

Best Management Practices

Trapping Coyotes in the Eastern United States



ASSOCIATION *of*
FISH & WILDLIFE
AGENCIES

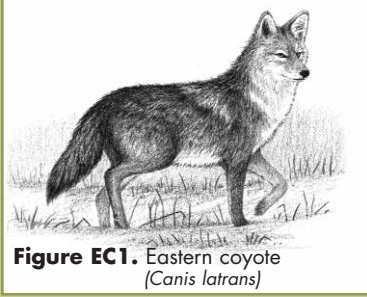


Figure EC1. Eastern coyote
(*Canis latrans*)

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are carefully researched recommendations designed to address animal welfare and increase trappers' efficiency and selectivity. The extensive research and field-testing used to develop BMPs are described in the introduction of this manual. The evaluation methods used to develop BMPs have been standardized, enabling BMPs to be easily updated and revised as new traps and techniques become available. All traps listed in the BMP have been tested and meet performance standards for animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and safety.

Trapping BMPs provide options, allowing for discretion and decision making in the field. It does not present a single choice that can or must be applied in all cases. They are meant to be implemented in a voluntary and educational approach. BMPs are the product of on-going work that may be updated as additional traps are identified through future scientific testing.

The Eastern Coyote at a Glance

Characteristics

The Eastern coyote is a medium to large member of the canid family (Figure EC1). Eastern coyotes are somewhat heavier than their western relatives, and adults average 30 to 38 pounds. Individuals weighing as much as 60 pounds have been recorded in some northeastern states. Adult males are generally larger than adult females. The scientific name is *Canis latrans*.

Range

Coyotes occur throughout North America from the edge of the northern tundra south to Central America. In the United States, all 48 contiguous states and Alaska have populations, though densities vary with habitat quality. Densities are highest in the Plains region and in the south-central states.

Habitat

Originally an inhabitant of the open grasslands and prairies of the Western United States and southern Canada, the coyote has adapted to a wide range of habitat conditions from southern swamps to northern spruce-fir forests. They also occur in urban and suburban environments, including some of the largest cities in the United States.

Food Habits

Coyotes are opportunistic predators. They commonly prey upon small animals (mice, rabbits, reptiles, and insects), sometimes including pets, and often consume scavenged food items and carrion, as well as fruits, seeds, and other plant material. Coyotes can also kill large mammals such as white-tailed deer and livestock.

Reproduction

Breeding takes place during late January or February in the north and later in the south. Litters, which average three to six pups, are born about 60 days after breeding. Females normally do not breed until their second winter. Pairs may remain together for several years, and both parents care for pups. Young usually disperse from the home territory in the fall when they are about six months old.

Populations

Although coyote populations vary across the east, they are generally considered abundant, increasing in numbers, and becoming less wary of people. Coyote densities are highly variable depending on habitat quality and range from one animal for every seven or eight square miles to an average of more than one animal per square mile. Adult coyotes may range over an area of 2-20 square miles, depending on the time of year. Family groups defend well-defined territories; pairs and solitary individuals do not.

Comments

Coyote range has expanded dramatically since the mid-1800s. Coyote populations spread from western grasslands north to Alaska, west across the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and east to the Atlantic coast. This increase in population and range occurred during a time of extensive habitat change and reduction in wolf numbers. Few mammals have shown such adaptability. As coyotes have occupied suburban areas they have become less wary of people, and in recent years attacks on people have been documented.

General Overview of Traps Meeting BMP Criteria for Coyotes in the Eastern United States

Two basic types of traps were tested for coyotes: foothold restraining traps and cable devices (Table EC2). Examples, brief descriptions, and mechanical details of the various makes and models that meet BMP criteria are given in the next section.

Table EC2. Overview of traps meeting BMP criteria for coyotes in the Eastern United States

Trap Category	Jaw/Frame Characteristics	Inside Jaw/Frame Spread at Dog*	Inside Width at Jaw/Frame Hinge Posts*
Coil-spring	Padded	4 1/2 - 5 3/16	4 9/16 - 6 7/16
	Unmodified	5 - 5 1/4	5
	Offset, laminated and/or wide	5 1/16 - 5 1/2	4 3/4 - 6 3/8
Powered Cable Device	Smooth, round rod, 1/8 inch cable	6 3/8	6
	Cable Characteristics	Loop Diameter	Locks
Non-powered Cable Devices	48 - 60 inches 3/32 or 1/8 inch diameter stranded cable	10 - 12 inches	Relaxing locks

* Inches



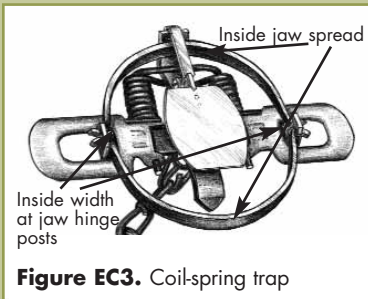


Figure EC3. Coil-spring trap

General Considerations When Trapping Eastern Coyotes

Jaw-type Traps

- Many currently-used trap models meet specifications;
- Pan-tension set to four pounds improves selectivity and foot placement in the trap;
- Captures and holds animals alive, allowing for release.

Powered Cable Devices (foot capture)

- Pan-tension set to four pounds improves selectivity;
- Can be used to capture several furbearer species;
- Large cable-loop diameter minimizes capture of smaller species;
- Cables require frequent replacement;
- Captures and holds animals alive, allowing for release.

Non-Powered Cable Devices

- The use of loop stops and breakaway devices can improve selectivity;
- Cables require frequent replacement;
- Captures and holds animals alive, allowing for release.

Specifications of Traps Meeting BMP Criteria for Coyotes in the Eastern United States

As more capture devices are tested and new information becomes available, they will be added to an updated list. Mechanical descriptions of tested traps are given as an aid to trappers or manufacturers who may wish to measure, build, or modify traps to meet these specifications (Figure EC3). Also, other commercially available traps, modified traps, or other capture devices not yet tested may perform as well as, or better than the listed BMP traps. References to trap names are provided to identify the specific traps tested. This list is provided for information purposes only, and does not imply an endorsement of any manufacturer.

These are average mechanical measurements which are rounded to the nearest $\frac{1}{16}$ inch. There may be up to $\frac{1}{8}$ inch variation in specifications on the part of the manufacturer. Manufacturers use recognizable names, such as "No. 2" coil-spring, to identify certain traps. However, there is no standardized system linking mechanical design features with trap names. The mechanical features of these traps are listed so that similar traps may be identified. The performance of anchoring systems was not specifically evaluated. However, methods of attachment are described for informational purposes.

Padded Jaws (Figures EC4a and EC4b)

Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 4 1/2 inches

Inner width: 4 7/8 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 4 9/16 inches

Jaw width: 9/16 inch round padded jaw

Jaw thickness: 3/8 inch

Padding: Manufacturer supplied rubber pads

Main trap springs: Two 0.131 inch wire-diameter springs

Additional springs: Two 0.100 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Reinforced with D-ring

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Woodstream™ Victor No. 1 1/2 Softcatch modified coil-spring, four-coiled.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in the trap testing: 7 1/2 inch center-mounted with two swivels, one shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: Some damage to trap pads should be expected and will require occasional replacement as a normal part of trap maintenance and upkeep. Special care should be taken to prevent odor contamination of the rubber jaws. Avoid using petroleum-based dye directly on the rubber pads. This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 3/16 inches

Inner width: 6 1/16 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 6 7/16 inches

Jaw width: 9/16 inch round padded jaw

Jaw thickness: 3/8 inch

Padding: manufacturer supplied rubber pads

Main trap springs: Two 0.145 inch wire-diameter springs

Additional springs: Two 0.115 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Reinforced with D-ring

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Woodstream™ Victor No. 3 Softcatch modified coil-spring, four-coiled.

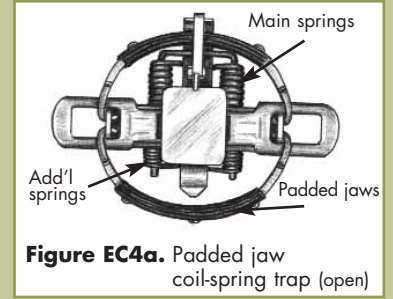


Figure EC4a. Padded jaw coil-spring trap (open)

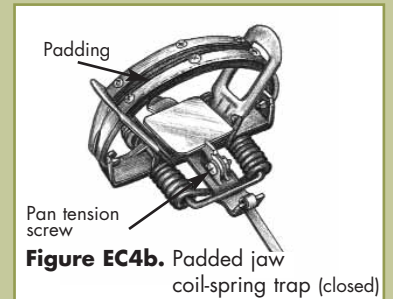


Figure EC4b. Padded jaw coil-spring trap (closed)

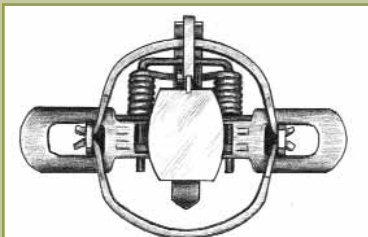


Figure EC5a. Unmodified jaw coil-spring trap (open)

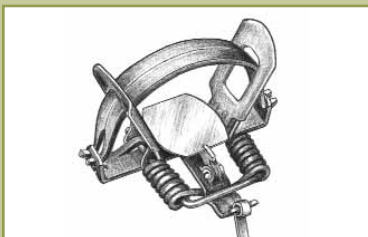


Figure EC5b. Unmodified jaw coil-spring trap (closed)

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 18 inch center-mounted with three swivels, two shock springs, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: Some damage to trap pads should be expected and will require occasional replacement as a normal part of trap maintenance and upkeep. Special care should be taken to prevent odor contamination of the rubber jaws. Avoid using petroleum-based dye directly on the rubber pads. This device also meets BMP criteria for Western coyotes.



Unmodified Jaws (Figures EC5a and EC5b)

Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 1/4 inches

Inner width: 4 9/16 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 5 inches

Jaw width: 1/2 inch smooth round jaw

Jaw thickness: 1/8 inch

Main trap springs: Two 0.145 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Not reinforced

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Woodstream™ Victor No. 1.75 coil-spring.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 9 1/2 inch center-mounted with two swivels, one shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes and Western coyotes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 inches

Inner width: 4 1/2 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 5 inches

Jaw width: 1/2 inch smooth round jaw

Jaw thickness: 1/8 inch

Main trap springs: Two 0.145 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Not reinforced

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Woodstream™ Victor No. 2 coil-spring.

Additional Information:

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 6 inch center-mounted with two swivels and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.



Offset, Laminated and/or Wide Jaws (Figures EC6a, EC6b, EC6c, EC6d and EC6e)

Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 1/16 inches

Inner width: 4 5/16 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 4 3/4 inches

Jaw width: 3/8 inch smooth oval jaw

Jaw thickness: 1/4 inch

Jaw offset: 3/16 inch

Main trap springs: Two 0.145 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Not reinforced

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Sleepy Creek™ No. 1 3/4 coil-spring, wide jaw, offset.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment on traps tested: 9 1/2 inch center-mounted with two swivels, one shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes.



Figure EC6a. Wide jaw, offset trap

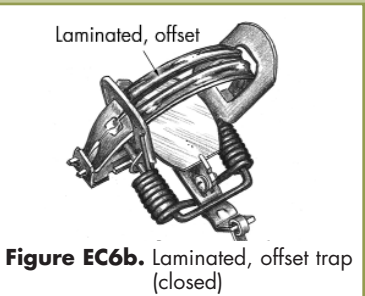


Figure EC6b. Laminated, offset trap (closed)

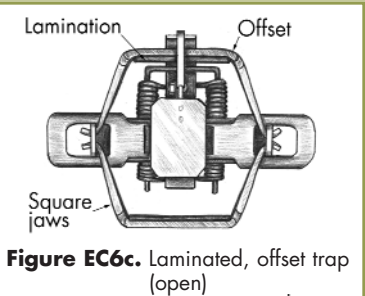


Figure EC6c. Laminated, offset trap (open)



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 ¹/₁₆ inches
Inner width: 4 ⁹/₁₆ inches
Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 5 ¹/₁₆ inches
Jaw width: ⁷/₁₆ inch wide, smooth round jaw
Jaw thickness: ⁵/₁₆ inch
Jaw thickness with lamination: ¹/₂ inch
Lamination: ³/₁₆ inch above-jaw lamination
Jaw offset: ³/₁₆ inch
Main trap springs: Two 0.135 inch wire-diameter springs
Base plate: Not reinforced

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Woodstream™ Victor No. 1.75 coil-spring trap modified with offset, laminated jaws.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 9 ¹/₂ inch center-mounted with two swivels, one Shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes and Western coyotes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 inches
Inner width: 4 ¹¹/₁₆ inches
Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 5 inches
Jaw width: ³/₈ inch wide, smooth round jaw
Jaw thickness: ³/₁₆ inch
Jaw thickness at flat face: ¹/₄ inch
Jaw offset: ¹/₄ inch
Main trap springs: Two 0.142 inch wire-diameter springs
Base plate: Not reinforced

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pages 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Oneida-Victor™ No. 1.75 coil-spring trap, wide jaw, offset.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 18 inch center-mounted with three swivels, one shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so two-four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and was checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device meets BMP criteria for Eastern coyotes and Western coyotes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 1/4 inches

Inner width: 4 11/16 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 5 1/16 inches

Jaw width: 3/8 inch wide, smooth round jaw

Jaw thickness: 3/16 inch

Jaw thickness at flat face: 1/4 inch

Jaw offset: 3/16 inch

Main trap springs: Two 0.153 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Not reinforced

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pages 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Oneida-Victor™ No. 2 coil-spring trap, wide jaw, offset.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 18 inch center-mounted with three swivels, one shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so two-four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and was checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device meets BMP criteria for Eastern coyotes and Western coyotes.



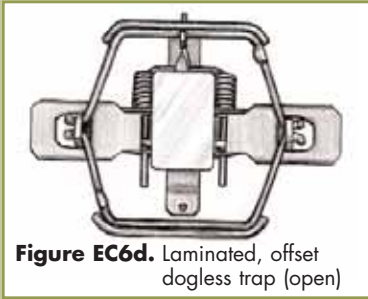


Figure EC6d. Laminated, offset dogless trap (open)



Figure EC6e. Laminated, offset dogless trap (closed)

Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 1/2 inches
 Inside jaw spread (between below-jaw lamination): 5 inches
 Inner width: 5 1/16 inches
 Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 5 9/16 inches
 Jaw width: 7/16 inch hexagonal jaw
 Jaw thickness: 1/16 inch
 Jaw thickness with lamination: 7/16 inches
 Lamination: 1/4 inch
 Jaw offset: 3/16 inch
 Main trap springs: Two 0.145 inch wire-diameter springs
 Additional springs: Two 0.110 inch wire-diameter springs
 Base plate: Reinforced with D-ring

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Bridger™ No.2 coil-spring modified with offset, laminated jaws, four-coiled.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 18 inch center-mounted with three swivels, two shock springs, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device also meets BMP criteria for Western coyotes and red foxes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 3/4 inches
 Inner width: 5 1/4 inches
 Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 6 inches
 Jaw width: 1/2 inch wide, square jaw
 Jaw thickness: 3/16 inch
 Jaw thickness with lamination: 1/2 inch
 Lamination: 1/4 inch above-jaw lamination
 Jaw offset: 3/16 inch
 Main trap springs: Two 0.150 inch wire-diameter springs
 Base plate: Reinforced with D-ring

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pages 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Montana Special™ No. 3 dogless coil-spring trap modified with offset, laminated jaws (lamination on top of jaws).

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 18 inch center-mounted with three swivels, one shock spring, and anchored with a stake.
- Selectivity features: Pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so two-four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and was checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device meets BMP criteria for Eastern coyotes and Western coyotes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside jaw spread (at dog): 5 1/2 inches

Inside jaw spread (between below-jaw lamination): 5 inches

Inner width: 6 inches

Inside width at jaw hinge posts: 6 3/8 inches

Jaw width: 1/2 inch hexagonal jaw

Jaw thickness: 3/16 inch

Jaw thickness with lamination: 5/8 inch

Lamination: 3/16 inch above-jaw, 1/4 inch below-jaw

Jaw offset: 1/4 inch

Main trap springs: Two 0.160 inch wire-diameter springs

Additional springs: Two 0.115 inch wire-diameter springs

Base plate: Reinforced with D-ring

Any trap that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP trap regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp. 4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Bridger™ No. 3 coil-spring, modified, offset (by manufacturer), double laminated, four-coiled.

Additional Information

- Chain attachment used in trap testing: 18-inch center-mounted with three swivels, two shock springs, and attached to a metal grapple.
- Selectivity features: Brass pan tension machine screw; pan tension set so four pounds of pressure triggered the trap, and checked and readjusted as needed after every capture.
- Special considerations for practicality: This device also meets BMP criteria for Western coyotes.

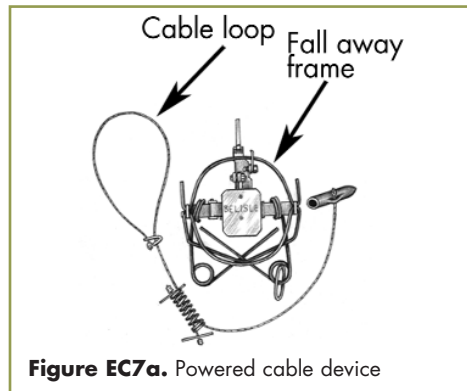


Figure EC7a. Powered cable device

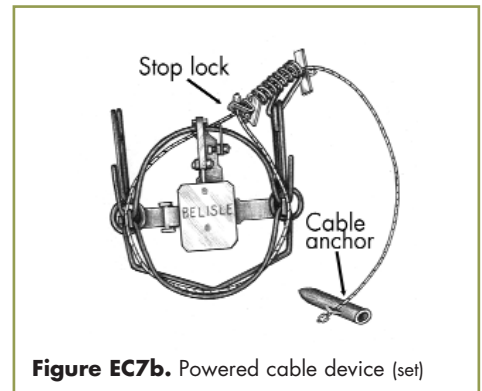


Figure EC7b. Powered cable device (set)

Powered Cable Devices (foot capture) (Figures EC7a and EC7b)

Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Inside cable retention frame spread (at dog): 6 ³/₈ inches

Inner width: 5 ³/₄ inches

Inside width at frame hinge posts: 6 inches

Cable retention frame width: ¹/₈ inch, smooth round rod

Cable retention frame thickness: ¹/₈ inch rod

Main trap springs: Two 0.188 inch wire-diameter rod quick-release springs

Cable diameter: ¹/₈ inch cable

Cable loop stop size: 2 inches

Base plate: Not reinforced

Any cable device that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP device regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp.4-6) needs to be considered as well. The trap tested was the Belisle™ Foot Snare.

Additional Information

- Cable attachment on device tested: Swivel and lunge spring with a cable anchor.
- Selectivity features: Pan tension machine screw; large cable diameter and available plastic sleeve work to prevent the cable from closing to a small diameter, thus allowing small animals such as squirrels, skunks, and some raccoons to escape.
- Special considerations for practicality: Some damage and kinking of cable should be expected and will require frequent replacement as a normal part of trap maintenance and upkeep. This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes and Western coyotes.



Non-Powered Cable Devices (Figures EC8a and EC8b)

Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Cable diameter: ³/₃₂ inch, 7 x 7 or 7 x 19 stranded cable

Cable length: 48 and 60 inches

Cable loop stop size: 2 ¹/₂ inches

Cable lock: Relaxing locks.

Catch loop size: 10-12 inches

Stop button: ³/₃₂ inch ferrule

Any cable device that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP device regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp.4-6) needs to be considered as well. Relaxing locks used were the Reichart™ washer lock, #4 Gregerson™ lock, and the BMI™ Slide Free lock.

Additional Information

- $\frac{3}{32}$ inch diameter cable extensions made of 7 x 7 stranded cable of 12, 14, 16, or 24 inches in length were used for anchoring cable restraint devices, connected by a #9 swivel.
- The bottom of the cable restraint catch loop should be ≥ 10 inches to ≤ 12 inches from the surface directly below the set.
- Special considerations for selectivity: Break-away devices allow escape with sufficient force; the use of a maximum loop stop prevents larger animals from entering the restraint while the minimum loop prevents the restraint from closing around an animal's foot. Break away amounts may vary based on regional needs where the potential capture of protected mammals and/or livestock exists.*
- Special considerations for practicality: Some damage and kinking of cable should be expected and will require frequent replacement as a normal part of maintenance and upkeep. This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes.



Average Mechanical Description and Attributes

Cable diameter: $\frac{1}{8}$ inch, 7 x 7 or 7 x 19 stranded cable
 Cable length: 48 and 60 inches
 Cable loop stop size: 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches
 Cable lock: Relaxing locks.
 Catch loop size: 10-12 inches
 Stop button: $\frac{1}{8}$ inch ferrule

Any cable device that has similar specifications may be considered a BMP device regardless of brand or source of modification, although performance information on all other BMP criteria (see "Criteria for Evaluation of Trapping Devices": Introduction pp.4-6) needs to be considered as well. Relaxing locks used were the Reichart™ washer lock, #4 Gregerson™ lock, and the BMI™ Slide Free lock.

Additional Information

- $\frac{1}{8}$ inch diameter cable extensions made of 7 x 7 stranded cable of 12, 14, 16, or 24 inches in length were used for anchoring cable restraint devices, connected by a #9 swivel.
- The bottom of the cable restraint catch loop should be ≥ 10 inches to ≤ 12 inches from the surface directly below the set.
- Special considerations for selectivity: Break-away devices allow escape with sufficient force; the use of a maximum loop stop prevents larger animals from entering the restraint while the minimum loop prevents the restraint from closing around an animal's foot. Break away amounts may vary based on regional needs where the potential capture of protected mammals and/or livestock exists.*
- Special considerations for practicality: Some damage and kinking of cable should be expected and will require frequent replacement as a normal part of maintenance and upkeep. This device also meets BMP criteria for red foxes.

* Break-aways ("S" hooks, "J" hooks and ferrules) used with manufacturer ratings of 185 lbs. and 285 lbs.

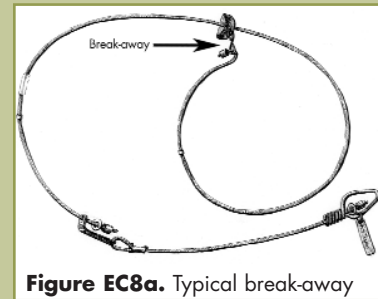


Figure EC8a. Typical break-away

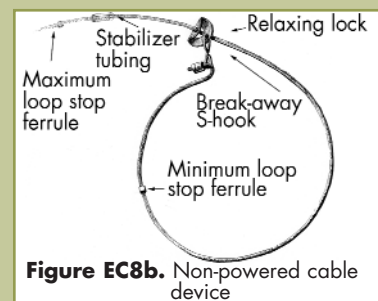


Figure EC8b. Non-powered cable device