Dog aware fact

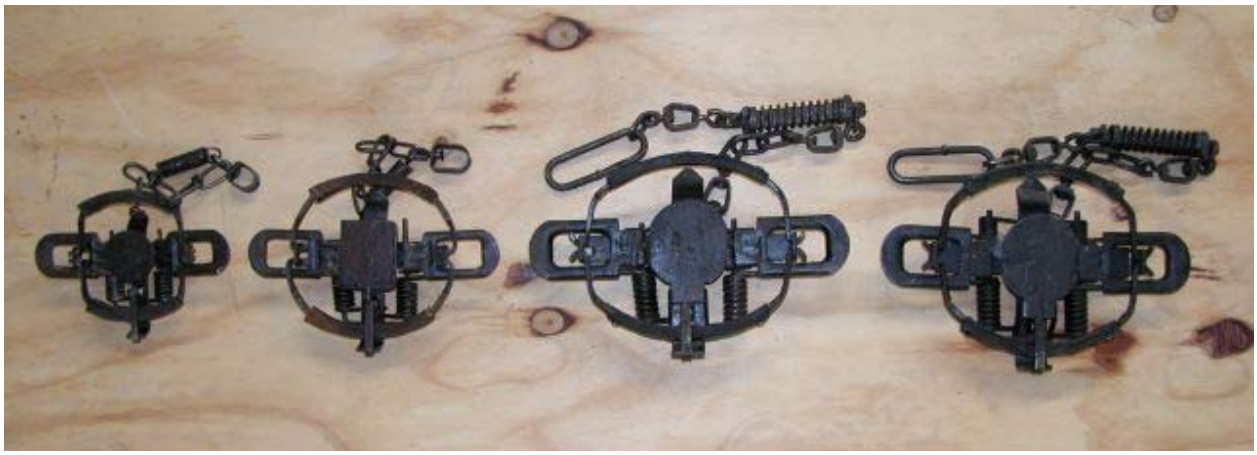
Foot-hold traps

Although foot-hold traps (rubber padded jawed and offset and/or laminated jawed) have not been widely used in Queensland in the past, they can be effective in dealing with problem animals. They are most effective in situations where more traditional control methods such as 1080 cannot be used, or as a follow up to baiting programs. Although very labour intensive, trapping should be considered as another tool in an integrated approach to controlling wild dogs.

'Foot-hold traps' are so named because the size of the trap is matched to the foot size of the target animal, with the trap designed to catch the animal across the tougher padded area of the foot. The objective is to hold the animal firmly at the foot, but prevent damage to underlying tissue. The jaws of foot-hold traps can be rubber padded, offset, and/or laminated. All types can be used effectively to control the effects of wild dogs while reducing captures of non-target animals and limiting animal welfare concerns.

A 'leg-hold trap' is much larger and catches the animal higher on the leg.

As all traps are made from steel, the term 'steel-jawed traps' applies to all traps, including those with padded jaws.



All three sizes of Victor Softcatch #1, 1 #1/12, #3 and #3 modified four-coiled matching the trap to the animal (Foot-hold traps). (Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)

Padded jaws

Padded-jaw traps have been developed to minimise injuries sometimes caused by unpadded foot-hold traps. These traps minimise injuries, not just because they are padded, but also because of the size of the trap and the material used for padding. In all types of traps the length of the chain, its location on the trap and the number of swivels in it relate directly to the efficiency of the trap and improved animal welfare.

Offset jaws

Offset jaws are a factory or after-market modification to create a 3–6 mm gap between the jaws when they are closed. This reduces the impact of the trap and allows for increased blood flow to the animal's paw. Animals caught in these traps tend to fight the trap less, thus reducing their stress and injury.

Laminated jaws

Expanding the thickness of the jaw by 6–10 mm increases its surface area on the animal's trapped foot, and research has shown that this significantly reduces injury, and increases the holding-efficiency of the trap.

Lamination is normally an after-market modification where a metal strip is welded above and/or below the jaw to increase its thickness. All unpadded foot-hold traps should ideally be laminated, increasing jaw width by at least 6 mm.

How foot-hold traps work

Foot-hold traps are buried in the ground so that when an animal steps on the plate, it is depressed. This frees the tongue from the notch and allows the jaws to spring shut, holding the animal's foot until it is dispatched or released by the trapper.

All traps should be checked and maintained daily, target animals should be destroyed humanely, and non-target animals treated for any injuries and released.

Advantages

The advantages of foot-hold traps are that:

- they are safe for the operator and the public
- the risk of physical injury to animals is low
- they grasp the animal's foot over the hard padded area
- they are highly effective when used correctly
- they can be placed in a range of places
- the addition of different trigger systems (e.g. Paws-I-Trip, gun-notch or night-latch triggers) can increase target specificity
- they are small and easy to set
- there is better public acceptance
- jaw pads can easily be replaced
- they do not pose a threat to large non-target wildlife or livestock
- holding ability can be increased by adding two extra coil springs.

Disadvantages

The disadvantages of these types of traps are that:

- the public may not distinguish between leg-hold and foot-hold traps
- there are potential animal welfare concerns if the traps aren't correctly monitored and animals are stressed or injured
- setting and maintaining them is labour intensive
- a high level of training is required initially
- without Paws-I-Trip, gun-notch or night-latch trigger systems, target specificity is reduced
- the small size of the plate or pan size increases the skill required to capture an animal
- they require regular maintenance to ensure their effectiveness
- if the jaws are padded, the pads need be replaced regularly.

If you are dog aware:

You know if used correctly foot hold traps are an effective control method.