



Photo: WI DNR



# Chapter 14 Trapping Safety

**Objective** - Students demonstrate an understanding of potential risks to their personal health, safety, and welfare from trapping activities.

## Introduction

Trapping is not a dangerous activity, but there are risks related to weather, drowning, animal bites and disease. Develop safe attitudes. Make safe behavior a habit. See Chapter 9, Trapping Equipment, for suggested safety equipment.

## Trapping Safety

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a leading cause of death among people who enjoy outdoor recreation. Cold weather, wind and water can lead to a loss of body heat. When your body temperature starts to lower, hypothermia sets in.

Shivering is one of the first signs of hypothermia. When this happens, go to a warm place, put on warmer clothes, or build a fire. Soon after shivering starts, a person may become confused and clumsy. Watch for signs of hypothermia whenever you are outdoors in cooler weather. Even when air temperatures are in the 50s, hypothermia can occur.

Trappers can prevent hypothermia by wearing warm, dry clothing. Wool clothes are a good choice. Wool insulates even when wet.

When working in or near water, use hip boots (or waders) and gauntlets. If you get wet, return to home, or camp, and put on dry clothes.

### Frostbite

**Frostbite** occurs when ice crystals form in your body's cells. It is a common cold weather injury to people's cheeks, ears, nose, toes, and fingers. Frostbite symptoms include white to grayish yellow skin and an intense cold, numb feeling. Pain and blisters also may be present. Protect frostbitten skin from further injury. Drink warm fluids, put on more clothes, or wrap up in blankets. The frozen area can be soaked in warm water (102 to 105 degrees F). Never rub frostbitten skin as rubbing will cause further injury.



Silvertip Productions

Trapper wading in stream.



Silvertip Productions

Hypothermia is a leading cause of death among people who participate in outdoor activities.

Frostbite is a common injury. Don't rub a frostbitten area. Warm it gently.



Mike Kortenhof

Success and safety go hand in hand.

When walking on ice keep ice picks where you can reach them fast. If you fall through in deep water you will need the picks to pull yourself out to safety.



Silvertip Productions

Ice safety picks

## Travel on Ice

Avoid traveling on ice-covered streams and rivers. Water currents cause weak, dangerous ice. Ice on a pond or lake is usually more consistent, but be cautious. Springs and underwater structures can cause weak spots on lakes and ponds.

Newly formed clear ice generally is the strongest. Four inches of good ice is needed to support a walking individual. Six inches or more of strong ice is recommended for multiple people, or snowmobiles. Ice cleats can help you maintain safe footing. Carry a walking staff or ice spud to help you check for ice conditions in front of you as you travel.

**White ice**, or ice mixed with snow and slush, is weaker than clear ice. **Candle ice**, usually found in the early spring, forms when good ice starts to decompose. Candle ice may be unsafe, even if it is two feet thick.

Many trappers carry ice safety picks while working their trap lines. Ice safety picks have strong handles with short spikes in the ends. The handles are tied together with rope. Thread the rope and picks through the sleeves and back of your coat so you will have them handy if you fall through. It is difficult to pull yourself out of the water without ice picks.

**If you do fall through the ice**, try to climb out by facing the direction you came from when the ice gave way. When you get out, roll in the direction you came from when you fell through. The ice may be even weaker if you try to go a different direction.

If a companion falls through, lie down on the ice to distribute your weight. Reach out to the victim with a walking staff, or throw them a rope. If you approach too close you may also fall in.

After escaping from icy water build a fire immediately unless you are close to shelter or a vehicle where you can get warm. After falling into icy water, hypothermia will set in quickly. If you have a cell phone with you, call for help immediately. Keep your cell phone in a zip lock bag in an inside pocket.

## The Danger of Drowning

Trappers need to be aware of the danger of drowning. It is easy to slip and fall down a steep bank, or slip into deep water holes of rivers and streams when wading. It is difficult to swim when wearing waders or hip boots or when your coat pockets are filled with heavy gear. When trapping on ice while using a snowshoes or skis for access, be sure to have bindings that allow for a quick release.

It is a good idea to wear an inflatable personal flotation vest when trapping around water. Good ones have a gas canister that can be used to inflate the vest instantly if you need it. The vest should also have a tube you can use to inflate it by mouth if the gas canister fails.

When wading, it is best to travel upstream because the water depth generally increases gradually. You are more likely to encounter steep drop-offs caused by currents when walking downstream. You can also see the bottom by walking against the current. Debris and sediment flow behind you.

Use a walking staff when wading to probe the water depth and bottom conditions. Smooth rocks or debris in the water can cause you to slip. You may encounter soft bottoms or hazardous conditions at points where two streams come together.

If you use a canoe or a boat for trapping follow all safety regulations. Take a boating safety education course available from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

### Risks Associated with Setting Large Body-grip Traps

Some traps, such as large body-grip traps used for beaver, can be dangerous to a trapper who doesn't know how to use them. If you accidentally are caught in a large trap you need to know how to release yourself, which may be difficult if you can't use one of your arms. Large body-grip traps are most often placed under water. You can drown or die from hypothermia if you get caught in a large trap set underwater.

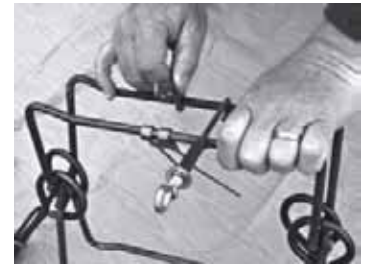
When using large body-grip traps, carry setting tongs and a length of rope with a loop in the end. Keep it in a pocket where you can easily reach it with one hand. If you are caught, thread the rope through the ends of the springs. Put your foot in the loop and use your free arm to pull the loose end. This releases the pressure on the springs so you can free yourself.

### Firearm Safety

Many trappers carry firearms to shoot animals caught in traps. Take a hunter education course from the Wisconsin DNR to learn about firearm safety. Practice safe habits around firearms at all times.

When trapping, it is a good idea to keep your firearm unloaded until you need to use it. It can be difficult to maintain control of a firearm when you are carrying gear and making sets.

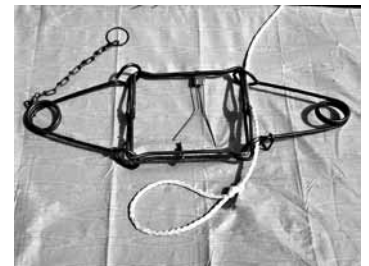
When you shoot a firearm at an animal in a trap be careful about ricochets off the trap or rocks. If you are trapping with companions, everyone should stand behind the shooter.



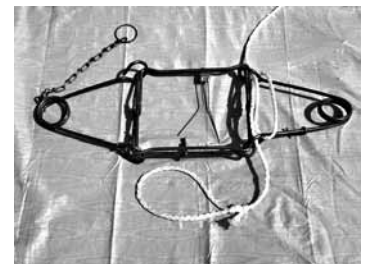
Silvertip Productions

Always use a safety gripper when setting large body-gripping traps

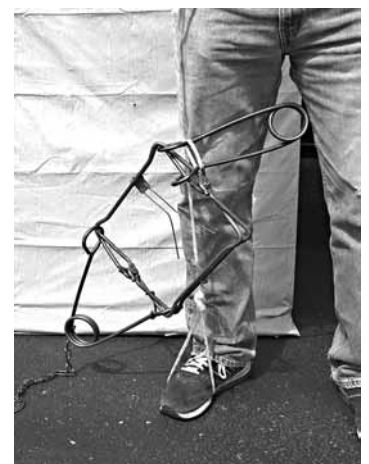
Using rope to set a body-grip trap.



1.



2.



3.



Chris Tischeaefer

Topographic map and compass.



Silvertip Productions

Use the “buddy system.”  
It could save your life!



J. Lee

A canoe is a good mode of transportation when trapping.

PFD stands for Personal Flotation Device, an inexpensive item that can save your life!

Always look beyond your target when shooting a firearm and only shoot if it is safe. Keep the muzzle under control and pointed in a safe direction at all times, even when the gun is not loaded.

### **Always remember TAB-K, the 4 rules of firearm safety:**

**T** - Treat every firearm as if it is loaded.

**A** - Always point the muzzle in a safe direction.

**B** - Be certain of your target and what’s beyond.

**K** - Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

### **Use a Map and Compass When in Unfamiliar Territory**

It is easy to get lost if you are in unfamiliar territory. When you are looking for sign and places to make sets you may not be paying close attention to landmarks and trails. Always carry a map of the place you are trapping and a compass. Many people carry a global positioning system (GPS) unit. If you carry a GPS, make certain you know how to use it. Carry a compass for a backup.

### **Always Let Someone Know Where YOU Are!**

Although many people trap alone it is best to use the buddy system for any outdoor activity. That way if you are injured or sick, your buddy can assist you or go for help.

Always tell your family exactly where you are going and when you plan to return. If you change locations or plans, let your family know. Leave a map of your trap line at home.

Cell phones are a good safety tool for trappers. Do not rely on a cell phone to get you out of all situations, though. You could be out of range or find yourself with a dead battery when you need your phone the most.

A trapper must know how to start a fire. Carry waterproof matches and firestarters with you at all times. If you find yourself in a hypothermia situation it may be difficult to start a fire without a firestarter.

### **Wear a Seatbelt!**

Trappers need to be careful when driving. Wear a seatbelt – it’s the law. You may need to pull off the road in unusual places where other drivers are not expecting a car. Trappers also develop a keen eye for observation, but you should not be intent on watching fields and other habitats when you are supposed to be watching the road.

## Be Visible!

Trappers should make themselves visible to hunters. Wear hunter orange clothing, especially during hunting seasons where orange clothing may be required for hunters. Trappers occasionally have been wounded by hunters who did not see the trapper or failed to properly identify their background. Wearing blaze-orange clothing also will make it easier to find you if you are lost, injured or sick.

## Animal Bites and Scratches

Animal bites and scratches can cause serious injuries. Wash wounds thoroughly with soap and water, apply bandages and seek medical assistance. Keep the animal confined for observation if possible. If you can't confine the animal, kill it without damaging the head so that health authorities can test it for rabies.

## Wildlife Diseases

Wild animals can carry a number of infectious diseases that can cause human illness. Some diseases are specific to one or a few species of furbearers, while other diseases affect many species of wildlife. Wildlife diseases transmittable to humans or domestic pets should be of concern to anyone who regularly encounters or handles wildlife.

Infectious diseases can be caused by numerous organisms and may spread by direct and/or indirect contact with infected animals. Trappers can also be exposed to parasites associated with wild animals. Follow the recommended precautions to protect yourself from potential hazards. If you become ill make certain your doctor is aware of your trapping activity.

General precautions include:

- Wear latex or other protective gloves, eye protection, and protective coveralls when handling carcasses or **scat**.
- Wash hands and arms thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals.
- Clean and disinfect knives, skinning boards, cutting surfaces and other equipment with a solution of one cup household bleach in one gallon of water.
- Avoid sick animals or animals that do not act normal.
- Do not drink untreated water from lakes or streams. Cook all wild game thoroughly.



Shawn Rossler

Wear latex gloves when skinning animals.



Center for Disease Control

Raccoon can carry several diseases.

Rabies and tularemia are two of the diseases humans may get from furbearers

Animal diseases and parasites that may affect humans include:

### **Rabies (Hydrophobia)**

Rabies is a virus that infects the central nervous system. Left untreated, rabies is nearly always fatal. The rabies virus may be carried by all warm blooded mammals but it occurs most often among wildlife species such as raccoon, bat, skunk and fox. Rabies usually is transmitted by the bite or scratch of an infected animal. Rabies can also be transmitted by contamination of a cut or scratch when skinning an infected animal, or from contact with your eyes, nose or mouth.

Rabies occurs in two forms in wildlife; “dumb” and “furious.” In the dumb form the animal is lethargic and may suffer paralysis. In the furious form the animal is restless, aggressive, and may bite at real or imaginary objects.

If you are bitten by a wild animal, wash the bite with soap and water, then seek medical attention. If possible, capture or kill the animal without damaging the head. Health authorities will test the brain tissue for rabies. Keep the animal refrigerated at 35-40 degrees F until it can be examined. Human Diploid Cell Vaccine (HDCV) can offer protection from the rabies virus without serious side effects. Ask your doctor for advice about HDCV, especially if you are trapping in areas where animals are known to carry rabies.

### **West Nile Virus**

Most people who are infected with the West Nile virus (WNV) will not have any type of symptoms. About 20 percent of people who become infected will develop West Nile fever (WNF). Symptoms include fever, headache, tiredness and body aches. There may be a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands.

The symptoms of severe infection (West Nile encephalitis or meningitis) include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. It is estimated that approximately 1 in 150 persons infected with the WNV will develop a more severe form of the disease. The incubation period is 3-14 days, and most WNF symptoms last for a few days. Severe infection symptoms may last several weeks. Neurological symptoms or damage may be permanent.

It is best to prevent the WNV by avoiding mosquito bites. Stay out of the field at dusk and dawn during mosquito season. Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants and socks when outdoors. Use a mosquito repellent containing DEET on exposed skin. The Center for Disease Control advises that you should not use DEET repellent on skin under your clothes. Do not apply repellents containing permethrin directly to your skin.



Center for Disease Control

Mosquitoes may transmit the West Nile virus.



Center for Disease Control

Tularemia lesion on hand. Contracted from muskrat.



FWS Photo

Cottontail Rabbits may carry tularemia.

## Tularemia (Rabbit Fever)

Tularemia is a bacterial disease most commonly associated with rabbit and hare. Beaver and muskrat may also carry this disease.

Tularemia is most commonly transmitted to wild animals by the bite of blood-sucking ticks or fleas. The bacteria enter the body, multiply, and invade internal organs. The liver and spleen enlarge and become covered with white spots. Humans can get tularemia from skinning infected animals, drinking contaminated water, getting bitten by infected deer flies and ticks and sometimes by eating undercooked meat. Symptoms include fever, infected sores, swollen lymph nodes and flu-like feelings. These symptoms may become severe. With prompt antibiotic treatment, few cases of tularemia are fatal.

## Lyme Disease

Lyme disease is a bacterial infection spread by the bite of a deer tick (*Ixodes dammini*). When diagnosed early the disease can be treated with antibiotics.

People get Lyme disease when they are bitten by ticks carrying *Borrelia burgdorferi* bacteria. Ticks that carry Lyme disease are very small and can be hard to see. If these tiny ticks bite mice infected with Lyme disease and then bite people or other animals, the disease can be passed on. After several days or weeks the bacteria may spread throughout the body of an infected person.

Diagnosis is difficult since Lyme disease symptoms vary and are similar to other common illnesses. One of the first symptoms may be a red circular skin lesion, but often the rash will not appear. Other early symptoms are flu-like and may include weakness, headaches, nausea, fever, stiff neck, dizziness, muscle aches, sore throat and swollen glands. In advanced stages more serious symptoms may occur including facial paralysis, arthritis and heart problems. Consult your physician if you have symptoms of Lyme disease.

Prevent Lyme disease by preventing tick bites. Wear light colored clothing when walking in tick habitat. Wear long sleeves and long pants. Check yourself thoroughly for ticks. If bitten by a tick, remove it promptly and disinfect the bite with rubbing alcohol.

## Leptospirosis

Leptospirosis is a bacterial disease that infects humans and animals. Almost all mammals can be infected, but it is more common in domestic animals than wildlife. The disease is known to infect striped skunk, raccoon, fox, opossum, bobcat, muskrat and woodchuck. Leptospirosis spreads from eating infected food, contact with the urine of an infected animal, or contact with urine-contaminated water. The bacteria may enter the body through skin wounds,



Center for Disease Control

Deer Tick. Ticks that carry Lyme disease.

## Ticks and fleas

Coyote and other furbearers may have ticks and fleas that carry bubonic plague. The Center for Disease Control reports 10 to 15 cases of plague a year in rural parts of the western U.S. If you catch an animal with fleas, handle the animal in a plastic bag immediately, spray generously with insecticide, and tie the bag shut. This will kill most of the ticks and fleas before they leave the body when it starts to cool.



Jeremy Duckwitz

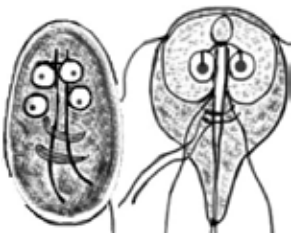
Coyote with mange and a healthy coyote.





Center for Disease Control

Wood tick - carries Ehrlichiosis



NPS Photo

Giardiasis parasite carried in beaver feces.



FWS Photo

Diseased raccoon.

Do not risk your health or the health of others by handling sick or diseased animals. The value of the pelt is not worth the risk.

mucous membranes, or cuts. Leptospirosis bacteria multiply in the blood stream. It may affect the kidney and leave the body in the urine. Infection can cause flu-like symptoms in humans including headache, fever, muscle ache, vomiting and kidney damage. Antibiotics are very effective for treatment.

### Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

Spotted fever is a bacterial disease transmitted by ticks. Symptoms include a sudden onset of fever that lasts for 2-3 weeks, muscle pain, headaches, chills and weakness. A rash may develop on the hands, arms and legs and then spread to the rest of the body. Furbearers may carry the ticks that carry spotted fever. The disease occurs most often in the eastern half of the United States. Limiting exposure to ticks is the most effective way to reduce the likelihood of infection.

### Sarcoptic Mange

Mange is caused by a parasitic mite. It occurs throughout North America and is most commonly found among red fox, coyote, squirrels, raccoon and domestic dogs. Adult female mites burrow under the skin and deposit their eggs. This makes the animal scratch, chew or lick the infected area, which leads to inflammation and infection. When the eggs hatch the condition worsens. The animal's hair falls out, the skin thickens, and gets crusted with scabs and cracks. Mange is usually fatal to red fox and sometimes to coyote and wolf. The mite is transmitted among animals through direct contact or by contact with contaminated areas such as dens or burrows. People can get the mites by handling mange-infested fox, coyote, wolf or domestic dogs.

### Trichinosis

Trichinosis is caused by eating raw or under cooked pork and wild game infected with a roundworm parasite called trichinella. It affects people and many kinds of domestic and wild animals. The parasite forms cysts in muscle tissue.

Cook furbearer meat thoroughly until the juices run clear. Freezing game meat, even for long periods, may not kill all worms. Likewise, curing (salting), drying, smoking or microwaving meat does not consistently kill infective worms.

### Giardiasis

Giardiasis is caused by a parasite that can be carried by many animals, including beaver. Beaver do not appear to be severely affected by the disease, but infected beaver can contaminate water sources used by people. Giardiasis spreads from drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food. Human symptoms include diarrhea, cramping, weakness and mild fever. The condition can last 1-2 weeks. Medication usually is prescribed to treat this ailment.

## Raccoon Roundworms (*Baylisascaris procyonis*)

*Baylisascaris procyonis* is a common intestinal roundworm parasite found in raccoon and can cause a fatal nervous system disease in wild animals. The worms develop to maturity in the raccoon intestine, where they produce millions of eggs that are passed on with the feces. Released eggs take 2-4 weeks to become infective to other animals and humans. The eggs can survive for years.

Raccoons tend to defecate in specific places over a period of time. Likely places are at the base of trees, barn lofts, sand boxes, chimneys, attics or on high surfaces such as rocks or roofs. People become infected when they accidentally ingest the eggs. The eggs can become airborne as dust where people can inhale them. When humans eat or inhale raccoon roundworm eggs, they hatch into larvae in the person's intestine and travel through the body, affecting the organs and muscles. Severity depends on how many eggs are ingested and where in the body the larvae spread. Symptoms can include nausea, tiredness, loss of coordination and blindness. Infected animals may show signs similar to rabies.

## Echinococcosis (hydatid disease)

Echinococcosis is caused by infection with the larval stage of **Echinococcus multilocularis**, a microscopic tapeworm found in fox, coyote, dogs and cats. Infection causes parasitic tumors to develop in the liver, lungs, kidneys, spleen, nervous tissue or bone. The disease may be fatal. One form of the disease mainly affects wild animals including fox and rodents. Wild fox, coyote and cats are infected when they eat **Echinococcus multilocularis** infected rodents such as field mice or voles. Dogs can also be a host. Cats are less likely to develop Echinococcosis than dogs, but may also become infected. Once the animal is infected, the tapeworm matures in its intestine where it lays eggs that are passed on in feces. The infectious tapeworm eggs are too tiny to see and will stick to anything.

People can get Echinococcosis by eating eggs in game meat or from contaminated food, water or soil. Surgery is the most common form of treatment. Medication may be required. Use latex or other non-latex rubber gloves when skinning animals and disinfect your work areas to prevent this disease.

## Viral Diseases and Protecting Your Pets

Pseudorabies, parvovirus, and distemper are diseases that can be carried by furbearers and passed on to pets or livestock. Have your pets vaccinated and seek treatment for them if you suspect these diseases.



Center for Disease Control

Cotton rat - died from echinococcosis.



Center for disease Control

Tapeworms.

## Chapter 14 Review – Trapping Safety

**Objective - Students demonstrate an understanding of potential risks to their personal health, safety, and welfare from trapping activities.**

**Describe the conditions that cause hypothermia, symptoms of its presence, and treatment procedures.**

1. List three signs of hypothermia:
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain how to prevent hypothermia.**

2. Trappers can prevent hypothermia by wearing \_\_\_\_\_ clothing.
3. Use \_\_\_\_\_ boots or \_\_\_\_\_ waders, plus long-sleeved \_\_\_\_\_ gloves when trapping in water.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a leading cause of death among people who participate in outdoor activities.

**Recognize the danger of traveling on ice covered lakes, ponds, rivers and streams.**

5. Avoid traveling on ice-covered \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ where water currents can cause weak spots.
6. Carry a walking staff to help you check for \_\_\_\_\_ in front of you as you travel.
7. If you fall through the ice try to climb out by facing the direction you \_\_\_\_\_ when the ice gave way.
8. You should build a \_\_\_\_\_ immediately when you reach shore unless you are close to shelter or your vehicle.
9. It is a good idea to wear an inflatable personal \_\_\_\_\_ when trapping on water.
10. When wading in streams, it is best to travel \_\_\_\_\_.
11. If you use a boat or canoe follow all \_\_\_\_\_ regulations and take a \_\_\_\_\_ safety course.

12. General trapping precautions to follow to protect against diseases include:
- Wear protective gloves, eye protection, and protective coveralls when handling \_\_\_\_\_ or scat.
  - Wash \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals.
  - Clean and disinfect \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ boards, \_\_\_\_\_ surfaces and other equipment with a solution of one cup household bleach in 1 gallon of water.
  - Avoid \_\_\_\_\_ animals or ones that do not act \_\_\_\_\_.
  - Do not \_\_\_\_\_ untreated water from lakes and streams.
  - Cook all \_\_\_\_\_ thoroughly.
13. If bitten by an animal you should wash wounds thoroughly with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, apply bandages and seek \_\_\_\_\_.
14. Keep the animal confined if possible, or kill it without damaging the \_\_\_\_\_ so authorities can examine it for rabies.
15. Trappers should make themselves visible to hunters by wearing hunter \_\_\_\_\_ clothing.
16. When setting large body-grip traps, trappers should carry setting tongs and a length of \_\_\_\_\_ with a \_\_\_\_\_ in the end.
17. When shooting at an animal in a trap be careful about \_\_\_\_\_ off the trap or rocks.
18. Define TAB-K, the 4 rules of firearm safety:
- T – \_\_\_\_\_
- A – \_\_\_\_\_
- B – \_\_\_\_\_
- K – \_\_\_\_\_
19. Always tell your family exactly \_\_\_\_\_ you are going and \_\_\_\_\_ you plan to return.
20. A trapper should know how to start a \_\_\_\_\_.



# Chapter 15 Running a Trapline

**Objective** - Students demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to safely and responsibly harvest furbearing animals using Best Management Practices.

## Introduction

Your success on the trap line begins long before the season opens. Trappers need to obtain permission, scout properties, and prepare equipment before the opening day.

## Obtaining Permission to Trap

Early summer is a good time to ask farmers and other landowners for permission to trap. During the spring, farmers are busy planting crops. In the fall, they will be busy again, preparing for the harvest.

Dress neatly when you ask a landowner for permission to trap. Be polite, even if the landowner denies your request.

When talking to landowners, ask about possible problems with too many furbearers or neighbors who might want someone to trap their property. If you establish a reputation as a responsible trapper, you may find that landowners will call you and ask you to trap problem furbearers.

Contact landowners again shortly before the season opens. Ask about other people, such as hunters, who may be using the property. Let landowners know the days and times you will be on their property and the type of vehicle you plan to drive. Make sure they have your phone number in case they need to reach you. Show the landowner the equipment you intend to use and how it operates.

Obtaining permission early will give you plenty of time for preseason scouting. When scouting or trapping, treat the property and the owner with respect.



Ohio DOW Photo

Don't wait until trapping season opens to ask for permission.



Chris Tischaeyer

Plat books help identify landowners and boundary lines.



Brent Temes

A tree girdled by a beaver.

Check the Wisconsin trapping regulations for information on how often you are required to check your traps. Regardless of the law, responsible trappers will visit their traps daily. It is good for animal welfare, and it will increase your success.

Why daily checks increase success!

- Less chance animals or traps will be stolen
- If traps have been disturbed you can remake the set
- Less chance for predation
- Less chance an animal will escape from a restraining device
- Less chance an animal will injure itself or damage its pelt
- If you remove an animal and set the trap again you may catch another one
- Most furbearers are active at night (nocturnal), so check your traps early each day



Silvertip Productions

Pre-season scouting leads to success

## ***Pre-season Scouting***

During preseason scouting trips find specific places to make your sets and plan the materials you need. Make notes of what you find and sketches of areas that look promising. This will allow you to set your traps out quickly when the season opens.

If you wait until the season opens to scout, it will be time-consuming and difficult to cover ground carrying your equipment. Scouting during the season may alert wary furbearers such as fox and coyote. Preseason planning allows you to make sets quickly and leave the area without creating much disturbance.

## ***A Commitment to Check Your Traps***

When you set out a trap line, you assume responsibilities. Animal welfare is a top priority. Most furbearers are nocturnal so it is best to check your live-restraint traps as early in the day as possible.

One important difference between trapping and hunting is your commitment to work your trap line until you remove your traps. Hunters can choose the days they want to hunt, but trappers must check their dryland sets daily in Wisconsin.

If you cannot personally fulfill your responsibility to wildlife and fellow trappers because of illness, have another licensed trapper check your line. If a licensed friend or family member knows where your sets are located they can check or remove your traps for you. Keep notes and sketches showing where to find your traps. **Be sure to contact your local conservation warden if you need someone to check your traps and they do not have a trap tag on your trap!**

## ***Check Your Traps Early Each Morning***

There are many good reasons to check your traps as early in the day as possible:

- Animal welfare - Most important!
- Prevent escape from live-restraint traps.
- Release nontarget animals.
- Reduce chances of fur or trap theft.
- Reduce chances of predation on your catch.
- Lets landowners and others know you are responsible.
- Gives you time during the day or evening to skin or sell your fur.
- Gives you time to remake sets.

## Humane Dispatch

Nearly everyone agrees that animals should be killed as humanely as possible. However, their ideas about a particular method might be quite different. Some people believe that guidelines developed by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) should be followed when killing wild animals in the field. We believe, as does the AVMA, that standards developed for veterinarians are not necessarily applicable or appropriate for activities like hunting and trapping. Licensed veterinarians can use lethal drugs that aren't available to the general public, they have more control over animals and don't need to worry about chemicals that make meat unfit for human consumption. While these limitations explain why methods used to kill animals on the trap line differ from those used to kill animals in a laboratory or clinic, you have the same obligation to kill animals as quickly and painlessly as possible – for their sake and yours.

The best way to kill a live raccoon, coyote, fox, or bobcat is with a well-placed shot with a .22 rimfire cartridge to the brain. Before firing, check for solid objects that may cause a ricochet. Anyone who comes with you should stand well behind you when the shot is fired. For a more complete overview of hunter safety, we suggest attending one of Wisconsin's hunter education courses. Successful completion of this course is required for all first time hunters born after January 1, 1973.

If a skunk raises its tail before you can get close enough to shoot accurately, approach it slowly from upwind and talk in a soft, monotone voice. Aim for the heart (just behind the front leg between the elbow and shoulder). Avoid shooting the skunk in the head to reduce the risk of transmitting rabies. Skunks also tend to spray when shot in the head and direct contact with the spray can cause temporary blindness.

Using body-grip traps can reduce the need to kill the animal directly. However, these traps are effective only for capturing certain species of furbearers. Using submersion systems with foot-hold restraint systems in or near water also aids in killing the animal.

Trappers must plan the method of **dispatch** prior to setting traps. Planning reduces stress on you and the captured animal.

## Releasing Non-target Animals

Your personal safety is the top priority when you release an animal from a live-restraint trap. Your second priority is to release the animal without harming it. If you cannot do this on your own, get help.



Silvertip Productions

**Noosing a bobcat.** Releasing a large animal, such as a bobcat, is difficult.



Joe Goodman



Joe Goodman

Shot placement is important for a quick, humane kill.

Our goal is to make a few good sets, not to make a lot of sets.

Practice set construction before the season opens - practice makes better!



Ohio DOW Photo

Rinse dirty animals in clean water.

The first step in releasing an animal is to restrain it without hurting it. Trapping equipment dealers sell **catchpoles** for this purpose. To use it, slip the noose over the animal's head and pull it down snugly so the animal cannot escape. Use the pole to steer the animal's head away from the trap while you depress the levers or springs with your feet. When the animal's foot is free you can position yourself behind the animal and release the noose.

An alternative to a catchpole some trappers use is a plywood board with a v-shaped notch caught in the bottom. You can hold the board between yourself and the animal and place the notch over the foot of the animal. This will allow you to open the trap with your feet, or allow a trap partner to open the trap while you hold the board. Often, basic handles are attached to the board to make it easier to hold in place.

You should have no problems with birds of prey if you have properly covered flesh baits at your set. If by chance you do catch one of these birds, examine it closely for injury. If the bird is injured contact a Conservation warden for help getting it to a rehabilitator. If you can release the animal unharmed, you should cover it with a blanket or coat while you depress the springs on your trap. Be extremely careful. Birds of prey have strong talons and beaks that can cause serious injury. Once the foot is free, remove the covering and allow the bird to fly away.

Do not attempt land trapping if you cannot safely and humanely release non-target animals.

### ***Capture of a Domestic Animal***

If you catch a domestic animal, examine it for injury before releasing it. Although the animal may appear to be a pet, do not assume it will not bite. Carefully restrain any animal when you release it.

If a domestic animal is injured, contact the owner or the landowner and make arrangements for medical care. No one wants to lose an animal or have it live with a permanent injury that could have been prevented with prompt treatment.

### ***A Few Good Sets vs. Many Sloppy Sets***

It is better to make a few good sets than to make many sets in a rush. Pre-season scouting and planning will help you make sets that have a high chance of success. If you rush your sets, they may be of low quality and catch fewer furbearers. As you gain experience you can increase the number of traps you set.



## ***Responsible Fur Handling in the Field***

Proper fur handling begins in the field. If an animal is wet and muddy, rinse it off in the cleanest water you can find. Remove the excess water by stroking the animal or gently shaking it. When you get the animal home, dry the fur as soon as possible.

When animals are trapped on land, keep them dry. Use a brush or comb to remove burrs or dirt.

Put any furbearers that are not bloody from shooting in a burlap bag or other protective cover. If an animal has fresh blood on its fur, lay it separately on newspaper or other material in the back of your truck or car trunk. Be sure not to display animals in ways that may offend people who see them.

Care in the field shows respect for your harvest and it will make the skinning job go faster at home. Proper handling in the field improves the quality of the final product.

## ***Keep a Daily Journal***

It is a good idea to keep a journal. Over time, it will help you increase your catch and bring back many good memories. Make notes about the types of traps you use, how you make your sets and how many animals you catch at a set before you remove it. Keep notes about different lures or baits you use. Soon your journal will help you know how to make your sets work the best during different parts of the season.

A journal is also a good place to keep sketches and information about your sets. Remember, sketches will help someone else find your traps if you get sick or cannot run your line.

### **Three Reasons to Keep a Journal**

- Increase your success.
- Guide others to your traps if you get sick.
- Save your memories to enjoy over the years.

Responsible fur handling respects the life of the animal.

Proper fur handling begins in the field.

## Chapter 15 Review – Running a Trap Line

**Objective – Students demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to safely and responsibly harvest furbearing animals using Best Management Practices.**

**Explain the importance of obtaining permission to trap on private land before the season opens.**

1. Early \_\_\_\_\_ is the best time to ask a farmer for permission to trap.
2. Obtaining permission early will give you plenty of time to \_\_\_\_\_ before trapping season opens.

**Describe the advantages of preseason scouting.**

3. Preseason scouting trips allow you to find \_\_\_\_\_ places to set your traps and plan the \_\_\_\_\_ you will need to make your sets.
4. Preseason scouting and planning will help you make sets that have a \_\_\_\_\_ chance of \_\_\_\_\_. If you rush your sets, they may be low quality and catch \_\_\_\_\_ furbearers.

**Make a commitment to check your traps.**

5. Animal \_\_\_\_\_ is the top priority.
6. Most furbearers are nocturnal, so it is best to check your live-restraining traps as early \_\_\_\_\_ as possible.
7. State four reasons to check traps as early in the day as possible.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Describe two methods to safely, quickly and humanely kill a furbearing animal caught in a live-restraint trap.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Describe two ways to release a nontarget animal from a foot-hold trap.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
10. If you catch a domestic animal in a foot-hold trap examine it closely for \_\_\_\_\_ before you release it. If it is \_\_\_\_\_, contact the animal's \_\_\_\_\_ or the landowner where you trap so the animal can be treated.

**Describe responsible fur handling procedures in the field and why it is important.**

11. Care in the field shows \_\_\_\_\_ for your harvest and will make the skinning job go faster at home. Proper handling in the \_\_\_\_\_ improves the quality of the final product.

12. Three reasons to keep a daily journal of your trapping activities include:

- a. Increase your \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Guide others to your traps if you get \_\_\_\_\_.
- c. Save your \_\_\_\_\_ to enjoy over the years.



## Chapter 16 Handling Fur

**Objective** - *Students demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills and equipment needed to safely skin animals and prepare the pelts for market*

### Introduction

Proper fur handling is the key to getting a good return for your product. Furbearer carcasses can spoil quickly, especially in warm weather. If you don't know how to skin and prepare pelts you may want to consider selling your furs unskinned on the carcass. Selling your animals on the carcass is less work for you and more work for the buyer. You will receive a lower price for unskinned furs. If you do decide to skin your catch, proper fur handling begins in the field.

To avoid spoilage, sell unskinned animals daily if the outside temperature is above 40 degrees or every two or three days if below 40 degrees and the animals have been left hanging. You can freeze whole animals if you have the room. Make sure that they are clean and dry. Animals that were killed recently should be allowed to cool long enough to let their body heat escape before placing them in the freezer. Small animals should be wrapped individually in sheets of newspaper. Place newspaper or cardboard between animals that are too large to wrap.

Never seal animals or pelts in plastic bags without proper cooling. Plastic will trap heat and moisture and spoil the pelt. Fur is a great insulator and piling animals in a freezer will cause those in the middle to spoil. If you have too many, rotate animals from the middle to the outside after 12 to 24 hours.

If a furbearer is trapped in water it should be removed from the trap and rinsed clean of any dirt, mud or vegetation. Shake excess water from the animal, and stroke it from head to tail with your hand to remove as much water as possible. If snow is available, roll the animal vigorously in it to take the moisture from the fur. If it is below freezing don't lay a wet animal on ice or a metal surface. The **guard hairs** of the pelt will freeze to ice or metal, damaging the pelt when you pick it up. Animals can be placed in a burlap bag to protect the fur while transporting them back to the fur shed. If an animal's fur is still wet when you get home, hang it up by the head or forelegs in a cool place to dry. Circulating air with a fan will reduce drying time. Generally, pelts should be dry before being skinned and placed on a stretching frame.



Paul Peterson

Trapper Education student skinning a muskrat.



John Lee

Opening cuts on a beaver.



Chris Tischaefel

Skinning gambrel.



Illinois Dept.  
of Natural Resources

Knife sharpening.

### **Fur IN**

Otter  
Skunk  
Weasels  
Raccoon  
Mink  
Muskrat

### **Fur OUT**

Gray Fox  
Red Fox  
Coyote  
Fisher  
Bobcat

### **OPEN Fur**

Beaver

If a furbearer is trapped on land and is already dry, simply place it in a burlap bag to protect the fur while transporting it back to the fur shed. Brush or comb the pelt to remove any burrs or dirt prior to skinning. Land furbearers may have external parasites such as fleas, ticks or mites, so keep the carcasses in a place where they won't contaminate your house, clothing or vehicle.

## ***Wearing Latex Gloves***

Furbearers should be skinned as soon as possible after they are trapped. The pelt is easier to remove and less likely to be damaged when the animal is fresh. Before skinning, remember to put on a pair of latex gloves. The gloves will help protect you from any diseases the animal might be carrying.

## ***“Cased furs” vs. “Open furs”***

Pelts are prepared for the market by skinning in one of two ways: **cased** or open. Except for beaver, all furbearers should be skinned cased.

Case skinning is much like removing a sweater or sweatshirt by grasping the bottom and turning it inside out as you pull it up over your head. To do this with a furbearer pelt, make a cut from the top of the foot pad along the inside of one back leg to the top of the foot pad of the other back leg. Then simply remove the pelt from the carcass by turning it inside out, skinning down over the back legs, forelegs, and head.

To skin a beaver using the open method, make a cut on the underside of the animal from its chin to the base of its tail. Removing the fur this way is much the same as you would take off a coat. Some fur handlers may also use a technique that combines case and open skinning to make beaver **fleshing** easier.

## ***“Fur in” vs. “Fur out”***

Fur markets want cased-skinned, dried furs presented either “fur in” or “fur out,” depending upon the species. “Fur in” means that the fur side of the pelt is on the inside when the pelt is sold. “Fur out” is just the opposite: The fur should be on the outside of the pelt, the skin on the inside. Check with your fur buyer to see how the individual pelts are to be prepared for market.

Most fur buyers are glad to explain proper fur handling techniques and preparation to you since it means more profit for both of you. Don't be afraid to ask.

## Tail Handling

Furbearers with furred tails should have their tails split from the underside with a knife and the tail bone removed. A tail-stripper comes in handy for this purpose. The deboned, furred tail should remain attached to the pelt. Tails of furbearers that are not furred should be cut from the pelt at the hairline during skinning and discarded.

## Fleshing Board and Fleshing Tools

Once you've skinned a furbearer the next step is **fleshing**. A fleshing beam is a wooden (or fiberglass) support that holds a pelt when removing meat or fat still on the skin. If not removed, this meat or fat could rot and spoil the pelt.

Once pulled onto a fleshing beam (skin side out), the pelt is scraped with a double-handled draw knife, a single-handed scraper, or other type of fleshing tool.

## Wire and Wooden Stretchers

The final step in preparing furs for market is to place the skinned, fleshed pelt on a wire or wooden **stretcher**. The term "stretching" may be a little misleading, as the pelt is not being stretched at this point in the process. Rather, it is simply being held in place as it dries so that it does not shrink or shrivel. Most cased-skinned furs should first be placed over a stretching board or wire frame fur-side in. Remember to center the pelt on the board or frame, meaning that the forelegs and belly of the pelt should be on one side of the frame and the eye holes, ears and back should be on the other side. Pull the pelt snug, but not too tight. If you are using a wooden stretching board, secure the pelt in place with a few tacks or push pins near the base of the tail and back legs. Wire frames usually have two metal arms with prongs that hold the base of the pelt taut.

## Drying Pelts

Once a pelt has been properly placed on a stretching board or wire frame it should be hung up and dried slowly in a room with a temperature of about 55-60 degrees Fahrenheit. Use a fan to circulate air throughout the room to reduce drying time. Pelts of fox, bobcat, fisher, and coyote should be turned fur side out.



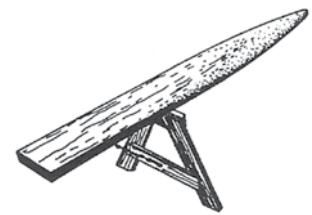
Chris Tischaefner

Plastic tail puller and opener.



Chris Tischaefner

Fur combs.



Illinois Dept of Natural Resources

Fleshing beam.



Chris Tisheafer

Pelting Equipment.



Jolene Kuehn

Trapper education instructor, John Irwin, teaching a student how to skin a muskrat.



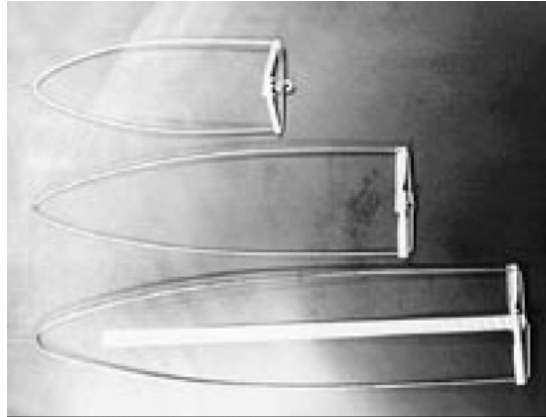
Illinois Dept of Natural Resources

Starting cut for open skinned beaver.



Illinois Dept of Natural Resources

Open skinning beaver.

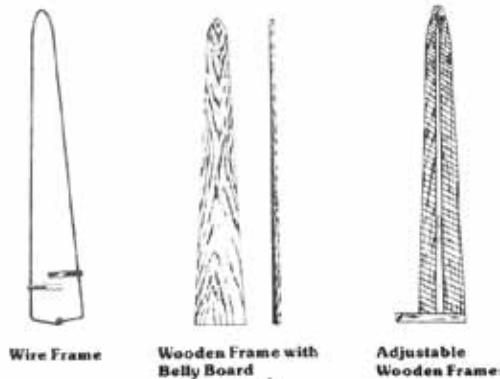


Ohio DOW

Wire stretchers come in many sizes.

You must check the pelts as they dry fur side in. Once the skin is dry to the touch, remove the fur from the stretcher and turn it fur side out. Place the pelt back on the stretcher fur side out and pin it in place to finish drying. The skin may be dry to the touch in as little as two hours for fisher.

#### Fur Drying Frames



Complete drying of a pelt may take anywhere from just a few days to a week or more depending upon the temperature and air flow. Regardless of how long it takes, a pelt should be completely dry before removing it from the stretching board or wire frame. If not properly dried, the pelt will rot.

### Freezing Pelts

An alternative to stretching skinned pelts is to quick-freeze them. Care must be taken if you choose this method or the pelts could be ruined. Always freeze the pelt flat, fur-side out, with no exposed flesh. Do not roll furs, and never freeze or thaw your fur in plastic. Animals with heavy flesh such as coyote, raccoon, and beaver should be thawed out for 5-6 hours in a cool room before selling. Never allow frozen **green pelts** to thaw for so long that the grease melts. Muskrat pelts should be frozen flat and not thawed at all before selling.

Small furbearers such as mink and muskrat can be frozen whole, without skinning. Allow whole frozen animals to partially thaw before selling. In the case of selling whole frozen muskrat, only the feet need to be thawed when presenting to the buyer.

### **Tips for Freezing Skinned Pelts**

- Turn the pelt fur-side out and match the belly to the back so that the leather side of the pelt is less prone to freezer burn.
- If the pelt has the tail attached, flip the tail under the belly, wrap the pelt in newspaper, and lay it flat in the freezer.
- Never wad or roll up pelts to freeze them – the inside can spoil. Never freeze skins inside sealed plastic bags – they collect moisture that can damage the fur.
- Remove muskrat, mink and fox pelts from the freezer about two hours before you take them to a fur buyer – they should still be “frosty.”
- Remove raccoon, coyote and beaver pelts from the freezer about six hours before taking them to a fur buyer – they will be partially frozen.
- Never thaw pelts by laying them next to a heater or fire.

Individual fur buyers may have different instructions for freezing pelts or whole animals. Check with your buyer for specific directions on freezing fur.

### **Health Precautions**

Some furbearers carry diseases and parasites that can be passed on to humans during the skinning process. To avoid health threats, use band-aids to cover open cuts or sores on your hands before skinning wild animals. Wear latex gloves. Disposable latex gloves like the ones used by surgeons are available from pharmacies or trapping supply dealers. When finished skinning, wash your hands well with anti-bacterial soap. Don't handle soda cans or food during the skinning process – they can pass bacteria to your mouth.

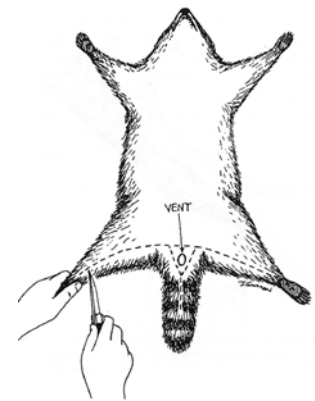
### **Skinning**

Skinning animals takes time, but it has some advantages. If you have limited freezer space, pelts take up less room than whole animals. Most dealers pay more (depending on the species) because it saves them the cost of having someone skin your catch. Meat from some furbearers can be used as bait, eaten or sold. You can use secondary markets for glands, skulls, teeth and claws.

You'll need some basic equipment for skinning. A sharp, high-quality knife is a must. Blades with pointed tips are best except when skinning beavers. A rounded tips come in handy for this job.



Opening cuts for a fox or coyote.



Opening cuts for a raccoon.



Opening cuts for a muskrat.

Illustrations courtesy of Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources



### Pelting a raccoon



Brush and comb the fur.



Line show where to cut.



Cut both legs from ankle to 1" below vent, then around the ankles.

Photo provided by Ohio DOW

**Open skinning** involves making a slit in the belly skin from the chin past the vent. **Case skinning** involves making a cut from heel to heel and around both ankles, then pulling the hide over the animal's head like you would remove a tight glove or sweater.

### Case-skinning muskrat

Muskrat are among the easiest furbearers to skin because the connective tissue that joins the pelt to the muscle is weak.

Some trappers prefer to hang the animal from a **gambrel**; others feel this is a wasted step. If you use a gambrel, poke the top of one hind foot through a hook. Grasp the tail and make a cut from the base of it (where the fur ends) to the heel of the hind foot that's held by the gambrel. The cutting edge of your knife should face upward and angle away from you, just under the skin. Repeat on the other side.

Make cuts around the ankles of both hind feet. Some people make cuts around the wrists of both front feet, but this isn't necessary. Make a cut completely around the base of the tail where the hair ends.

Work the skin free from the muscle tissue on one of the hind legs. After it's started, push your forefinger and index finger under the pelt toward the backbone, then upward under the tail, pulling the pelt free. Peel the skin away from the muscle all the way across the cut. Follow through with your thumb around the leg bone and start removing the pelt on the animal's belly side.

Pull the pelt downward toward the animal's head. It should come off freely until you get to the front legs. Pass a finger between an armpit and the pelt to loosen it then pull downward until the front leg comes free. Repeat this on the other side.

Grasping the pelt at the tail end, pull downward until it stops at the ears (you'll notice some whitish cartilage where the ears connect to the skull). Make small cuts to separate the bases of the ears from the skull. Pull downward until you get to the eyes. Use a knife to make small cuts that separate the eyelids at the skull (be sure to leave the eyelids on the pelt). Pull downward until the pelt is free, or make a small cut at the tip of the nose.

### Case-skinning raccoon

Make cuts around both ankles and wrists. Some people prefer to cut both front feet off at the wrists with a hatchet. Next, make a cut from the inside of one heel to the other, passing below the vent. Grasp the end of the tail and split the underside toward the vent. If you have a tail stripper, you can start the cut about 4-6 inches from the base of the tail. Continue the cut along one side of the vent

until it meets the cut that goes from heel to heel. Make a cut on the other side of the anus, forming a triangle around the vent.

Using your knife, separate the pelt from the muscle around both ankles. You'll need to loosen enough of the pelt to grab it. Pull downward with some force. This should separate the pelt along most of the leg. Repeat this procedure on the other side.

Work the pelt free near the base of the tail. If necessary, cut some of the connective tissue. Peel the pelt away from the tail bone for a distance of 3-4 inches. Place a tail stripper around the tail bone and yank downward with one hand while using your other hand for leverage against the lower back of the raccoon. If the tail bone doesn't pull out, extend your cut a few inches toward the tip of the tail and try again. Split the tail all the way to the tip after the bone is removed.

Tails remain attached to the pelts of raccoon, fox, coyote, bobcat, mink, weasels and skunk. After removing the bone, split the tail along its entire length. Using a guide can help you to make a straight cut.

Pull the base of the tail toward you and run your fist downward between the pelt and the muscle tissue along the backbone. Turn the animal around and loosen the pelt from the belly. If the raccoon is a male, the skin will stop at the tip of the penis; a small cut can be used to separate it from the pelt.

Run your fist downward between the pelt and the muscle tissue along the centerline of the belly. Pull the pelt downward, freeing the sides. It will stop at the front legs. Using a knife, make a slit through the connective tissue at the shoulder and upper arm. Be careful not to cut through the pelt itself.

Loosen the pelt near the armpit by pushing between the pelt and muscle tissue with your fingers. After it's started, cup your fingers from both hands through the opening and pull downward. This should separate the pelt to the wrist, where it will pull free. Repeat this procedure on the other side.

After both front legs are free, pull downward on the pelt. The pelt of young raccoons will usually separate to the base of the skull. The connective tissue on the necks of older raccoons is stronger. You'll probably need to use a knife in some places, but be careful – a light touch with a sharp blade will get the job done, especially if you're applying pressure to the pelt by pulling it downward.

Continue working the pelt downward until it stops at the cartilage that forms the bases of the ears. Cut through the cartilage at a point close to skull. When both ears are free, pull downward until you reach the eyes. Using a knife, sepa-

#### Pelting a raccoon (con't.)



Cut bottom side of tail. Start about 1/4 of the tail length down. Wear latex gloves when skinning. Keep your knife sharp.



Pull the pelt off the legs, down to the crotch. Work it loose with your fingers, then cut it away at the crotch.



Pull the pelt off the hips then pull it away from the back and part way down the tail.

Photo provided by Ohio DOW

### Pelting a raccoon (con't)



Remove tail bone with puller.



Once the tail is free, you can use the tail splitter, or the tip of a sharp knife to split open the tail.



Pull the pelt down to the animal's shoulders. Use a rag to get a good grip.

Photo provided by Ohio DOW

rate them from the pelt by cutting carefully next to the skull. Pull downward again to the tip of the nose and make a small cut through the cartilage to free the pelt.

### Open-skinning beaver

Make cuts as shown earlier in this manual. Be careful not to cut into the muscle tissue – insert your blade just beneath the skin with the cutting edge facing up and angled away from you. We recommend removing all four feet with a hatchet or heavy-duty knife.

Beaver have a thin layer of fat between the pelt and muscle tissue on the belly. Starting at the edge of the cut you made down the beaver's belly, use a round-tipped knife to separate the pelt and fat from the muscle tissue. Continue this process along the entire length of the beaver – take your time and angle your blade toward the muscle tissue to avoid slicing into the leather.

You'll encounter a thin layer of connective tissue about halfway between the center line of the belly and the legs. Cut through it, leaving the connective tissue attached to the pelt. Continue separating the pelt until you reach the armpit and groin area. Pull the pelt back to expose the layer of connective tissue around the legs. Slice through the tissue, then run a couple of fingers under it along the legs. You should be able to flip the pelt over the end of the bones where you cut off the feet.

Flip the beaver on its side and continue separating the pelt from the muscle tissue, working toward the backbone. You'll probably need to cut into the muscle tissue near the lower hip and tail, leaving some of it attached to the pelt. The middle part of the pelt will separate easily by pulling it back or running your hand between the pelt and muscle. Don't worry about skinning out the shoulders and neck at this point. Lay the beaver on its back and repeat these procedures on the other side.

After the pelt is loose on both sides, lay the beaver on its belly and flip the pelt over the beaver's head. This exposes the shoulders, which can be separated easily from the pelt. Continue working toward the head until you encounter the ear canals at the base of the skull – they are somewhat bony and connected by cartilage. Cut through the cartilage at the skull and continue skinning out the head. You'll need to make some cuts to separate the connective tissue around the eyes and another when you get to the tip of the nose.

### Fleshing Pelts

**Fleshing** removes fat and muscle tissue that can spoil and damage the pelt. Muskrat, mink, weasels, fox, coyote and bobcat are relatively easy to flesh. Raccoon, beaver, and skunks are more difficult.

## Muskrat

For muskrat, you'll need a fleshing board and a scraper. You can make a fleshing board from a piece of 1 x 6-inch lumber. Cut it to the shape of a wire **stretcher**, but not as wide. Use a rasp to round the edges, and then sand them smooth.

Turn the pelt so that the leather side faces out and pull it over the rounded tip of the fleshing board. Rotate the pelt until the sides are on the flat working surfaces (one of the holes from a front leg should be on the front, the other on the back). Pull the pelt downward until it's snug.

Using a one-handed scraper, serving spoon or dull knife, remove any chunks of fat or muscle from the skirt (bottom) of the pelt. Next, remove any muscle tissue attached to the pelt near the cheeks. Well-fed muskrats have a fat deposit under each armpit. Remove these along with the reddish membrane that covers them.

Over-scraping is usually more of a problem than under-scraping with muskrats. If you apply too much pressure, you'll tear a hole in the pelt. Small specks of fat aren't a problem because they'll dry out when you put the pelt on a stretcher. It's the larger chunks and deposits under the armpits that need attention.

## Mink and Weasel

Place the pelt leather-side-out on a wooden stretcher. Use a narrow stretcher for females, which are smaller than males. Remove any muscle or chunks of fat along the skirt (bottom) of the pelt with a dull knife or one-handed scraper. Avoid getting fat or grease on the fur side of the pelt. If you do, rub the fur with sawdust to remove it.

Wild mink usually have a fat deposit under each armpit. Remove it along with the thin membrane that covers it. Be careful not to cut or rip the front legs.

You'll notice a thick red membrane across the lower back (below the shoulders). This is called a "saddle." Leave the saddle attached to the pelt unless it has a thick deposit of fat under it, which is rare with wild mink or weasels.

## Fox, Coyote, and Bobcat

Remove all burrs by combing the fur. Nicking one with your fleshing knife while working on the leather side of the pelt can cause it to tear.

For the most part, fox and coyote require little fleshing. Remove any muscle tissue and chunks of fat. This is usually easier with a two-handed fleshing knife than a one-handed scraper. The cartilage at the bases of the ears should be cut off with a regular knife to avoid spoilage.

## Pelting a raccoon (con't)



Work your fingers through the pelt at the armpit and pull the skin off the leg.



Pull the skin down to the ankle and cut the pelt.



Pull the pelt down over the neck. Cut through the ear cartilage at the skull without cutting the fur.

Photo provided by Ohio DOW

## Pelting a raccoon (con't)



Pull the pelt down to the eyes. Work your knife around the eyelids without cutting the fur.



Cut the pelt free at the jaw hinge, and then follow the lips without hitting the teeth. The teeth will dull your knife.



Cut through the bottom of the lip and free the pelt. You don't need to skin all the lower jaw. Cut lip half way up.

Photo provided by Ohio DOW

## Raccoon, Beaver, and Skunk

These pelts are the most difficult to flesh. The skin is covered by a thin layer of fatty material. This layer is covered by a membrane. You must remove both the membrane and the fatty layer for the skin to dry properly. We recommend spending time with a fur buyer or someone else with experience before trying to flesh these species yourself.

You'll need a fleshing beam, plastic apron and two-handled fleshing knife.

The belly is the easiest place to start. Starting at the head, use the dull edge to remove the membrane and underlying fat. Work it off as far as you can reach comfortably then rotate the skin enough to work on the next section. Be careful around the front legs because you can cut or rip through creases or folds of loose skin.

Starting behind the ears, use the sharp side of your knife to slice through the membrane on the neck. Let the blade of your fleshing knife ride under the membrane and push it away from you.

When the part of the pelt nearest you is fleshed all the way around, pull the pelt toward you and use your waist to pin it to the end of the fleshing beam. Continue fleshing all the way to the skirt (bottom) of the pelt. The edge of the skirt should be fleshed clean. The tail should be fleshed if it's fatty.

Fleshing beaver is similar except that most people prefer to start behind the ears and work all the way to the tail end of the pelt using the sharp edge of their fleshing knife. After a strip as wide as the shoulders is completed, rotate the pelt and work the fat and membrane off the sides with the dull edge of your fleshing knife. Be careful around the leg holes because it's easy to tear them.

## Stretching and Drying

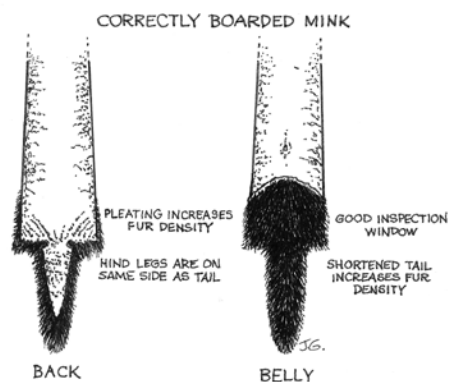
### Muskrat

Most people prefer to use wire stretchers for muskrat pelts. Place the pelt on the stretcher with the fur side in. Adjust the pelt so that the eyes and ears are centered on one side and the front leg holes are centered on the other. Poke a small hole through the pelt at a point where the center of the tail would have been attached. Insert the middle tooth of one hook and pull it downward to remove any slack from the pelt. Attach the other hook to the belly with two teeth and remove any slack.

Hang stretchers from a rafter to keep them away from mice while drying. Temperatures between 40 and 60 degrees are best for drying pelts. Use a fan if the humidity is high.

## Mink

Use wooden stretchers for mink. They come in two sizes. Narrow boards are used for females, which are usually smaller than males. Unusually small males can be put on a female board if the pelt looks too short and wide on a male board.



Place the pelt on the stretcher with the fur side in. Adjust the pelt so that the eyes and ears are centered on one side and the front leg holes are centered on the other. Grab the tail with one hand and use your other hand to stroke the pelt downward from head to tail. This removes slack without overstretching.

Pull up and out on the tail. This helps to move part of the underside to the back of the stretcher and creates an inspection window without cutting. Lay the tail back on the board. Pull down slightly if the pelt has any slack in it.

Tack the base of the tail to the board using an aluminum push pin. Bunch up the pelt on both sides of the push pin until the ends of the back legs come around to the same side of the board as the tail. Tack them at the edges of the board. Now tack the skin between the tail and the ends of the hind legs. It should be bunched slightly between each pin to make a pleat.

Spread the tail. Beginning at the butt end, push it upward toward the skirt in small increments. You want to make it short and wide instead of long and narrow. Pin the sides of the tail or place a piece of galvanized hardware cloth over the tail and pin it to the board.

Cut off the lower lip. Trim the front legs to about 3/4" in length and poke them back between the pelt and the board. Place a "belly board" (a narrow wooden wedge) between the board and the fur side of the pelt on the belly. The pelt will shrink as it dries. If you don't use a belly board, it can shrink so tightly to the board that it's difficult to remove when the time comes.

## Fleshing a raccoon



Raccoons have a lot of fat. Work the pelt over the fleshing beam. Put a rag over the nose of the pelt and press your stomach against the beam to hold the pelt. Start scraping just behind the ears, working down the pelt and away from your body using a pushing motion.



Pull the pelt up on the beam as you work further down the skin. This picture shows the fleshing knife working the raccoon's stomach area.

Photo provided by Ohio DOW

## Fleshing a raccoon (con't)



When you finish fleshing the body, do each leg and the tail. Be careful around the tail so you don't tear it off.



Slip the pelt over the wire stretcher and adjust it. Fasten the tail and rear legs.

## Raccoon

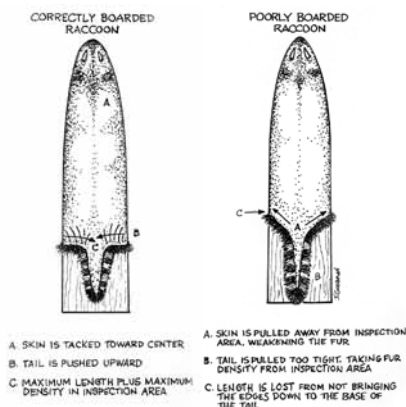
Use wooden or wire stretchers for raccoon. Wire stretchers are cheaper than wooden ones. They also save time because the pelt is attached by two hooks instead of tacked along the skirt. The advantage of wooden stretchers is that they give you more control over the shape of the pelt. This makes for more uniform pelts and, on average, higher prices in some markets.

When using a wire stretcher, squeeze the two sides together and slip the pelt over the top. Release the sides and square the pelt on the stretcher so that the eyes are centered on one side and the front legs are centered on the other. Pull the pelt down snugly and fasten a hook to the tail (about 2-3 inches below the base) using one or two teeth. Use the other hook to fasten the tips of the hind legs on the belly side. Pull down on both hooks to remove any slack from the pelt. Cut off the lower lip, and then trim the front legs to a length of about 3 inches.

Some people enlarge the inspection window on the belly by trimming away some of the pelt that bunches up in the groin area. This gives a neater appearance without hurting the pelt because the thin, kinky hair on the lower belly has no value.

When using a wooden stretcher, slip the pelt over the end and adjust it so that the eyes are centered on one side and the legs on the other. Pull downward gently to remove any slack from the pelt. Tack it at the base of the tail using an aluminum push pin. Bunch up the pelt on both sides of the push pin until the ends of the back legs come around to the same side of the board as the tail. Tack the ends at the edges of the board. Now tack the skin between the tail and the ends of the hind legs. It should be bunched slightly between each pin to make a pleat.

Spread the tail. Beginning at the butt end, push it upward toward the skirt in small increments. You want to make it short and wide instead of long and narrow. Place a piece of galvanized hardware cloth or cardboard over the tail to hold it in place, then pin the hardware cloth to the board.



Cut off the lower lip. Trim the front legs to about 3 inches in length. Place a “belly board” (a narrow wooden wedge) between the board and the fur side of the pelt on the belly. The pelt will shrink as it dries. If you don’t use a belly board, it can shrink so tightly to the board that it’s difficult to remove when the time comes.

***NOTE: Never try to make a pelt bigger than it is by “stretching” it. Pelts should be pulled tight enough to take the slack out of them –no more, no less.***

### **Boarding Beaver**

Beaver are skinned open rather than cased. The pelt is then either tacked onto a plywood board, or sewn onto a wooden or metal hoop frame for drying. If tacked onto a plywood board (this should be done skin side up), use nails at least two inches long. Place the nails no more than one inch apart. The pelt should be shaped to form either a circle or oval. Once the pelt is tacked in place, raise it off the board up to the head of the nails in order to allow air circulation between the pelt and board. If sewing the beaver pelt onto a hoop, make your stitches about an inch apart. Regardless of whether you tack or sew, the four leg holes on the pelt should be closed, either by nails or stitching. Hogrings can be substituted for sewing when stretching on steel hoops.

### **Fox, Coyote and Bobcat**

You can purchase solid wooden stretchers or adjustable wooden frames. Remember to use a belly board for solid wooden stretchers. Do not cut an inspection window in fox or coyote.

When using a wood stretcher, position and fasten the pelt with the fur side in, much like a raccoon. Trim off the lower lip with a knife. If necessary, trim the front legs to a length no longer than 2 inches.

Allow the pelt to dry until the skin side is no longer tacky (4-12 hours depending on the temperature and humidity). Remove the pelt from the stretcher. Turn it inside out (with the fur facing out). If dry, the front legs can remain inside the pelt when it’s turned. **NOTE:** If a pelt is too dry to turn easily, wrap it with a warm, damp towel for a few minutes and try again.

Place the pelt back on the stretcher and fasten it. Reinsert a belly board to prop the pelt open so that air can circulate. Allow the pelt to dry completely before removing it.



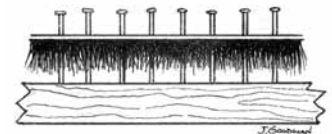
S. Rossler

North American Fur Auctions, the Wisconsin Trappers Association and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources produced 8+ hours of instructional fur handling footage. Contact your state instructor to view these professional fur handling videos.



Bruce Bacon

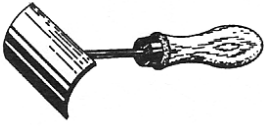
Beavers on boards.



Lifting the beaver pelt will allow for faster drying.

***Note: Experienced beaver trappers sometimes skin a beaver partly open, and partly cased. This makes it easier to hold the beaver on a fleshing beam. After fleshing they finish cutting the belly so they can board the beaver.***





Illinois Dept  
of Natural Resources

Single hand pelt  
scraper.



Chris Tischaefel

Knives and sharpener.



Ohio DOW

Fur Handling Tools  
Comb, Brush, & Fork.



Ohio DOW

Knives.



Ohio DOW

Knife Sharpeners.

## **Basic Fur Handling Equipment**

- **Latex gloves** – Latex gloves are very important to have when skinning furbearers they keep your hands clean, and protect you from any diseases the animal might be carrying.
- **Skinning Knives** – A good skinning knife is needed for the animal to be properly skinned.
- **Knife Sharpener or Honing Stone** – Skinning knives should be kept sharp at all times. Frequent touch ups with the stone or sharpener make the skinning job go much faster.
- **Gambrel** – A gambrel is a device used to hang the animal by its hind legs while it is being skinned.
- **Tail Stripper and Opener** – Furred tails should remain attached to the pelt. The tail should be split with a knife and then the tail bone removed with a tail stripper.
- **Fleshing Beam** – A fleshing beam or board is a wooden or fiberglass support that holds a pelt when removing meat or fat still on the animal after skinning. If not removed, this meat or fat could spoil the pelt.
- **Fleshing Tools** – There are many types of fleshing tools including double-handled draw shave knives, hog scrapers, and spoons.
- **Wooden and Wire Stretchers** – After the pelt has been fleshed it is ready to be dried. The pelt is placed on a wooden or wire stretcher. If you are using a wooden stretcher the pelt is secured with a few tacks or push pins near the base of the tail and back legs. Wire frames have two metal arms with prongs that hold the base of the pelt taut.
- **Fur Combs and Brushes** – Combs are used to remove any dirt or burdock in the fur prior to skinning. Brushes can be used to smooth out the fur.
- **Flea and/or Tick Spray** – Many land furbearers have external parasites such as fleas, ticks or mites. They can be sprayed with flea or tick spray and placed in a bag to kill these parasites.

## Summary of Fur Handling Techniques

Species	Skinning Method	Tail	Fur Side	Stretcher Size (Wire)	Fleshing and Stretching
Muskrat	Cased	Off	In	#1	Don't overflesh
Mink (male)	Cased	On	In	Not recommended	See boarding instructions
Mink (female)	Cased	On	In	Not recommended	See boarding instructions
Raccoon	Cased	On	In	Not recommended	Flesh through membrane
Skunk	Cased	On	In	Not recommended	Flesh through membrane
Weasel	Cased	On	In	Not recommended	Little or no fleshing required
Fox	Cased	On	Out	Not recommended	Turn pelt fur side out when skin is dry to the touch
Coyote	Cased	On	Out	Not recommended	Turn pelt fur side out when skin is dry to the touch
Bobcat	Cased	On	Out	Not recommended	Turn pelt fur side out when skin is dry to the touch
Beaver	Open	Off	NA	NA	Boards are better; correct shape is oval

### Board Dimensions

Species	Length	Width at Base	Width From Nose to Base
Mink (male)	36	4-5	1¼ @ 1½; 2 @ 2¾; 2½ @ 7; 3 @ 15; 4 @ 30
Mink (female)	30	3-4	1¼ @ 1; 1¾ @ 3; 2 @ 6; 2¼ @ 14; 2¾ @ 27
Raccoon (XL+)	48-54	9	6½ @ 11; 8½ @ 30
Raccoon (XL-)	48-54	8	5 @ 5½; 7-7½ @ 25
Fox (XL)	66	7	2½ @ 2¼; 3 @ 3½; 4 @ 6; 5 @ 9; 6 @ 14; 6½ @ 18; 7 @ 35
Coyote (XL)	72	9	4 @ 3; 5⅛ @ 5; 6 @ 7½; 6¾ @ 12; 7¼ @ 17; 9 @ 39
Bobcat (XL)	72	9	4 @ 3; 5⅛ @ 5; 6 @ 7½; 6¾ @ 12; 7¼ @ 17; 9 @ 39
Weasel (XL+)	18-20	2-1/2	1 @ 1; 1⅜ @ 1¾; 1⅝ @ 3½; 2½ @ 16
Weasel (XL-)	16-18	2	1 @ 1; 1¼ @ 1¾; 1⅜ @ 2½; 1½ @ 4
XL+ = pelts graded as extra large or larger. (All measurements are in inches.)			

## **Chapter 16 Review – Handling Fur**

**Objective - Students demonstrate an understanding of the knowledge, skills and equipment needed to safely skin animals and prepare the pelts for market.**

**Explain the importance of wearing latex gloves when processing furbearers.**

1. Latex gloves will help protect you from animal \_\_\_\_\_.

**Explain the terms “cased furs” and “open furs.”**

2. Except for beaver, all furbearers should be skinned \_\_\_\_\_.

**Explain the terms “market fur in” and “market fur out.”**

3. Fur in means that the fur side of the pelt should be on the \_\_\_\_\_ when the case-skinned pelt is taken to market.

**Explain why the tails of some furbearers are split and left on the pelt while the tails of others are removed.**

4. Furbearers with \_\_\_\_\_ tails should have their tails split open and the \_\_\_\_\_ should be removed.

**Know the purpose of a fleshing beam and fleshing tools.**

5. Once you have skinned a furbearer, the next step is to \_\_\_\_\_ the pelt.

**Describe the proper use of wire and wooden stretchers.**

6. A stretcher holds the pelt in place as it \_\_\_\_\_ so that it does not shrink or shrivel.

**Explain the process of drying pelts and why it is important.**

7. If a pelt is not properly dried it can \_\_\_\_\_ and the value will be lost.

**Explain the process for freezing pelts.**

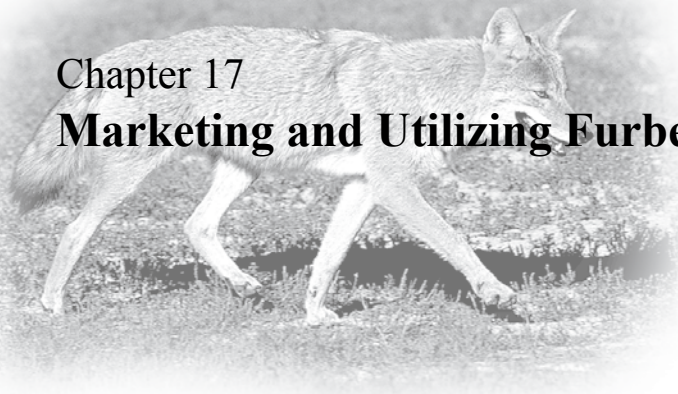
8. Be prepared to discuss proper storage procedures for pelts.

**Explain the procedure for “boarding beavers.”**

9. Beaver pelts are skinned open. The pelt is then \_\_\_\_\_ onto a plywood board or \_\_\_\_\_ onto a hoop frame for drying.

# Chapter 17

## Marketing and Utilizing Furbearers



**Objective -** *Students demonstrate an understanding of the full value of harvested furbearers*

### Introduction

Responsible trappers make full use of furbearers they harvest. The primary value of a pelt is for clothing, but furbearers are also used for human food, pet food, glands, skulls and fertilizer. Making the most of what you catch is one of the many responsibilities that come with trapping.

The personal reasons for trapping are as individual as each of us. Regardless of what is individually important, trappers must respect and honor the life we affect. Whether your activity is for personal reasons or those considered in professional wildlife management, each animal we harvest is a gift. Treating the animal as such is the ultimate respect for the individual animal and for the resource.

### ***A Commodity in a Global Market***

Furs are a worldwide commodity. Their value at a given time is determined by supply (the number of pelts for sale) and demand (the number of pelts needed for manufacturing garments). Much of the demand for furs comes from markets in Europe, Russia and Asia. Therefore, the economic health and buying power of these regions affect their demand for raw furs and the return you receive for your pelts.

Manufacturers usually hire a broker to fill orders for pelts. When possible, buyers deal directly with brokers to resell your pelts. Buyers who don't have contracts with brokers resell your pelts to other buyers. This might take place several times before your pelts make their way to a broker.

Buyers' profits come from selling your pelts for more than they paid after accounting for their time and expenses. They usually operate on a narrow margin, and a sudden shift in supply or demand can increase their profit or turn it into loss.

While it's rare to meet a trapper without a story about being "taken" by a fur buyer, it's even rarer to find a fur buyer who stayed in business by cheating



J. Lee

Beaver caught in a body-grip trap.

Taxidermists often look for high quality specimens to mount.

Check regulations and obey the law.

customers. Established fur buyers provide a fair market return to keep your business. The return can vary from buyer to buyer, but it's usually in the same ballpark. To get the best possible return for your furs:

- Monitor market conditions by following reports in trade magazines.
- Shop around if you have doubts about an offer – you aren't committed to taking it.
- Take pride in the way you handle your furs – clean, well-handled furs without damage are worth more in any market.

At auctions, the sponsors charge customers a commission – usually a set percentage of your proceeds. This fee pays for the sponsor's expenses and includes their profits. Most state trapper association-sponsored auctions allow you to set a minimum bid price for your furs. International auctions don't allow you to set a minimum bid, but the sponsors can withdraw a lot if the price doesn't meet their expectations. After all, their profits are tied directly to yours.

## ***Procedures for Selling Furbearers or Pelts***

Fur harvesters have four choices for selling fur. There are advantages and disadvantages for each method. Options include:

### **Local Fur Buyers**

Local fur buyers will know the most about furbearers in your area. They can be a valuable source of information and experience.

If you live close to a fur buyer you can sell animals as you catch them. This is an advantage if you don't have a good place to process fur and store it. A local buyer can also give you specific tips on fur handling, or possibly show you the best techniques. Local buyers also buy "green" pelts. **Green pelts** are skinned but not fleshed, stretched and dried. However, a trapper that learns how to put up fur properly is proud of his/her final products and is the person who will continue to trap for years to come.

If you are fortunate enough to live near several fur buyers you can shop around for the best return. This generally is best if you have a large number of furs. A disadvantage of selling to a local buyer is the return. A local buyer is a "middle man" who must buy low and sell higher to make a living.

Some local buyers advertise in area newspapers, but many rely on "word of mouth" for new customers. Asking experienced trappers is a good way to locate buyers in your area.



Dan Enloe

Fleshed raccoon.



Dan Enloe

Fox and coyote pelts.

Frozen pelts should be thawed before being sold. Make sure that they are slowly thawed in a cool place.

A wet hide can spoil in a few hours if it becomes too warm.



Badger skull.

Brent Temes

## Traveling Fur Buyers

Traveling fur buyers work for larger companies. Some of the larger companies set up “truck routes.” Their buyers travel from town to town, making stops at designated places and times. Most routes are run weekly or every other week. You can find out if a stop is scheduled in your area by checking the local newspaper beginning about two weeks before season opens.

You may be able to meet them at a local sporting goods store on scheduled dates, or make an appointment for them to visit you. Traveling buyers make it convenient for you to sell fur, but the return you receive may be lower than the return you could get selling by mail or at auction.

Traveling buyers will purchase whole animals, pelts that have been skinned but are not fleshed, or pelts that have been fleshed, stretched and dried. Unless you schedule your trapping activities so that your catch is fresh when a buyer stops in town, you’ll need to freeze your furs or flesh, stretch and dry them so that they don’t spoil.

## Selling by Mail

Some trappers sell their fur by mail. Mail buyers advertise in trapping magazines. Selling by mail saves you the time and cost of driving a long distance. Mail buyers will usually make payment in a few days. Mail buyers do not charge a commission, and some will pay the shipping costs. Some also will give you 10 days or so to decide if you like the offering return. If not, they will ship your furs back to you.

Return lists for pelts from mail buyers can be deceiving. Returns can change, or a buyer may give you a good offer for some of your furs and downgrade the rest. When selling by mail you lose the advantage of having competitive bidding for your fur.

## Fur Auctions

Auctions are an option if your furs are fleshed, stretched and dried. Some state trapping associations sponsor auctions as a service to their members. These auctions are advertised in newsletters or magazines that come with your membership.

All of the international auction houses advertise in trapping magazines. Contact a company’s office or one of its representatives to set up an account. They’ll assign an account number and provide shipping tags, receipts, auction schedules and instructions. When your pelts are fleshed, stretched and dried, you can ship them to a receiving station or, in some cases, deliver them to a representative who collects furs along a truck route before each auction. Payment for furs sold at auction is made within 30 days. All unsold pelts are stored

for future auctions. If requested, the company will return unsold pelts for the cost of shipping and handling.

Each trapper must decide when and how to sell fur based on current returns, market forecasts, convenience and cost. Other trappers, magazines, and trapping associations can provide helpful information. The more you know about grading fur and market conditions, the better the chance you will earn a good return for your work.

## Grading Pelts

The value of a pelt is determined by its size, fur density, damage, color and clarity. Standards for these criteria differ among species and regions.

To determine the size of **cased** skins that are stretched to meet industry standards, measure the pelt along the back from the tip of the nose to the nearest point that the leather ends at the skirt (bottom of back).

Larger-sized animals of one species generally bring a better return than smaller ones. Pelt primeness is an important grading factor. Trapping seasons are set to harvest furbearers when they are most often prime. Summer pelts are thin, flat, and have little value. Prime pelts have dense **underfur** and fully developed **guard hairs**. The skin, or leather, side of an unprime pelt is dark blue or black because the **hair follicles** are not fully developed. Later in the season furs may not be worth as much because of fading color, hair loss, rubbing or curling. Furs also can be damaged by careless handling.

Grades reflect the degree of primeness and, to a lesser extent, damage (in many cases, damage is evaluated separately). The best pelts are graded as selects; the worst as fourths. The best pelts are graded as “Ones” (I) or “Ones part Twos” (I pt. II). Seconds are lower quality due to slight damage, color, or other factors. Thirds (IIIs) are badly rubbed. Unprimed and fourths (IVs) are of very little commercial value.

## Grading Terminology

- **Badly Sewn** - Where leg holes and cuts are poorly sewn or where bad damage has been caused by too much sewing.
- **Badly Shot** - A pelt peppered by a shotgun or large rifle. Bad bites may also be listed in this grade.
- **Bitten** - Pelt has holes caused by bites. This is most common in muskrat and beaver during late winter or early spring when they're breeding and defending or establishing territories.
- **Blue Pelt** - An unprimed pelt. When dried, shows dark blue or black on the skin side.



Brent Temes

Beaver skull.



Jolene Kuehn

Fur Grading.



Silvertip Productions

Meats

- **Burnt** - Pelt is brittle and sometimes cracked, usually from drying too fast near a heater or in the sun or wind. Can also be caused by leaving too much fat on the pelt.
- **Clear Pelt** - In mink and otter, this term indicates an even change in fur color from underfur to guard hairs.
- **Clipped** - Patches of guard hair that have been chewed off by rodents.
- **Course** - Guard hairs are dull, lifeless and hard to the touch. Usually seen in late-caught furs.
- **Flat** - Guard hairs lay flat because the underfur isn't fully developed. Usually seen in early-caught furs.
- **Loose** - Guard hairs are coming out, usually because the roots have been cut by over-fleshing. Sometimes seen in early-caught furs.
- **Overstretch** - Stretching the pelt beyond normal size; thins the leather and gives a flat and weak appearance.
- **Rubbed Fur** - Parts of a pelt where fur is damaged by an animal rubbing it on dens, roots or other objects.
- **Shedder** - Fur "sheds" easily from the pelt when raked with the fingers. Can be seen with late caught furs or caused by putting the pelt on a stretcher while the fur is still wet.
- **Singed Fur** - Metallic sheen on otter fur caused by curled tips of the guard hairs. This damage can occur from excessive dry heat, direct sunlight, stroking dry fur, contact with freezing metal, or by the otter itself during the late season.
- **Springy** - Underfur is falling out or kinked or wooly in appearance. Usually seen in late caught furs.
- **Tainted** - Part of the pelt is spoiled. Usually caused by waiting too long before skinning an animal or failing to remove enough of the tissue and fat during the **fleshing** process.
- **Understretch** - Stretching smaller than normal size causing wrinkles and sloppy appearance.

### ***Taxes and the Trapper***

All earnings from trapping should be reported as regular income for tax purposes. However, a trapper should also keep accurate records and receipts of expenses incurred while trapping, most of which can be deducted.

Traps and other equipment which is purchased only for trapping can be deducted, either in a single year (for small purchases) or can be deducted over several years (for large purchases).

If you keep a daily log with odometer readings, mileage can be deducted at the standard rate per mile. Other items, such as boats and canoes, can be deducted only if they are purchased solely for trapping.



Trappers who trap as a hobby may deduct expenses only to the amount of their earnings. Only trappers who trap as a business may claim a loss.

It is your responsibility to pay taxes on all income derived from trapping. Whether you can deduct expenses will be up to you and your ability to maintain records. Contact your tax professional for further information.

## ***Furbearers Can be Used for Human Consumption***

Many people enjoy eating meat from healthy beaver, muskrat, raccoon, opossum, and bobcat. Freshly caught, skinned, and gutted animals will taste the best. The front and hind quarters and back meat are most commonly eaten. Avoid meat from any animals that appear sick. Keep the carcasses clean and thoroughly cook any wild game you intend to eat. Below are a few recipes.

### ***Fried Raccoon***

Trim off all the fat and remove glands from a young, dressed raccoon (glands are soft, whitish and located under each front arm and the hindquarters). Cut into small pieces suitable for frying. Place meat in a bowl and cover with milk. Let stand for 30-40 minutes. Remove meat from milk and roll in flour which is well seasoned with salt and pepper. Fry in deep fat until brown.

For gravy, pour off most of the fat, leaving just enough to cover the bottom of the pan. Add three tablespoons of seasoned flour and brown. Pour about 2 cups of milk (used for soaking the meat) into browned flour and cook until thick while stirring constantly.

### ***Roast Raccoon***

Place the dressed raccoon in a large pot and cover with water. Put one or two pods of red pepper in the pot and salt the water to taste. Parboil until tender, then remove and place in a baking pan. Sprinkle with black pepper and flour. Add some of the stock to the roast as it is being baked. Onion may be added if desired. Cook until brown.

### ***BBQ Raccoon***

1 raccoon, dressed (remove fat & glands)	1 rib celery
3 cloves garlic, chopped	2 large red onions, quartered
1 large apple, quartered	3 hot red peppers
1 cup vinegar	3 tbs. salt

Pull celery apart and wash. Place all ingredients in pot with enough water to cover raccoon. Bring to slow boil and cook until tender or fork goes in easily, about 1-2 hours depending on size of raccoon. Remove meat from pot, cut off front and back legs, cut remainder into 4 pieces. Place on rack, brush with your favorite BBQ sauce. Place in 400 degree oven, turn and baste frequently with BBQ sauce until golden brown.

Using as much of the animal as possible is the right thing to do.



Silvertip Productions

Trapper bagging fresh muskrat for freezer



Brent Temes

Bobcat skull.

### ***Baked Muskrat BBQ***

1 muskrat	3 t. fat
2 t. vinegar	2 t. tomato ketchup
1/2 clove garlic, crushed	1/8 t. black pepper
1/2 t. salt	dash cayenne pepper

Soak muskrat in slightly salted water or in diluted vinegar for 12-24 hours. Wash thoroughly, removing all blood and visible fat. Cut into pieces for serving; drain. Place in greased shallow pan; baste with sauce made of remaining ingredients. Bake uncovered in 325-350 degree oven for 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 hours or until tender, basting every 15 minutes. Place on hot platter and garnish with parsley, celery leaves or curly endive if desired.

### ***Muskrat Stew***

1 muskrat, cut up	flour
salt & pepper	2-1/2 tbs. butter
7 cups boiling water	1 t. thyme
1 cup sweet corn	3 potatoes, cubed
1/4 t. cayenne	3 medium onions, sliced
2 cups canned tomatoes	

Roll the muskrat pieces in flour, salt and pepper. Brown in butter. Add muskrat and all other ingredients (except tomatoes) to the boiling water. Cover and simmer for 1-1/2 to 2 hours. Add tomatoes (including juice) and simmer another hour.

### ***Baked Iowa Corn-Fed Raccoon***

Dress raccoon shortly after it's killed. Remove as much fat as possible. Soak in salt water overnight and cook the following day or freeze until ready to use. Young raccoons may be left whole and are best for this recipe.

2 dressed raccoons, fat	1/3 pound salted pork, sliced
1/2 t. salt on each raccoon	1/2 t. pepper on each raccoon
3 lemon slices about 1/4" thick	2 large onions, sliced
1/4 t. each of marjoram, thyme, savory	2 cloves garlic, sliced thin
1-2 cups chopped celery	1-2 bay leaves
2 quarts strong bouillon	2 chilies

Place the carcasses on a rack in a roaster (electric, self-basting types work great). Salt and pepper and add bay leaves and other herbs. Strip with salt pork or fat back. Place lemon and onion slices over the meat. Sprinkle with garlic. Add chopped celery. Cook at 350 degrees for an hour or until done.

## ***Other Uses of Furbearer Meat***

Some trappers feed muskrat and beaver meat to their dogs. Check with your veterinarian to see if furbearer meat would be a good choice for your dog's size, breed, age and general health. Fur ranchers may buy muskrat and beaver carcasses for mink food.

## ***Use of Glands***

Castor glands and oil sacs are found below the skin in the anal area of both male and female beaver. Castor glands and oil sacs are valuable and can be removed. Trappers can sell the glands for use in perfume or trapping lures.

Mink, weasel, skunk, otter and fisher have anal glands that contain a strong musk useful in making trapping lures. The glands should be cut loose with minimal squeezing and kept cool or frozen. Weasel glands particularly are good for attracting mink, otter, weasels, fox and coyote.

Fox and coyote anal glands and foot pads are used in lure-making for those species. Glands of raccoon, opossum, and muskrat are also sometimes used.

## ***Other Animal Parts***

Furbearer skulls are often needed for science classes or nature centers. Dermestid beetles are useful for cleaning skulls or other bones you want to save.

Some companies specialize in animal parts that are used for arts, crafts and novelties. Check trade magazines for advertisements and contact companies for prices and instructions on handling. Universities and museums also collect and display animal parts for educational displays. Search the internet for optional techniques for cleaning skulls.

## ***Proper Disposal of Carcasses***

Responsible trappers use as much of each animal trapped as possible. Animal carcasses or parts can be used as baits or attractants when trapping or snaring. Any remaining parts should be taken to a rendering plant, used for fertilizer or buried. Improper disposal could lead to human or animal health problems. Other people could be offended by seeing animal carcasses and parts. Disposal methods may be regulated in some areas, so it is best to plan your carcass disposal prior to the start of the season.



Beaver castor glands



Brent Temes

Coyote skull.

## **Chapter 17 Review – Marketing and Utilizing Furbearers**

**Objective - Students demonstrate an understanding of the full value of harvested furbearers.**

1. List four ways to sell fur.
  - a. Local \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. Traveling \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. Selling by \_\_\_\_\_.
  - d. Fur \_\_\_\_\_.
  
2. Trapping seasons are set to harvest furbearers when they are most often \_\_\_\_\_.
  
3. Prime pelts have dense \_\_\_\_\_ and fully developed \_\_\_\_\_ hairs.
  
4. Name three kinds of Wisconsin furbearers that make great table fare.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. All earning from trapping should be reported as regular income for \_\_\_\_\_.
  
6. Male and female beaver have \_\_\_\_\_ glands and oil \_\_\_\_\_ that trappers can sell.

**Know that furbearer skulls are sometimes needed for science classes or nature interpretation.**

7. Dermestid \_\_\_\_\_ are useful for cleaning skulls and other bones to use in science classes.

**Describe why it is important to properly dispose of any animal parts that remain after processing.**

8. Improper disposal of animal parts could lead to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ health problems and littering violations.



## Chapter 18

# Glossary

<b>Activist</b> .....	A person who takes direct, often confrontational, action to support or oppose a cause.
<b>Additive Mortality</b> .....	Harvests that exceed natural mortality and reduce a species' population.
<b>Aesthetic</b> .....	Concerning the appreciation of beauty.
<b>AFWA</b> .....	Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies.
<b>Animal Rights</b> .....	The belief that animals should have the same "rights" as humans.
<b>Apathetic</b> .....	Indifference, lacking interest or concern.
<b>Asphyxiate</b> .....	To stop the breathing of an animal.
<b>Bag Limit</b> .....	Number of animals legally allowed to be taken in a day or a season.
<b>Best Management Practices</b> .....	The use of recommended equipment and techniques as determined by experts in an activity.
<b>Biological Carrying Capacity</b> ....	The number of animals a given area of habitat is capable of supporting throughout the year.
<b>BMP</b> .....	Abbreviation for Best Management Practice
<b>Body-grip Trap</b> .....	A trap designed to close on an animal's body and quickly kill it.
<b>Cable Device</b> .....	A device designed to capture a furbearer by use of a multi-strand steel cable.
<b>Cable Restraint</b> .....	A cable device designed to hold an animal alive.
<b>Cable Snare</b> .....	A restraining device made from a cable and a locking mechanism, and a term used to describe old style devices made from other materials.
<b>Cable Stake</b> .....	An earth anchor attached to a cable and driven into the ground used to secure a trap without using a stake.
<b>Cache</b> .....	Food stored for use at a later time, for example, the food pile of branches made by a beaver, or a mouse buried by a fox.
<b>Cage Trap</b> .....	A trap designed of wire mesh to enclose an animal and hold it alive.
<b>Carnivore</b> .....	An animal that primarily eats other animals.
<b>Carrying Capacity</b> .....	A term referring to the number of animals that a given area of habitat is capable of supporting.
<b>Cased Pelt</b> .....	A pelt skinned by cutting along the hind legs and pulled down over the body.
<b>Castor</b> .....	An odorous, glandular substance obtained from beaver, used in lures and perfume.
<b>Catchpole</b> .....	A slip-noose on a rigid handle used to hold an animal while releasing it.
<b>Colony Trap</b> .....	A wire mesh kill-type trap used in runways underwater for mink and muskrats, capable of catching multiple animals.
<b>Compensatory Mortality</b> .....	Harvests that do not add to or exceed mortality from natural causes.
<b>Conservation</b> .....	The careful guarding of an asset. Conservation allows for the use of resources within limits.
<b>Cotton Mink</b> .....	A mink pelt with white underfur.
<b>Crepuscular</b> .....	Active at morning and/or evening twilight.
<b>Cultural</b> .....	The total product of human creativity and intellect.
<b>Cultural Carrying Capacity</b> .....	The number of animals that humans will accept in a given area. When people want to reduce animal populations that are otherwise within the biological carrying capacity for the area, biologists may need to reduce the population until people find it acceptable.
<b>Deadfall</b> .....	A primitive device designed to kill an animal with a falling log or rock, commonly used before the manufacture of modern traps. Deadfalls are not legal in Wisconsin.
<b>Delayed Implantation</b> .....	In animal reproduction, this refers to the fertilized egg not implanting in the uterine wall and beginning development for some time after mating occurs.
<b>Dispatch</b> .....	To kill an animal without delay in a humane manner.
<b>Dispersal</b> .....	The one-way movement of animals from their place of birth or home range, often coinciding with sexual maturity.
<b>Drowning Device</b> .....	Properly called a submersion device. A trap chain is attached to a slide lock on a cable leading to deep water. A trapped animal can go into deeper water, but not return, leading to death.
<b>Echinococcus</b> .....	A tapeworm parasite that can form cysts in humans and other wild animals.
<b>Ecology</b> .....	The science of relationships between organisms and their environment.
<b>Ecosystem</b> .....	A community of plants, animals and microorganisms linked by energy and nutrient flows that interact with each other and with the physical environment.
<b>Efficiency</b> .....	Skillfulness in avoiding wasted time and energy.

<b>Endangered Species</b> .....	A species whose population is so small that it is in danger of extinction.
<b>Ermine</b> .....	White color phase of the weasel as seen during winter.
<b>Ethics</b> .....	A person's personal code of behavior, moral values, and principles.
<b>Excise Tax</b> .....	A tax that is measured by the amount of business done.
<b>Extinction</b> .....	No longer in existence. Total extermination.
<b>Extirpation</b> .....	Elimination of a species within a range or boundary where it once existed.
<b>Fleshing</b> .....	Removing fat and meat from a pelt.
<b>Fleshing Beam</b> .....	Wooden or fiberglass form to hold and support a pelt while removing the fat and meat left after skinning.
<b>Foot-hold Trap</b> .....	A capture device designed to hold an animal by the foot. May be used to hold animals alive, or to kill them in submersion sets.
<b>Frostbite</b> .....	A serious health hazard involving the freezing of the skin or other body tissues.
<b>Gambrel</b> .....	A frame or device used for hanging an animal by the hind legs for skinning.
<b>Gestation Period</b> .....	Length of pregnancy.
<b>Grapple</b> .....	A hook-like device attached to the trap chain which allows an animal to move from the trap site and become entangled.
<b>Green Pelt</b> .....	A pelt that has not been stretched or dried.
<b>Guard Hairs</b> .....	Long, glossy hairs that overlap and protect the soft, dense underfur.
<b>Guarded Trap</b> .....	A foot-hold trap with a spring device that pins the animal and prevents it from twisting or pulling free.
<b>Habitat</b> .....	A place that provides all the food, water, shelter and space an animal needs to live.
<b>Hair Follicle</b> .....	The part of the skin that produces and holds the hair or fur.
<b>Herbivore</b> .....	An animal that primarily feeds on plants.
<b>Heritage</b> .....	Practices handed down from the past by tradition.
<b>Hibernation</b> .....	A state of inactivity that some animals enter in winter.
<b>Home Range</b> .....	The area where an animal lives or travels day to day.
<b>Hudson's Bay Company</b> .....	An early Canadian fur trading company is still active today as North American Fur Auctions.
<b>Hypothermia</b> .....	A serious health risk that involves the loss of body heat.
<b>Lap Link</b> .....	A metal ring attaching a trap to a stake. It allows the chain to rotate around the stake.
<b>Live-Restraining</b> .....	A trap or device designed to hold an animal without killing it.
<b>Lyme Disease</b> .....	A disease transmitted to humans by certain ticks.
<b>Nocturnal</b> .....	Active at night.
<b>Omnivore</b> .....	An animal that eats both plants and animals.
<b>Open Pelt</b> .....	A pelt skinned by cutting down the midline of the belly.
<b>Opportunist</b> .....	An animal that takes advantage of the most abundant or easily obtainable source of food.
<b>Pan Cover</b> .....	A piece of canvas, cloth, wax paper or other material used to cover a trap pan and prevent soil from getting underneath it.
<b>Pan Tension</b> .....	The amount of force, measured in weight, that it takes to trip a trap pan.
<b>Pan Throw</b> .....	The distance a trap pan must move before the trap is sprung.
<b>Parasite</b> .....	A plant or animal that lives in or on a host, and derives nourishment from the host.
<b>Pelage</b> .....	An animal's hair or fur.
<b>Pelt</b> .....	An animal's skin and fur after it has been taken off the body.
<b>Photoperiod</b> .....	The length or amount of daylight; it regulates biological changes in animals, for example, prime ness of fur, breeding and hibernation.
<b>Poaching</b> .....	Killing protected animals, or killing animals out of season or by unlawful means.
<b>Preservation</b> .....	Protecting something from loss or danger. Implies very little or no use of a wildlife resource.
<b>Prime Pelt</b> .....	A desirable pelt with the winter fur grown in and mature hair follicles.
<b>Privilege</b> .....	A special advantage or benefit not enjoyed by all.
<b>Protected Species</b> .....	A species that may not be harmed or killed. Eagles, hawks and owls, for example, are protected species.

<b>Rabies</b> .....	A serious animal disease that can be transmitted to humans, primarily by saliva from infected animals.
<b>Rare Species</b> .....	A species that is very uncommon, even in its favored habitat.
<b>Raw Fur</b> .....	A pelt that has been stretched and dried but not tanned.
<b>Responsibility</b> .....	An obligation. The social force that binds you to your obligations and the courses of action demanded by that force.
<b>Right</b> .....	An abstract idea of something that is due to a person by law, tradition, or nature.
<b>S-Hook</b> .....	A “S” shaped device for attaching a trap chain to a stake, allowing the chain to rotate around the stake.
<b>Safety Gripper</b> .....	A device used to hold a body-grip trap in the set position while it is being handled by a trapper.
<b>Samson Pelt</b> .....	A pelt lacking or nearly lacking guard hairs.
<b>Scat</b> .....	Animal droppings or feces.
<b>Scavenger</b> .....	An animal that primarily feeds on dead animals instead of killing its own food.
<b>Scored</b> .....	Mark left by a bullet or knife that cut part-way through the leather.
<b>Selectivity</b> .....	Tendency for a capture device set to target a single species.
<b>Set (Trap Set)</b> .....	The immediate area where a capture device has been set along with other preparations made by the trapper.
<b>Snared</b> .....	A term used to describe fur that is rubbed off the pelt by snare cable.
<b>Social Carrying Capacity</b> .....	The number of animals people will tolerate in a given area.
<b>Species</b> .....	A group of like animals capable of interbreeding.
<b>Stretcher</b> .....	A frame that holds a pelt in a standard shape while drying.
<b>Submersion Set</b> .....	A capture device attached to a slide cable, or one where a tangle stake is used, designed to cause a furbearer to asphyxiate underwater. Sometimes called a “drowning” set.
<b>Subsistence</b> .....	A means of surviving.
<b>Sustainable</b> .....	Capable of being maintained indefinitely.
<b>Swivel</b> .....	A device used at the ends and/or middle of a trap chain to reduce injury to a trapped animal.
<b>Tanning</b> .....	Treating a hide to make it into leather.
<b>Territory</b> .....	The part of an animal’s home range that it will defend from other animals of the same species.
<b>Threatened Species</b> .....	A species that is rare and declining, and likely to become an endangered species in the foreseeable future through most or all of its range.
<b>Trap Bed</b> .....	A hole or depression dug in the ground where a trap is placed.
<b>Trap Hook</b> .....	A pole with a hook at one end to help find and recover traps from water. Often used as a wading stick.
<b>Trap Line</b> .....	All of the traps and sets in use at a given time by a single trapper.
<b>Tularemia</b> .....	A bacterial disease of rabbits and rodents that can be transmitted to humans through cuts or scratches while skinning infected animals.
<b>Underfur</b> .....	Soft, dense fibers lying below the guard hairs. Provides primary insulation for the animal.
<b>Utilitarian</b> .....	Someone who believes that a value of a thing or animal depends on its usefulness.
<b>Voyageurs</b> .....	French Canadians employed by the early fur companies to transport furs and trade goods through the wilderness, primarily by canoe.
<b>Welfare</b> .....	Something that aids or promotes well-being.



## Chapter 19 References

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ISBN:0-41271-350-0

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Infectious Diseases of Wild Mammals, Third Edition edited by E.S. Williams and I.K. Barker, The Iowa State University Press, Ames, 2001.

Parasitic Diseases of Wild Mammals, edited by J.W. Davis and R.C. Anderson, The Iowa State University Press, Ames, 1971. ISBN:0-8138-1240-1

## ***Magazines***

Fur – Fish – Game  
2878 East Main Street  
Columbus, OH 43209

### ***Fur Trade Magazines***

Trapper and Predator Caller  
700 East State Street  
Iola, WI 54990

## ***Web Resources***

Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies  
[www.furbearermgmt.org](http://www.furbearermgmt.org) (includes information and updates on Best Management Practices)

Furbearer Resources Technical Workgroup  
[www.furbearermgmt.org/](http://www.furbearermgmt.org/)

Fur Information Council of America  
[www.fur.org](http://www.fur.org)

Fur Institute of Canada  
[www.fur.ca](http://www.fur.ca)

Fur Takers of America  
[www.furtakersofamerica.com](http://www.furtakersofamerica.com)

International Fur Trade Federation  
[www.iftf.com](http://www.iftf.com)

National Trappers Association  
[www.nationaltrappers.com](http://www.nationaltrappers.com)

Searchable Field Guides for 5,500 Plants and Animals:  
[www.enature.com](http://www.enature.com)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
[www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

U.S. Forest Service  
[www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us)

U.S. Sportsmen's Alliance  
[www.wlfa.org](http://www.wlfa.org)

The Wildlife Society  
[www.wildlife.org](http://www.wildlife.org)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/>

The Wisconsin Trappers Association  
<http://www.wistrap.org/>

**Addresses for the following companies are provided for the convenience of students seeking trapping supplies or related services and does not imply endorsement or preference by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Trappers Association or the Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program:**

Florin's Trapping  
<http://www.florintrapping.com/>

Schmitt Enterprises  
[www.schmittent.com](http://www.schmittent.com)

Fur Harvesters Auction, Inc.  
[www.furharvesters.com](http://www.furharvesters.com)

The Snare Shop  
<http://www.snareshop.com/>

Groenewold Fur & Wool Co.  
[www.gfwco.com](http://www.gfwco.com)

Sterling Fur Company  
11268 Frick Road  
Sterling, Ohio 44276

Minnesota Trapline Products  
[www.minntrapprod.com](http://www.minntrapprod.com)

Trapper Art's Supply  
<http://www.trapperartssupply.com/>

North American Fur Auctions  
[www.nafa.ca](http://www.nafa.ca)

Trapper and Predator Caller Magazine  
[www.trapperpredatorcaller.com](http://www.trapperpredatorcaller.com)

Northwest Trappers Supply  
[www.nwtrappers.com](http://www.nwtrappers.com)

USA Foxx and Furs  
<http://www.usafoxx.com/>

Rolley Hess Enterprises



## Appendix A – Trap Selectivity Matrix

<b>TRAP SELECTIVITY MATRIX</b>						
<b>TRAP TYPES:</b>						
	<b>Foot-hold</b>	<b>FootEncapsulating</b>	<b>Stoploss</b>	<b>Cage</b>	<b>Body Grip</b>	<b>Cable Restraint</b>
<b>1. Set location</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>2. Sized to target furbearer</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>3. Strength</b>	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes
<b>4. Pan tension</b>	Yes	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>5. Treadle tension</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a
<b>6. Trigger design</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a
<b>7. Trigger tension</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	n/a
<b>8. Capture device design</b>	n/a	Yes	n/a	Yes	n/a	n/a
<b>9. Type or design of set</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes
<b>10. Use of lure or bait</b>	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes	Yes	n/a
<b>11. Loop size</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
<b>12. Loop height from ground</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
<b>13. Sliding lock or mechanical lock</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
<b>14. Break-a-way system</b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes
n/a – not applicable to this type of trap						

# Appendix B – Authentic Assessments

## Trap Test - Authentic Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Failed	Passed with Assistance	Passed	Notes
IDs traps as kill-type or live-restraining devices: Show minimum of foot-holds, body-grip, cable restraints, and cage trap.				
Trap ID – Style, Size: Show longspring, coil-spring, body-grip, cable restraints, cage, enclosed foot-holds				
IDs legal traps for state				
Matches traps with species:				
Safely sets legal traps				
Describes trap preparation: Minimum of foot-hold and body-grip trap preparation				
Describes foot-hold trap tuning				
<b>Passed – Y/N</b>				

## Appendix B – Authentic Assessments

### Furbearer Identification – Authentic Assessment    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Failed</b>	<b>Passed with Assistance</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>IDs furbearers from pelt collection</b>				
<b>Describes habitat</b>				
<b>Track identification</b>				
<b>Describes food habits</b>				
<b>Trap/hunt legal status</b>				
<b>Passed – Y/N</b>				

# Appendix B – Authentic Assessments

**Laws and Regulations – Authentic Assessment**      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	Failed	Passed with Assistance	Passed	Notes
States where regulation brochures can be found				
Correctly states name of agency that regulates trapping				
Demonstrates use of regulations to show legal species to trap, seasons, legal traps				
Describes requirements regarding permission to trap				
Describes penalties for violating trapping regulations				
Describes training and licensing requirements for trapping				
Describes procedures for reporting trapping violations				
<b>Passed – Y/N</b>				

# Appendix B – Authentic Assessments

## Marking Sets – Authentic Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(One water sets and one land set)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Failed</b>	<b>Passed with Assistance</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Selecting location				
Select proper trap				
Staking/anchoring				
Digging the bed				
Bedding the trap				
Use of lure, bait, urine				
Selectivity				
Animal welfare				
Safety considerations				
Regulation compliance				
<b>Passed – Y/N</b>				

# Appendix B – Authentic Assessments

## Trapping Knowledge – Authentic Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Failed</b>	<b>Passed with Assistance</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Describe wildlife habitat used by furbearers</b>				
<b>Explain “carrying capacity”</b>				
<b>Describe how wildlife management is funded in North America</b>				
<b>Participation in class discussions on responsibility</b>				
<b>Describes or demonstrates fur handling procedures</b>				
<b>Describes how to sell fur</b>				
<b>Demonstrates safe and responsible attitudes about his/her role as a trapper</b>				
<b>Passed – Y/N</b>				



# Appendix B – Authentic Assessments

## Cable Devices – Authentic Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Failed</b>	<b>Passed with Assistance</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Identifies components of device and purpose</b>				
<b>Identifies or describes suitable locations for lethal and non-lethal sets</b>				
<b>Uses appropriate support system</b>				
<b>Uses appropriate anchoring system</b>				
<b>Uses appropriate loop size and loop height for target species</b>				
<b>Understands regulations related to cable devices</b>				
<b>Demonstrates a safe and responsible attitude about using cable devices</b>				
<b>Passed – Y/N</b>				

## Appendix C - Traps, Sets and Attractors

Furbearer	Traps	Sets	Bait & Lure
Coyote	#1.5 - 3 Coilspring Cable restraint	Dirt-hole, flat, post, trail	Bait: Covered meat or fish Lure: Fox or coyote lure, urine
Red Fox	#1.5 - 3 Coilspring Cable restraint	Dirt-hole, flat, post, trail	Bait: Covered meat or fish Lure: Fox lure, urine
Gray Fox	#1 - 2 Coilspring Cage trap	Dirt-hole, flat, post, trail	Bait: Covered meat, eggs, fish Lure: Fox lure, urine
Beaver	#330 Body-grip traps #4 or #5 foot-hold trap Cable snare	Climb out, scent mound, channel, open water beaver set, under-ice	Bait: Small sticks of poplar, willow, cottonwood Lure: Commercial or homemade castor scents
Muskrat	#110 - 150 Body-grip traps #1 - 1.5 Longspring Guarded longspring Colony trap	Feedbed, trail, pocket, runway, floating	Bait: Apples, carrots, ear corn, turnip, orange peels Lure: Musk glands from male muskrats
Bobcat	#1.5 - 3 Coilspring, #3 Longspring Cable restraint	Dirt-hole, cubby, trail	Bait: Fish, beaver or rabbit meat Lure: Anise, catnip, fish oil, beaver castor, other glands
Mink	#1 - 1.5 Foot-hold traps #110 - 160 Body-grip traps	Pocket, trail, cubby, channel, obstruction	Bait: Chunks of fish or fresh muskrat Lure: Mink/muskrat musk, scat, urine, fish oil
River Otter	#220-330 Body-grip	Otter latrine or channel sets	Bait: Fresh fish or muskrat Lure: None recommended
Fisher	#160 - 220 Body-grip traps #1.5 - 2 Foot-hold Cage traps	Dirt-hole, cubby, lean- ing pole	Bait: Raccoon or porcupine meat, fish Lure: Fisher musk & urine, beaver castor, skunk essence
Weasel	#1.5 Coilspring, #0 - 1.5 Longspring Victor rat trap #50 - 110 Body-grip traps	Cubby, traps in boxes or hollow logs	Bait: Bloody meat or rabbit Lure: Weasel gland scent
Striped Skunk	#1 - 1.5 Longspring or coilspring Cage traps #160 - 220 Body-grip traps	Dirt-hole, cubby	Bait: Fresh or tainted meat, fish, or eggs Lure: Fish oil, skunk musk, anise, honey
Opossum	#1 - 1.65 Coilspring Enclosed Foot-hold traps Cage trap	Dirt-hole, cubby	Bait: Jelly, jam, fruit, meat eggs, cheese, fish Lure: Not necessary
Raccoon	#1 - 1.5 Coilspring, #11 Longspring traps Enclosed foot-hold traps Cage traps #160 or 220 Body-grip traps	Pocket, cubby, spring run, cage, dirt-hole	Bait: Chunks of fish or muskrat Lure: Fish oil, anise, honey, hard candy

## Appendix D - Pelt Preparation

Furbearer	Pelt Preparation	Stretcher Size - Inches				
		Size	Length	Base	Shoulder	Neck
Coyote	Skin cased, split tail. May be little fat or flesh. Pelt immediately. Turn pelt fur side out when skin is dry to the touch	Large	75	13	9.5	14
		Average	70	12	9	13
		Small	65	11	8	12
Red Fox	Skin cased, split tail. May be little fat or flesh. Pelt immediately. Turn pelt side out when skin in dry to the touch	Large	56	8	6	11.5
		Average	54	7	5	11
		Small	50	6.5	4.5	10
Gray Fox	Skin cased, split tail. Gray fox have more to flesh than red fox. Pelt immediately. Turn pelt side out when skin is dry to the touch.	Large	56	9	6	11.5
		Average	54	7	5	11
		Small	50	6.5	4.5	10
Beaver	Skinned open, dried in oval shape by nailing on pattern board, or sewn to hoop. If nailed, lift pelt on nails a short time after boarding. This allows air to circulate between pelt and board.					
Muskrat	Skin cased with tail removed, don't overflesh, market fur in	Large	22	20	6.5	6
		Average	21	7.5	6	5.5
		Small	20	7	5.5	5
Bobcat	Skin cased, remove claws, remove all flesh and fat, market fur out	Large	70	10	7	12
		Average	60	9	6.5	11
		Small	48	7	5	10
Mink	Skin cased, split tail, market fur side in, fleshed lightly	Large male	40	5	3.25	8.5
		Large female	36	4	3	8
River Otter	Skin cased, cut front legs short and sew closed, pin tail in V shape, market fur in	Large	65	8	6.75	15
		Average	58	7.5	6	13.5
		Small	32	7	5	9
Fisher	Skin cased, flesh well, market fur out	Large male	50	8	6	10
		Large female	48	7	5	9.5
Weasels	Skin cased, market fur in, remove tail bone but do not split the tail	Large	22	3	2.5	5.5
		Average	16	2.5	1.75	4
		Small	12	1.75	1.25	3
Striped Skunk	Skin cased, flesh well, market fur in	Large	40	8	6	10.5
		Average	38	7.5	5.5	10
		Small	34	7	5	9
Opossum	Skin cased, tail off, fur side in; flesh carefully to avoid tears	Large	38	8	6	10.5
		Average	36	7.5	5.5	10
		Small	32	7	5	9
Raccoon	Skin cased, tail split. Remove all flesh & fat; market fur in	Large	48	10	7.5	12.5
		Average	42	9	6.5	12
		Small	34	8	5.5	11.5





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