

Dog aware fact



Leg-hold traps

Leg-hold traps evolved from the large, crude, hand-forged gin traps used in England and France to catch poachers. The word 'gin' is believed to be derived from the French term 'engine' that generally describes any type of mechanical device. The first settlers used leg-hold traps to control dingoes that attacked their sheep. The Lane's trap manufactured in Western Australia is basically a smaller version of the historical gin trap. These long-spring, leg-hold traps still have serrated jaws approximately 21 cm wide and 50.5 cm long overall.

The difference between a leg-hold trap (e.g. the Lane's trap) and a foot-hold trap is that the former is much larger and often catches the animal higher on the leg. All traps used for wild dog control with an inside jaw spread (from trigger jaw to loose jaw) greater than 16.55 cm should be considered as leg-hold traps.

Leg-hold traps with serrated jaws and teeth are not recommended. If larger traps are required, modern ones with padded, offset and/or laminated jaws should be used. If necessary, old leg-hold traps can be modified by removing serrations or teeth and adding padding or lamination.

Modifications such as adding base plates, centre swivelling, using three swivels, shock springs and Paws-I-Trip or night-latch triggers will make a leg-hold trap more selective, humane and efficient.



A Number 3 Victor Softcatch foot-hold trap (top) and a padded Lane's dog leg-hold trap (bottom)
(Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)



Lane's traps padded (top) and standard with teeth (bottom). Lane's traps have a 21 cm jaw spread.
(Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)



Above: Modified Bridger Number 5 laminated/offset jawed leg-hold trap, used in the United States for wolves and beavers. The trap has a 26.2 cm inside jaw spread and would be classed as a leg-hold trap for wild dogs. (Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)



Right: Number 14 Oneida jump-trap manufactured in the 1920s–30s by the American Trap Company. They are designed for beavers and otters—the mini teeth help to grip the slippery, tough feet of the beavers. The trap has a 17.8 cm jaw spread. (Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll)

Although very labour intensive, trapping should be considered as another tool in an integrated approach to wild dog control. However, the use of foot-hold traps, rather than the much larger leg-hold traps, is encouraged.

If traps cannot be checked daily (preferably in the early hours of daylight), it is more humane to lace them with strychnine by wrapping a small portion (about half a teaspoon) in hessian and wrapping or wiring this to the inside edge of the trap jaw. When caught, the animal bites at the trap and ingests a fatal dose of strychnine.

Advantages

The advantages of the leg-hold trap are:

- its large size increases capture zone
- its flexibility of placement and set type.

Disadvantages

The disadvantages of leg-hold traps are that:

- their large size makes them difficult to set
- they are not target-specific, as the pan cannot be adjusted at all
- large non-target animals, including livestock, are at risk
- there are concerns over human safety
- there are animal welfare concerns regarding pain, suffering and massive injuries.
- the public perception of the traps is poor
- the trap grasps the animal on the leg above the foot, causing major trauma
- the size of the trap restricts its swivel action, increasing injuries
- the pads are of poor quality and difficult to remove when damaged.

If you are dog aware:

You know trapping can be an effective control for wild dogs.