



THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE
PROTECTION
of Fur-Bearing Animals

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Trapping Overview

Each year in Canada, almost 1 million animals are trapped and killed for their fur. These animals include bobcats, lynx, coyotes, wolves, foxes, beavers, minks, otters and muskrats.

“Non-Target” Catches

In addition to the millions of target animals trapped and sold for their pelts, there are also many more “accidental” catches of animals whose pelts are not valuable. Additionally, there are animals whose pelts are damaged so badly by the time the trapper returns, that they are not valuable enough to use.

Dogs and cats are frequent victims of these cruel traps. Owls, ducks, jays, porcupines, flying squirrels, rabbits, etc. are also caught. They are “unwanted” and are thrown away, or let free, often painfully and sometimes fatally injured. Some non-target catches are even endangered species, such as eagles, badgers and others.



Photo: Eli Kohnert

Photo: Dog killed in Conibear trap

“In my last year of land trapping... I caught 28 house cats and several dogs. I did not kill the dogs, but I did kill 26 of the cats. I did this upon the oral advice of the local game warden and the Maine Trapper’s Association representative.”

Bill Randall, former Maine trapper

Types of traps used in Canada

There are 3 main fur traps used in Canada today, the leg-hold trap, Conibear trap and snare trap.

1. Leg-hold:

The leg-hold trap remains legal in all provinces across Canada. Variations of the leg-hold trap are as follows:

a) “Padded” Leg-hold Traps

The so-called “padded” trap clamps onto an animal’s leg with enough excruciating power to hold a desperate, panicking wolf.

The only difference between a “padded” trap and a conventional steel jawed leg-hold trap is a strip of synthetic material lining the powerful steel jaws.

b) Off-Set Traps

The “offset” trap is a regular steel jawed leg-hold trap with a 3/16” gap between the closed steel jaws.

c) Laminated Traps

The "laminated" trap is a regular steel jawed leg-hold trap with extra steel added to the jaws to make them wider (thicker).

In addition to these minor modifications, some leg-hold traps have been made stronger because a second pair of springs has been added. These now 4-spring traps, instead of the usual 2 coil springs, means double the pressure, double the pain for trapped animals.

2). The Conibear Trap

The Conibear trap was invented in 1957 by Frank Conibear, who wanted to create an alternative to leg-hold traps that would eliminate the hours or days of fear and suffering.

The problem is that the Conibear does not work as intended unless the animal happens to be just the "right size" for the size of the trap, come into the trap at the "right speed", and also from the "right angle" - conditions that are impossible to predict. Rather than being an instant-kill trap, the Conibear smashes down, clamping onto various parts of the animal's body, for example, the shoulder, neck, abdomen, etc., where his agony will be unspeakable.



Photo: Ermine in Conibear trap

The Conibear trap cannot, of course, discriminate, so there is no way for it - or the trapper - to discern what animal will find its way into the device. If the animal victim is 'lucky,' it will meet all the ideal criteria and die within minutes; animals like Harper, a Jack Russell Terrier, who died in his owner's arms moments after his head and neck were gripped in a Conibear trap.

Harper's death was the inspiration behind Harper's Law, a municipal bylaw that prohibits the use of body-gripping traps in the city limits of Guelph, Ontario, except in certain circumstances, and with specific conditions attached.

Conibear traps cause their victims horrendous pain and suffering – slow and agonizing deaths. In many Canadian provinces, a trapper can leave a Conibear trap unchecked for up to 14 days – a ghastly amount of time for an animal to be caught and held, defenseless and in anguish.

Even trappers refer to the Conibear as "body-holding trap" or "body-gripper", in recognition that it is *not* well described as a kill trap.

Castor [the cat] was caught by the belly in the Conibear, which is ... designed to kill animals by clamping on the neck, but often catches them by other body parts. After being found meowing in the trap by his owners, Castor spent five days in veterinary intensive care, but had to be euthanized because of the extent of his internal injuries.

The Times Colonist, March 2009

The Wildlife Departments continue to classify Conibears as "quick-killing." However, in many government-issued trapping publications, a quiet change to the descriptive "body holding trap" is being seen more frequently, as it has become still more apparent that the Conibear is anything but "quick kill."

Newer Conibear type traps such as the Magnum and the Sauvageau have the same basic design, and suffer the same basic problems.

3). The Snare Trap

...after reading the report by an IF&W biologist that 70% of the neck snared coyotes struggled for up to 3 days and died only after their brains exploded from blood abundance – something known as “jellyheads” – I had to speak out.
Bill Randall, former trapper

The snare is a brutal, yet simple trap. A wire loop encircles the animal's body (leg, abdomen, neck, etc.). As the animal struggles, the loop tightens... and tightens.

A snare is another kind of body holding trap; a wire loop is placed along a traveling path where the animal will walk right through it. Sometimes the animal will slowly strangle himself, choking to death, like the wolverine on the right.

Sometimes he will suffer alive, fighting for breath, until the trapper returns to kill him.

Sometimes the ensnared animal can pull the snare from its stake in the ground, and wolves have been seen with the wire embedded painfully in their infected flesh around their necks. These animals are doomed to harsh ends, as infection robs them of their ability to hunt, feed, and walk.

Not uncommonly large ungulates, like deer or elk, will stumble into the snare, which grasps them by the leg. In their struggles to free themselves, they may break their limbs, leaving them laying in terrible pain and completely vulnerable to predators.

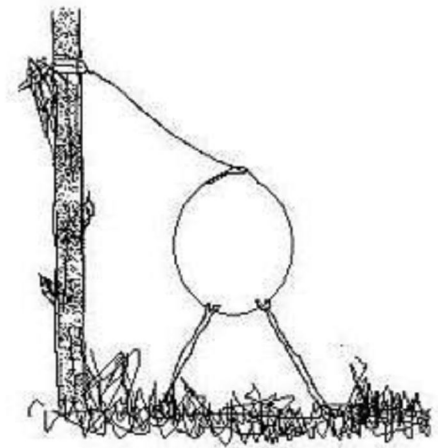


Photo: Snare trap

Pole Snares

Snares are often used to catch squirrels. In many jurisdictions, several snares are attached to one suspended pole. The sound of one trapped squirrel attracts the others. There they hang, alive, dangling off the pole by their trapped body part until the trapper returns.

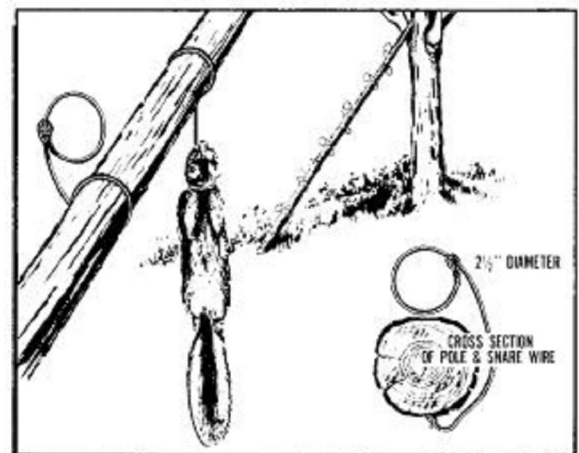


Photo: Pole snare