ditches muskrat sets are best made at feeding spots, at slides where they enter the water, and at the entrances of bank dens.

HINTS

If for some reason a muskrat has not been drowned in the trap, pick him up by

his tail, then pick up the trap, otherwise the 'rat may pull out of the trap.

It is also well to remember that the muskrat can inflict painful and dangerous wounds with his sharp front teeth.

TRAPPING MINK

Sign

Minks prefer small streams and ponds and shallow marshes. Piles of driftwood are especially attractive to them. Their presence is shown by dens near streams; runs through vegetation, often in the vicinity of the den; droppings, commonly in quite large piles (latrines); "bored" muskrat houses and tracks. Mink dens are usually round holes leading straight downward, often into old muskrat dens. A latrine is often found near the den. Minks are very active, especially along the margins of streams and ponds or marshes. The numerous tracks they make in these places are probably the most easily discovered sign to be looked for.

Sets

LAKE OR MARSH

When the water is open it is usually best to make sets for mink in the water, using bait such as fish, rabbit, skinned muskrat, or garter snake. The latter is especially good mink bait.

Where mink tracks are found along the margin of lake or marsh, make the set in 4 to 5 inches of water and from 3 to 15 feet from the shore line. Two traps are preferable with the bait on a stake between the traps, the traps 6 to 8 inches on either side of the bait (Fig. 4). Run a sharpened stick into the bait, such as a rabbit head, and push the stick into the bottom mud until only about 2 inches of the fleshy portion of the head remains above water. It is well to tie the bait to its stake with string or wire. The trap chains can be staked out in any direction, with either iron rods or wooden stakes. The stakes are driven in so that they are completely under the water.

STREAM

Figure 6 shows the placement of a trap where minks, traveling parallel to the margin of a stream, are forced into the water by a steep bank. Here the trap can be under 1 to 6 inches of water. The best spot at which to place the trap is determined by observing where the mink tracks enter and leave the water.

DRY LAND

Dry land sets are often made in runs. Runs, or trails, are found in vegetation along streams and marshes, commonly leading to dens. Minks will many times make runs along the line of contact of mowed and unmowed wild hay near the bank of a water area (Fig. 7). Run sets are made without bait (Fig 7 & 8). The traps, chains, and stakes are buried. Cover the traps with finely broken up dry hay from the surface of the soil. Do not cover traps too heavily as this may clog the trap jaws and allow the animal to pull out.

TRAPPING BEAVER

Beaver are legally taken in Nebraska only under special permits issued by the Game, and Parks Commission. The organization or individual whose property is being damaged by beaver, and who files the damage complaint and receives a permit, can select the trapper or trappers to take the beaver. Many land owners and operators do their own beaver trapping. The permit holder and his duly designated and authorized trapper may make whatever arrangements they wish regarding the ownership of the pelts harvested under such a permit. All pelts must be sealed by a Game Commission Agent before they can be legally sold, shipped or otherwise transported out of the State of Nebraska.

Sign

Probably no fur bearer makes its presence more thoroughly known than the beaver. Felled trees and "beaver stumps" are probably the most common sign. Cuttings of smaller vegetation such as shrubs and field corn, dams, island and bank lodges and food piles, trails or runs and slides, canals, scent, and tracks all indicate the presence of beaver.

Sets

Although many devices have been dreamed up and recommended for the trapping of beaver, probably the best sets are made in den entrance (Fig. 9) and at landing places and slides. All sets for beaver are made under water with the traps staked toward the deeper water.

It is necessary to drown the beaver in the trap. This is done with the so-called "running" wire (Fig. 9). A smooth wire, about the size of an ordinary telephone line is fastened near the top end of a heavy stake which is driven in the stream bottom (near the trap) so that the top of the stake is under the mud or sand; this assures the trap chain not becoming wound about the stake and holding the beaver in shallow water where he can escape. The wire is long enough to fasten to a good sized rock and to reach to about 3-4 feet of water. At a distance from the rock equal to the depth of water the rock is to lay in, a "lock" is placed on the running wire by tightly winding another piece of wire about it, allowing a free end or "wing" to extend about 6 inches and at an angle to the running wire; this wing must extend upstream. The deep end of the running wire and its rock anchor should be slightly downstream from the trap. The tight running wire runs through the ring of the trap chain. This ring should be fairly large; the ring of a neckyoke is sometimes used. The length of the chain must be adjusted to allow the beaver to swim to deep water--that is, to just beyond the wire lock--without being pulled below the surface. The trap ring follows the wire, slides over the lock, the wing of which keeps the ring from being pulled back to shallow water. The trapped beaver is held in deep water.

Many Nebraska streams will "sand in" a rock anchor, making it impossible to pull the rock out after a few hours in the stream. It is for this reason that the lock must be as far from the rock as the water is deep at the rock. This allows the trapper to lift the drowned beaver and the trap to the surface, and to cut the running wire and release the trap without moving the anchor.

A bait set can be made at an eddy in a stream where beaver are active, especially in streams with strong current. In moving upstream a beaver will take advantage of these back currents because of the easier swimming. Landing places are sometimes found associated with such eddy currents. Place two traps under 4 to 6 inches of water and stick a few fresh branches or twigs of cottonwood or willow into the mud between the traps and the shore line (Fig. 10).

As little disturbance as possible in the area of the beaver colony is ad-

vissable. Beavers are easily "spooked" by careless trapping methods.

TRAPPING COYOTES

Sign

The presence of coyotes in an area is usually announced by their barking and howling at night, often at sunset and sunrise. They travel considerable distances and their tracks not only reveal their presence but also information regarding their movements, territories, and feeding habits. The tracks of a coyote can usually be distinguished from those of a dog by the placement of the first and fourth toes, that is, the two outside toes. In the track of a coyote these outside toes are placed well behind the other toes, and tend to point nearly straight forward. A dog track shows the two outside toes tending to flare outward, producing a more or less broad track as compared with the relatively slim track of the coyote.

Sets

A set for coyote can be made in a cow trail and is especially good if the trail is not longer used by cattle and where the sign shows frequent travel by coyotes (Fig.11). Bury the two traps so that the pans are at ground level. A square of paper (not newspaper) should be placed over the pan of each trap; these pan covers (canvas can be used) keep the dirt from filling in under the pan and halting the action of the trap. Brown wrapping paper can be used if there is no snow; white paper is better if snow is on the ground. Cover the traps with fine dry sand or dirt and the dry, trashy grass particles from the surface of the ground. Be sure that the chains and stakes are completely buried.

The carcass set as pictured in Figure 12 is a good set for coyotes, but is not recommended unless it can be made at a considerable distance from farm or ranch buildings so that the chances of it being visited by dogs are lessened. It is easy to determine if coyotes have been feeding on the carcass of a cow or horse. The age of a carcass makes little difference, for coyotes will continue to visit the remains of a dead farm animal for many months, gnawing at the bones and dry fragments of hide. Use at least four traps. The traps can be wired to the neck or legs of the carcass. Stakes may be used and should usually be placed at the back of the dead animal. The traps are run in the ground and covered in the manner described above. Always be careful not to cover the traps too heavily or with too large pieces of dead vegetation. It is effective to lay two or three broken fence posts or old logs about the set; an approaching coyote will tend to watch these objects, thereby increasing the chances of stepping in a trap.

If it is snowing when a coyote set is being made, place the traps on the surface of the ground and let them snow under.

A bait set can be made for coyotes using skinned-out carcasses from your fur take. The carcasses of three or four muskrats in a pile, half a prairie dog, or half a jack rabbit are placed on the surface of the ground. Four traps are evenly spaced about the bait at the intervals indicated in Figure 13. Placing and staking the traps as illustrated will tend to cause a coyote to get into more than one trap. All evidence of the traps, chains, and stakes must be covered. Small pieces of remaining bait such as legs, head, and tail are scattered about this set as far out as 15 feet from the traps; these are the "come-on" that bring the coyote into the main bait.

Many trappers find it pays to wear cotton gloves and stand or kneel on a piece of canvas while placing traps in a coyote set. Dirt from the trap holes is placed on the canvas and any surplus dirt is carried away from the set.

The "coyote-getter", or cyanide gun, is being used with marked success in taking coyotes. This recent invention, while very effective and popular, is recommended for use only in sparsely settled country or where sets can be made with assurance that dogs, livestock, or children can not contact them. Destruction of animals other than coyotes is reported to be negligible. Directions for operating accompany the cyanide guns and should be closely followed. It is well to know, also, that there are state laws governing the use of these devices.

PELT HANDLING

Many trappers lose money because of the improper handling of their pelts. The annual loss to trappers all over the country due to careless pelting runs into hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The fur buyers in Nebraska were asked to state the most important practices or improvements the trappers should follow in order to insure the highest value of their pelts. Five suggestions were outstanding among those offered:

1. Wait for prime season.
2. Skin carefully and flesh thoroughly.
3. Stretch properly.
4. Dry in a cool, dark place
5. Clean the pelt.

Other good suggestions were (1) run your traps daily, (2) use traps of proper size, (3) dry the fur before placing the pelt on a stretcher or drying board, and (4) if you wish to sell your catch "on the hoof", take your unskinned animals to the buyer daily.

Pelts are either "open-handled" or "cased". Open skins are removed from the animal by slitting straight down the belly from the lower jaw to anal opening, then slitting front and hind legs to the body cut (excepting the beaver, on which legs are not slit). Cased skins are removed by slitting the backs of the hind legs to the anal opening, and peeling the skin forward off of the body.

All fur should be cleaned. Those skins prepared with fur side out can be brushed. Some animals, such as coyotes and skunks, commonly are carrying burrs in their fur; these should be removed.

Just as every trapper develops his pet methods of making sets, so he has favorite pelting practices. The procedures outlined here have been used for many years and effectively enough to produce pelts that repeatedly receive top prices and the praise of both fur buyers and manufacturers.

PROPER PELTING PAYS

Pelting Muskrat

1. Clean and dry the fur if it is dirty.
 - a. If snow is on the ground, push the muskrat into the snow several times, "fluff" it around in the snow, and shake it dry. Snow will help dry a wet animal.
 - b. If there is no snow, take the muskrat by the tail and rinse well in water, squeeze the water from the fur, and dry.
2. On a clean floor or on clean dry hay or grass, kneel with the muskrat's tail under your left foot. With the 'rat on its back, begin first slit on inside of left hind foot. Cut straight to the base of tail and slit left side of tail out about 2 inches from its base.
3. Turn 'rat over and slit skin of right leg and right side of tail in same manner.

4. Run blade under skin in front of anal opening, from the right to the left initial slits; cut through rectum and skin out lower side of tail to end of the tail slits. Flap of tail skin now free.
5. Skin out the belly about half way forward by thrusting the fingers under the belly skin. This skin must sometimes be started by cutting some of the connective tissue found immediately beneath the skin.
6. Peel skin from the left hind leg to the foot and cut skin free. The foot stays with the carcass.
7. Turn 'rat on its belly and run blade under skin at base of tail, and skin out upper side of tail to end of the tail slits. Upper tail flap now free.
8. Skin out right hind leg.
9. Pull entire skin forward; standing on carcass, pull skin with left hand until carcass peeled past the front legs.
10. Skin out right front leg by working thumb of your right hand between skin and leg and pulling skin free of the foot. Use a tight, close-in hold on the leg of the pelt while pulling it free from the foot.
11. Skin out left front leg in same manner.
12. Pull the skin over the head as far as it will go easily. Cut ear tubes close to the skull; take extra care with eye membranes, nose, and lips; keep pulling gently and cutting at the same time.
13. With the fur side in, slip the pelt on one hand and pick off all fat and flesh. It is not necessary to remove all of the thin muscle layer on the back of the pelt; this muscle dries readily and does not depreciate the value of the pelt.
14. Drying of pelts can be done on factory-made wire "streachers" or home-made drying boards.
 - a. Wire stretchers.

Wire stretchers can be recommended over wooden ones because of the uniformity of the dried pelts which come from the former. There is much less chance of over-stretching with the wire type than with the home-made drying board.

Slide the muskrat pelt onto the stretcher, fur side in; puncture a hole in each tail flap; insert a clip point into each hole and pull clips back until the skin is fairly taut. DO NOT OVER-STRETCH. Over-stretching results in misshapen pelts with thinned hair--and lowered values. There is no premium in trying to make the pelt larger than it actually is.
 - b. Good drying boards can be made from quarter-inch box wood. It is well to make a large supply of these before the trapping season begins. Slide the pelt onto the board fur side in, thrust a small nail through each tail flap and pull skin taut, nailing in place. Insert a wedge ($\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide at its base and as long as the drying board) between the board and the belly side of the pelt to the full length of the pelt. This wedge allows easy removal of the pelt from the board when it is dry.

15. Hang the pelts in a cold or cool, dark, well ventilated place to dry. Do not hang them where any heating device, such as a stove is being used. The less dusty the drying room the better. It is best to hang the pelts on wires so that mice can not get to them. If temperatures are above freezing, skins will usually dry in a week; at freezing temperatures a longer time is required.

PELTING MINK

1. After cleaning the fur, place the mink on its back on a clean surface; place your left foot on its tail. Make the first slit by inserting knife blade in middle of heel pad of left hind foot and cutting along inside of leg straight to anal opening along the line of division between the shorter and longer fur.
2. Do the same on the right hind leg.
3. Skin the belly forward about 4 inches, using the knife.
4. Loosen the skin around both hind legs at the knees. Skin out both hind legs and the feet to toes. Leave the toes and claws on the skin by cutting toes off at the second joint.
5. Slit skin on lower side of tail from anal opening to tip of tail. Skin out tail by using knife.
6. Peel pelt from carcass forward to front legs by pulling steadily and cutting connective tissue.
7. Skin out front legs and feet by pulling lightly but steadily on the skin and cutting connective tissue. Leave toes and claws on the skin by cutting toes off at the second joint.
8. Pull pelt forward over head; cut ear tubes close to the skull. Take care not to damage eye holes, nose and lips.
9. The pelt of a large mink can be fleshed by slipping it over your hand. Pick off all fat and flesh using knife with blade against your thumb. Small mink pelts must be pulled over a drying board for fleshing; the board must be small enough to leave the pelt fitting loosely.
10. Good mink drying boards can be made from quarter-inch box wood; they should be slightly wider at the rear end. Make the board to fit the pelt so that the pelt is taut but not over stretched. Insert a wedge on the belly side; the wedge should be about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch high at the rear end, about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch high toward the nose end.

Secure the tautness of the pelt on the board with small nails--two at each side at the base of the tail, one in the center flap between the hind legs, and one in each hind foot. Drive a small nail in the drying board through one of the eye holes of the pelt. Hang the board by this nail; the tail will dry in the desired position.

PELTING BEAVER

Beaver pelts are open-handled and stretched round. A single slit is made in the skin from the tip of the lower jaw to the vent. The feet and the tail are removed. The round effect is obtained by stretching, not cutting. The pelt can

be rounded for drying by tacking to a flat surface or by lacing in a circular frame. The value of a beaver skin is considerably lessened by poor handling; most beaver trappers take extra pride in preparing good-looking pelts.

PELTING COYOTE

Coyote pelts are cased fur side out. Slit the back of each hind leg to the anal opening, and skin out the hind legs, cutting the skin off near the feet. Do not slit the tail; pull the tail bone out of the tail. Cut off the front feet and slit the skin up the back of each front leg to near the body. Pull the skin forward over the head, skinning out the front legs. In skinning out the head be sure to cut ears close to the skull and take extra care not to damage eyelids, nose, and lips.

Some buyers recommend slitting the tail, cutting off the claws but leaving the feet on the pelt, and not slitting the skin of the front legs.

PELTING OTHER FUR BEARERS

Skunks (including Civets): Case skin-side out. Cut off the feet. Slit the tail and dry flat. After slitting hind legs from feet to anal opening, cut around the scent sac and glands and carefully remove them.

Raccoon and badger: Handle open. Stretch square. Get square effect by stretching and not by cutting or trimming. Slit the tail and dry flat. Do not remove legs.

Opossum: Case skin-side out. Cut off tail and feet.

Fox: Case fur-side out. Slit the tail to the end and dry flat. Do not cut off feet or claws.

Weasel: Case skin-side out. Feet and claws should be left on. Do not slit the tail but remove the tail bone by pulling.

Bobcat (Wildcat, Lynx Cat): Case fur-side out; sometimes open handled. Slit the tail to the end and leave the feet and claws on.

TRAPS

Suggested steel trap sizes are listed her with the animal they are expected to best take and hold:

Badger-----	No. 3 or No. 4	Mink-----	No. 3
Beaver -----	No. 3 or No. 4	Muskrat -----	No. 1½
Bobcat -----	No. 3	Opossum -----	No. 1½ or No. 2
Civet -----	No. 1½	Raccoon -----	No. 3
Coyote -----	No. 3 or No. 4	Skunk -----	No. 1 or No. 1½
Fox (Red) -----	No. 2 or No. 3	Weasel -----	No. 1

The No. 0 trap should not be used in the taking of any fur bearer.

Care of the traps during the time they are not in use is important to their successful operation. At the close of the trapping season they should be cleaned and hung in a dry place. Oiling is not considered necessary.

Before placing a trap in a set, test its action to make sure that it works freely. Check all moving parts. This is best done by setting the trap and snapping it a time or two.

Fig. 1. Open water set for muskrat on 'rat house or feeding platform.

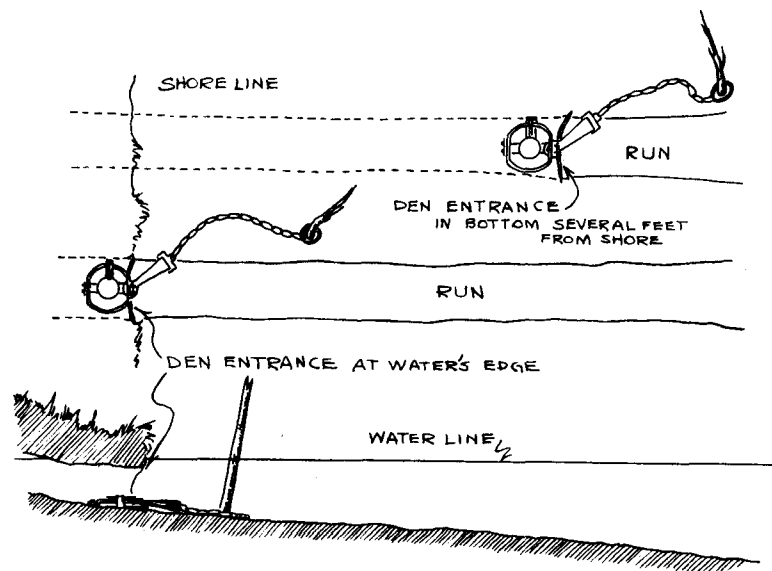
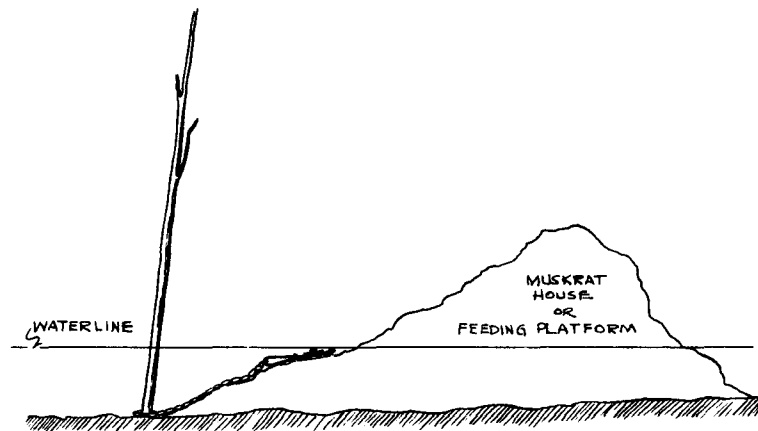


Fig. 2. Open water sets for muskrat at den entrances.

Fig. 3. a. Method of trapping in small muskrat house.
 b. Digger, made from automobile spring leaf, for digging into muskrat houses.

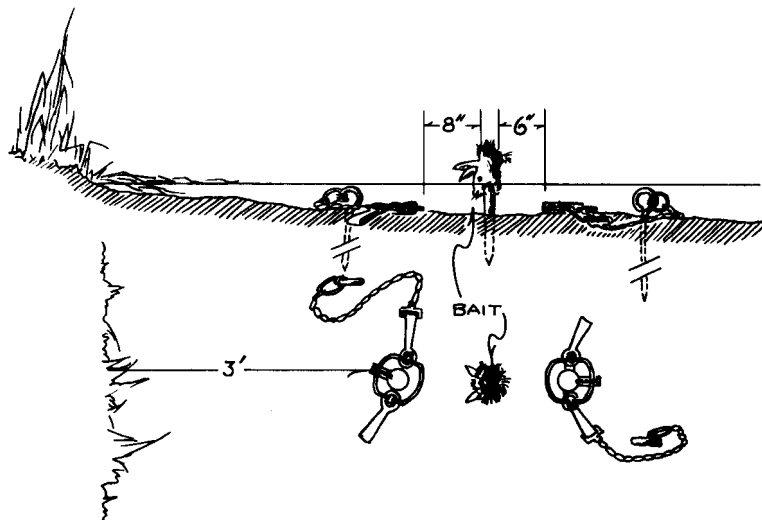
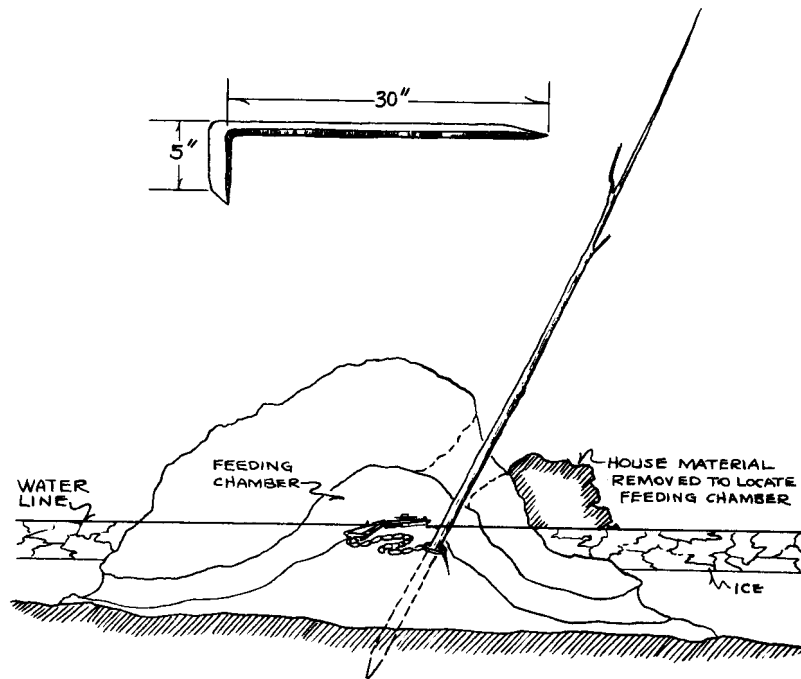


Fig. 4. Still water set for mink with rabbit head pictured as bait.

Fig. 5. Stream set for mink with fish pictured as bait.

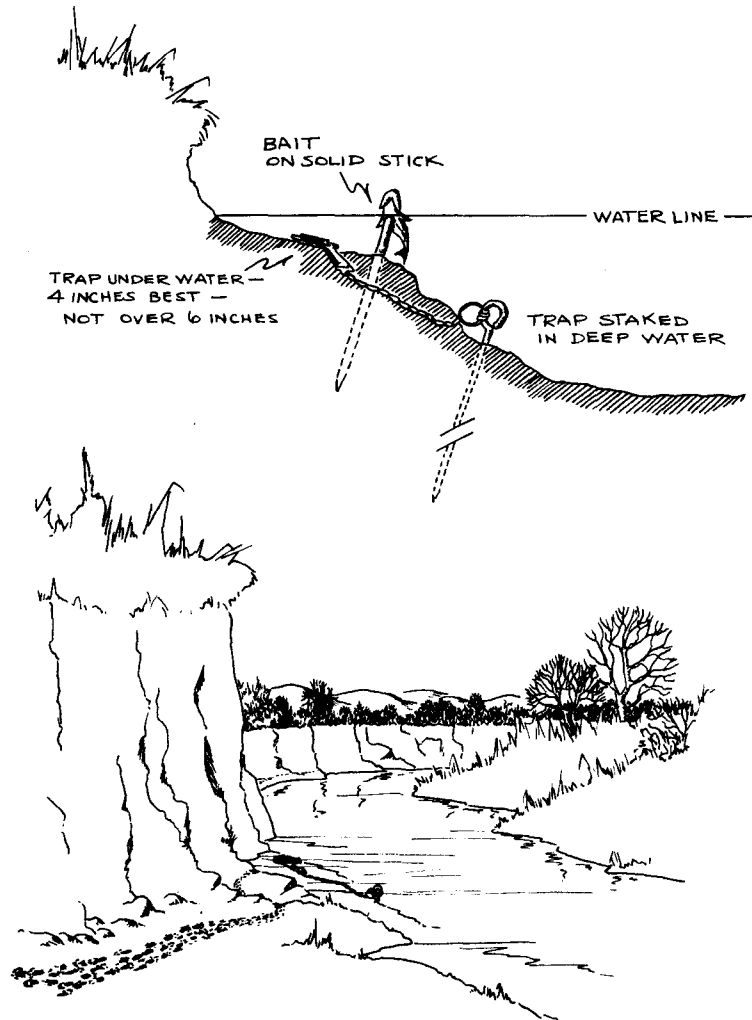


Fig. 6. Stream set for mink where a steep bank forces travelling minks into the water.

Fig. 7. Dry land set for mink in mink run near water area.

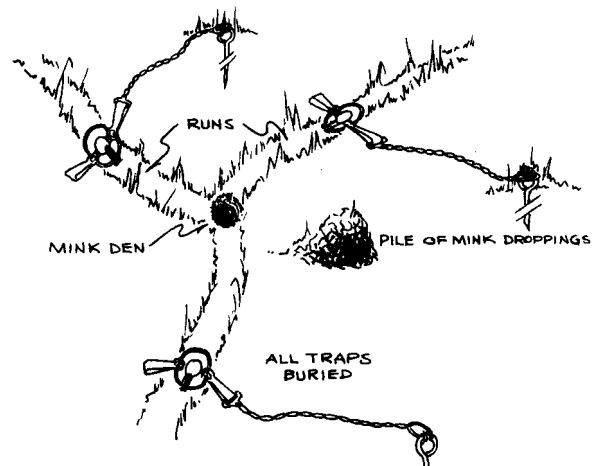
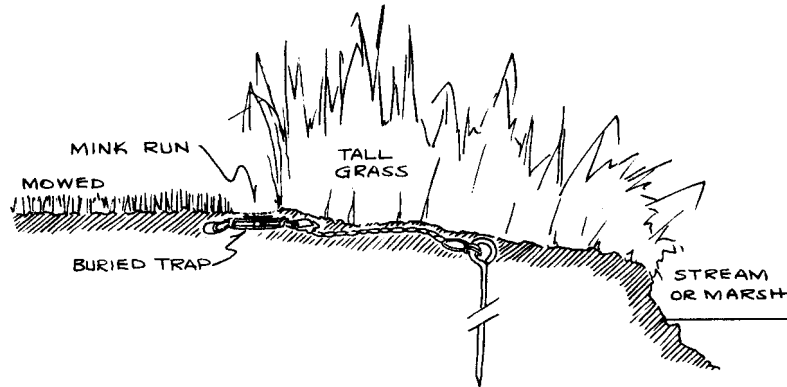


Fig. 8. Dry land set for mink in runs leading to the animal's den.
Traps, chains, and stakes are buried.

Fig. 9. Beaver set at entrance of bank den, showing the use of the "running" wire and "lock".

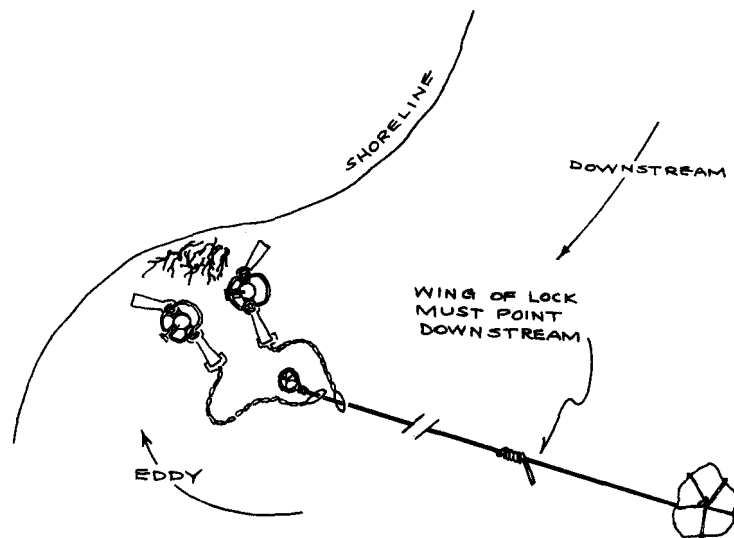
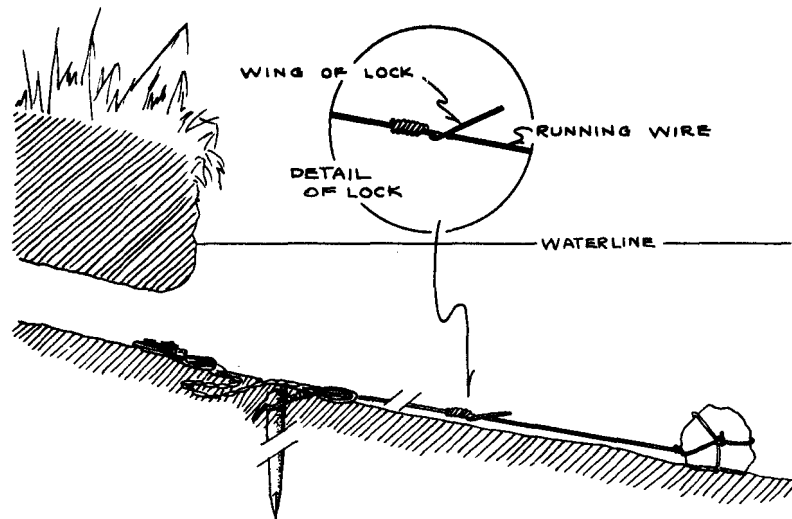


Fig. 10. Beaver set in eddy current at edge of stream using twigs of willow or cottonwood as bait.

Fig. 11. Cow trail set for coyote. All evidence of traps, chains, stakes, etc., must be concealed.

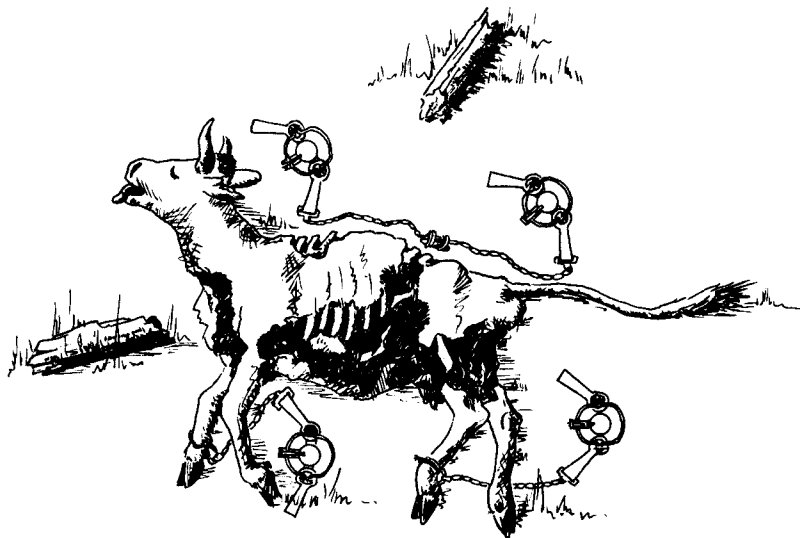
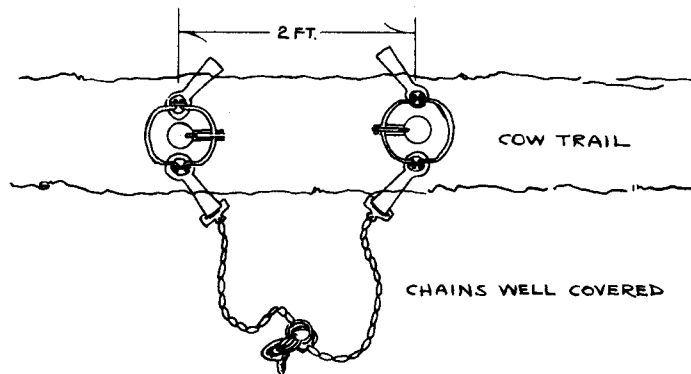


Fig. 12. Carcass set for coyote. All evidence of traps, chains, wires, etc., must be concealed.

Fig. 13. Set for coyote using skinned out carcasses of muskrats. All trap evidence must be buried. Note the scattered small pieces of bait.

