

Chapter 6

Important Terms

You should know the following terms:

- Adjusting a trap
- Dye
- Wax
- Cold dip
- Animal sign
- Tracks
- Droppings
- Huts (lodges)
- Cover

Learning Objectives

You should be able to:

- Understand options for securing landowner permission to trap: from landowners you know, from landowners who have given you permission to hunt, from landowners who don't know you
- Understand the importance of presenting a good first impression
- Recognize things that can help you get permission including a neat appearance and polite attitude
- Understand the need to seek permission well ahead of the trapping season
- Learn how to adjust a foothold trap
- Understand the steps in preparing foothold traps: adjusting, boiling and dyeing, waxing or dipping
- Learn how to prepare bodygrip traps: boil and dye
- Learn how to prepare snares: boil in a baking soda solution
- Understand that scouting helps you determine where to set traps
- Recognize four types of animal sign: tracks, droppings, food scraps, dens
- Learn to identify animal signs by consulting nature guides
- Recognize good places to look for animal sign: wetlands, cover patches, travel routes
- Understand that you can prepare for setting traps as the season approaches

Chapter 6

Getting Ready to Trap

You will be a more successful trapper if you get ready for trapping well in advance of the season. Being prepared will save you time when the season opens and give you more time for actual trapping. Besides this, your preseason activities can help you pass the time while you anxiously await the beginning of trapping season.

Getting Permission

One of the most important things you need to do to get ready to trap is get written permission from landowners. For beginning trappers, it will probably be easiest to get permission from people who know you or your family. If there are places where you have permission to hunt, you could ask if you might also have permission to trap. Sometimes, people who don't know you will hesitate to give you permission to trap. If you have secured permission from other landowners in the area, ask if you may use them as a reference. Then you can tell people who don't know you of other places in the neighborhood where you have permission to trap or hunt.

First impressions are important when you are asking permission to trap. Always present a neat, clean appearance. Be polite. If someone will not give you permission to trap, do not argue with them. They could change their mind and give you permission at a later date.

There are some things you can do that might help you get permission to trap. Tell the landowner you have taken the trapper education course and you are prepared to trap safely and responsibly. Ask the landowners if they are having any problems with furbearers. Muskrats can damage ponds and ditch banks. Raccoons can damage crops and gardens. Offer to help reduce the number of these problem animals by trapping them.

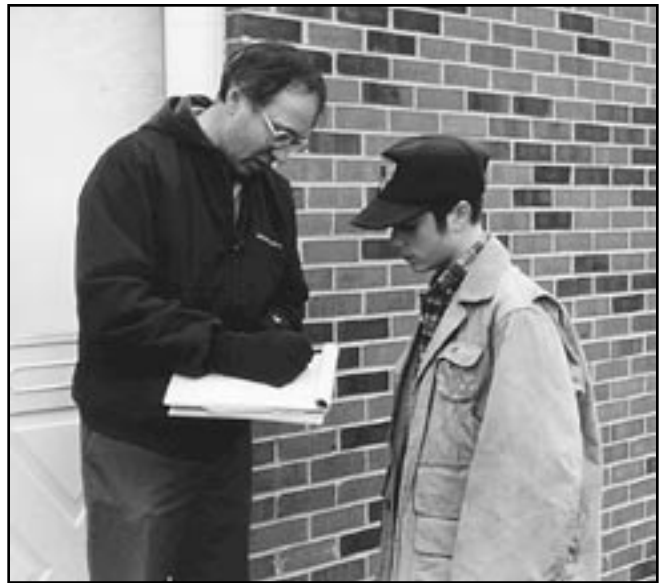
You should start seeking permission well in advance of the trapping season. Do not wait until the last minute. You may have to make several trips before you actually contact the person who can give you permission. The best time to get

permission is late in the summer, before farmers have started to harvest their crops. Try to avoid interrupting people when they are working or otherwise busy. Evenings, after the dinner hour, are usually a good time to visit landowners.

Tips for Getting Permission to Trap

- Get references from other landowners who know you.
- Present a neat, clean appearance — be polite.
- Offer to remove furbearers that are causing property damage.
- Start seeking permission well ahead of the trapping season.

Getting Permission



You must get written permission to trap on someone's property.

Getting Your Equipment Ready

You should have your trapping equipment assembled and ready to go before the season starts. A lot of the equipment you need can probably be gathered up around your home. Other equipment you may be able to make for yourself. You will have to buy some items of equipment from a trapping supply dealer, especially traps. Order your traps well ahead of the season so you can get them ready.

To get foothold traps ready for use, you should adjust each trap so the pan sets level. You can do this by bending the end of the trap frame where the

dog is attached. Bending the frame in lowers the pan, and bending the frame out raises the pan.

The traps should be boiled in a kettle of clean water to remove the dirt and oil. Young trappers should seek adult supervision when working with fires and boiling water. A cupful of unscented automatic dishwasher detergent added to the water will help get the traps clean. After this, the traps need to be dyed to make them a dark color. This will help camouflage them. Boil the traps in water containing walnut hulls, sumac bark, or commercial trap dye to color them. New, shiny traps will not take dye. These traps must be boiled clean and allowed to hang in the open air for a few weeks until they take on a light coating of rust.

Your traps should also be coated to protect them from the elements. Wax is a good trap coating. One way to wax traps is to add one or two pounds of wax to the water in your boiling kettle. The wax will melt and float to the surface. Put your traps in the kettle and let them heat up for a few minutes. Then slowly pull the traps up through the wax.

Another method for waxing traps is to melt pure wax or paraffin in a metal container, then dip clean, *dry* traps into the melted wax. You must be very careful waxing traps this way. *Melted wax is highly flammable.* DO NOT try to melt wax on an open fire. Use a hot plate or a small camp stove. Keep a metal lid nearby that will completely cover the container. If the wax container should catch on fire, you can smother it by placing the lid on the container. All waxing should be done outdoors away from combustible materials to reduce the danger of fire. Young trappers should seek adult supervision in waxing traps. NEVER dip wet traps in pure melted wax. The water on the traps can turn into steam and cause an explosion of hot wax.

Be very careful with fires, boiling water, and hot wax. Always wear protective clothing and some type of eye protection when you are handling traps around hot wax or boiling water.

Cold dip is another type of trap coating. Cold dip is mixed with gasoline, and the traps are dipped in the solution. *Gasoline is extremely flammable* and young trappers should seek adult supervision. The dip should only be used outdoors in a well ventilated area. The dip provides a protective coating for the traps as well as coloring them. It is not necessary to rust or dye traps you are going to dip. It takes several weeks of warm weather to dry this coating, so traps must be dipped well in advance of the season. You cannot successfully dip traps in cold weather because they will not dry.

After dipped or waxed traps have dried, take a small file and scrape the coating off the end of the dog and out of the notch. The coating is slippery, and the traps may not stay set unless you scrape

it away in these areas.

Preparing bodygrip traps is slightly different. They require no adjustment. It is a good idea to boil and dye bodygrip traps, but you may want to avoid coating them. Coatings like wax or dip on a bodygrip trap make them slippery and hard to keep set.

Snares do not need a great deal of preparation. They require no adjustment. New snares are shiny and they should be dulled to make them less visible to animals. Boiling snares in a trap dye solution will have no effect on them. Instead, boil the snares in clean water to which you have added several tablespoons of baking soda. This can be done in a pot on a kitchen stove. Do not coat snares. The coating may interfere with the operation of the snare.

Adjusting a Foothold Trap

The pan on a foothold trap must be adjusted so that it is level with the jaws when the trap is set. This pan is up too high.



To adjust this, use a pair of pliers to bend the end of the trap frame. Bend the frame in if the pan is too high or out if the pan is too low.



This is how the pan should set when the trap is properly adjusted.



Getting Your Traps Ready — Cold Dipping

- Adjust the traps to level the pan.
- Boil the traps to remove the oil or dirt.
- Dip the traps (allow at least three weeks of warm weather for drying.)
- Scrape the dip from the notch and dog.

Getting Your Traps Ready — Dyeing and Waxing

- Adjust the traps to level the pan.
- Boil the traps to remove the oil or dirt.
- Allow new traps to take a light coat of rust.
- Boil the traps in a dye solution.
- Wax the traps.
- Scrape the wax from the notch and dog.

Scouting

Starting a few weeks before the trapping season, you should go into the areas you intend to trap and look for animal signs. This will help you determine how many animals are present. You can also find out where they are feeding and where they are traveling. This will help you determine where to set your traps.

Animals leave many signs of their presence. Tracks left in muddy or dusty areas are one of the most common signs. Droppings are another common type of animal sign. Some animals leave scraps of food where they have been feeding. Sometimes you can actually find the den or lodge of an animal. The openings of muskrat dens are often visible under water along the shoreline. Muskrats and beaver often build huts or lodges that are easy to spot in shallow water.

Consult a good nature guide or manual to help you identify tracks and other sign left by different furbearers. You can find this kind of information at your school or public library.

A good place to start looking for sign is around areas of cover, especially cover that borders a creek, stream, pond, or other body of water. These wetland areas are very attractive to furbearers, and it will be easy to find tracks in the wet ground.

Other areas of cover like woodlots, brush patches, and gullies will also be attractive to furbearers. Look around the edges of these for tracks, droppings, and trails. You can also find sign along the routes that animals travel. Fence rows, brush rows, and farm lanes often guide the movement of animals. Look for tracks and droppings here.

As trapping season grows closer, you may want to do some work to prepare for setting your traps. You can decide where your traps will be placed. You can draw a rough map on a piece of paper and mark the locations where you want to set your traps. This map can also help you later during the season as you run your traps. If some of your sets require digging holes, building cubbies, or narrowing down trails, you can do this shortly before the season opens. This will save you time when you actually begin trapping.



Chapter 6 Study Guide

Review Questions

1. List four common signs which would identify furbearers:
1. _____, 2. _____,
3. _____, 4. _____.
2. Foothold traps should be _____ then _____ in boiling water and then waxed.
3. Getting _____ is the first step in preparing for the trapping season.
4. _____ will help you decide where to set your traps when the season opens.