

Be Prepared: Learn About Trapping and Know What to Do

If a pet is caught accidentally in a trap or snare, it is possible to remove it without injury. The key is to follow the steps outlined in this brochure quickly and calmly. You should understand how to remove a trap or snare before you head outside, but take this brochure with you for field reference. It's also important to understand your pet's temperament. A dog or other animal caught in a trap or snare may be extremely agitated, and may try to bite those who come near. Your ability to reassure and calm your pet is critical to a successful release. Keeping your pet safe is your responsibility.

- Know when trapping seasons are open (as early as September through May with most trapping during November to March). Understand that trapping is a popular pastime or livelihood that occurs throughout Alaska, even on some popular recreational trails. Assume all maintained winter trails are traplines unless otherwise marked. Visit www.adfg.alaska.gov and click on "trapping" under "hunting" for more information.
- Keep control of your pet at all times. Keep your animal leashed when walking in the woods. In many communities, pets are required to be leashed. Know your local leash laws and follow them.
- If you encounter traps or snares, immediately leash your pet and leave the area.
- **It is against state law (AS.16.05.790) to move or tamper with any legally set traps or snares you may encounter. If you believe traps are illegally set, immediately notify the Alaska Wildlife Troopers, Alaska Fish and Wildlife Safeguard (1-800-478-3377) or the nearest Fish and Game office.**
- Never try to release any wild animal held in a trap or snare, as this also violates state law. Although a wild animal may look docile, it can be very dangerous.

This brochure covers how to release pets from three kinds of traps:

- 1) body-grip traps 2) foot-hold traps and 3) snares

Consider taking a trap removal tool kit with you when you go...

- Stout rope (3/8"-1/2" by 8') or strong leash.
- Baling wire or large zip ties to hold open trap springs.
- A muzzling device to keep a trapped pet from biting you. If you don't have a muzzle, use a belt or leash, or even a coat, shirt or electrical tape to wrap around the animal's muzzle.
- Trap setters for opening body-grip traps.
- A short board or piece of plywood can also be useful to put under a trap in deep snow conditions. This keeps the trap from sinking in the snow.

Watch a Demonstration Video

"Sharing Alaska's Trails" by the Alaska Trappers Association demonstrates how to remove pets from traps and snares. Visit www.alaskatrappers.org; click on "ATA videos." ADF&G also has demonstration videos and more information at www.adfg.alaska.gov. Click on "Trapping" under "Hunting" and then on "Sharing the Trails."

Trap Safety for Pet Owners

How to release your pet from a trap or snare



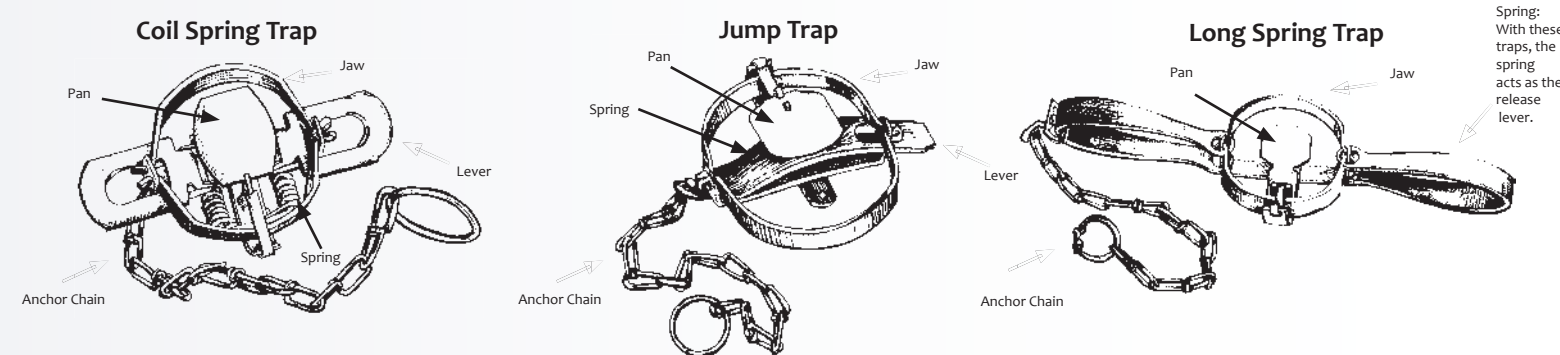
The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation and the Alaska Trappers Association



Foot-Hold Traps

Foot-hold traps come in various shapes, sizes and styles but the basic principle of how they function is the same. These traps are designed to catch an animal by closing across the paw. The trap's jaws close when an animal steps on the pan, releasing the springs or levers. Traps below are shown in the "open" or "set" position.

Pressure is released by compressing the spring levers (for coil spring and jump traps) or the springs themselves (for long spring traps). Accidental capture of your dog or pet in one of these traps is generally not life-threatening provided you are near your pet when it gets caught.



How To Remove a Foot-Hold Trap

Step 1: Either pin your pet to the ground so it cannot move or stand over it so you can use your legs to hold the animal still. Use your feet, knees or the palms of your hands to compress the spring levers. Depending on the size of the dog and the trap, another option may be to kneel over the animal and then use your hands to open the trap.



Step 2: With the spring levers parallel to your feet or hands, step on or press both levers to relax the pressure on the trap jaws and free the foot. Quickly pull your pet out of the trap jaws.



This method works well on hard surfaces. Step down on both levers at the same time.

Remember, most trapping occurs in winter:

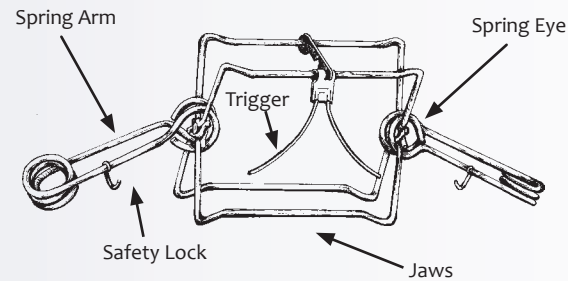
In deep snow, you may need to stabilize the trap on a solid surface (a log, some wood, snowshoes, or anything you can find) before depressing the springs. Another method (shown here) is to use your thigh to stabilize the trap and depress the trap levers with both hands.



Other considerations:

- You may need to muzzle your pet to keep it under control while you try to release it.
- If you have someone with you, one person can hold the animal while the other depresses the spring levers.
- The jaws do not need to be completely opened in order to free the foot.
- Be cautious after releasing your pet's foot. It's possible your pet may get injured trying to pull away from the trap.

Body-Grip Traps



Body-grip type traps are designed to kill small to medium-size animals humanely by closing quickly around the neck and body of an animal.

In order to remove a body-grip trap from a pet, the springs must be compressed and secured. Compressing the springs allows the jaws to move freely, so you can release the dog.

Try to remain calm and work quickly. These kinds of traps are often deadly to pets if not released quickly. You may need to muzzle your pet, but again, work as fast as you can.

There are tools, called trap setters or setting tongs, that are specifically designed to open body-grip traps. They can be purchased at a trapping supply store or some sporting goods stores.

Trap setters are useful, but because they are large and heavy, few people carry them. There are several alternate techniques for releasing a body-grip trap that don't rely on setters. It may be possible to open small body-grip traps with two hands if you are very strong. However, we recommend you first try the method shown to the right that uses a rope or leash as a pulley to compress the springs and open the trap.

Another possible method (best for small traps) is to place your knee against one of the springs and pull the spring toward your knee.

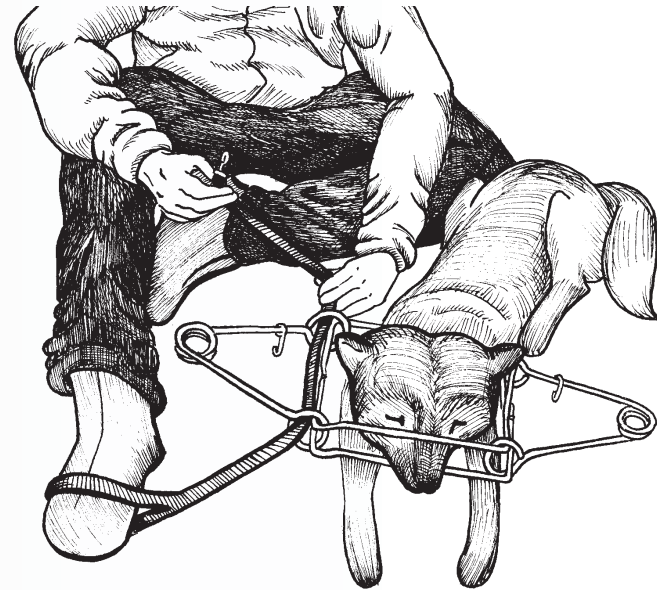
For more information on removing pets from traps, visit the ADF&G website, www.adfg.alaska.gov. Visit "trapping" under "hunting" and click on "Sharing the Trails." Or visit the Alaska Trappers Association website at www.alaskatrappers.org.

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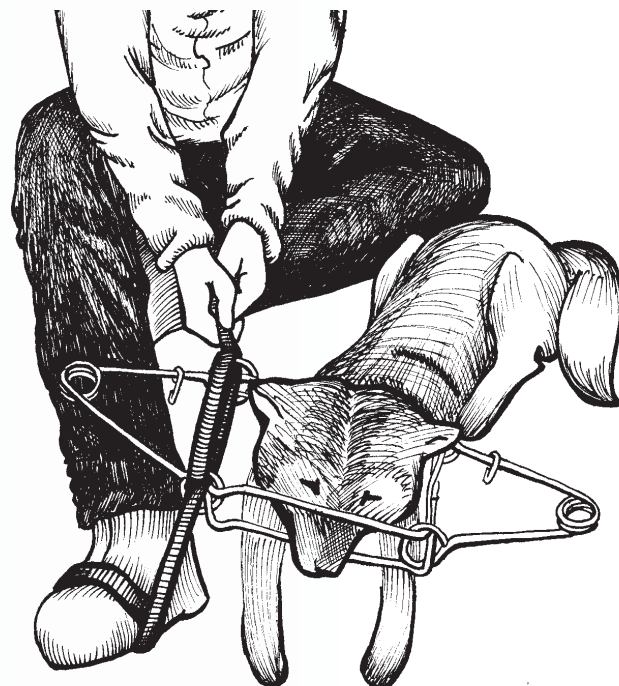
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How To Remove a Body-Grip Trap: Leash Pulley Method

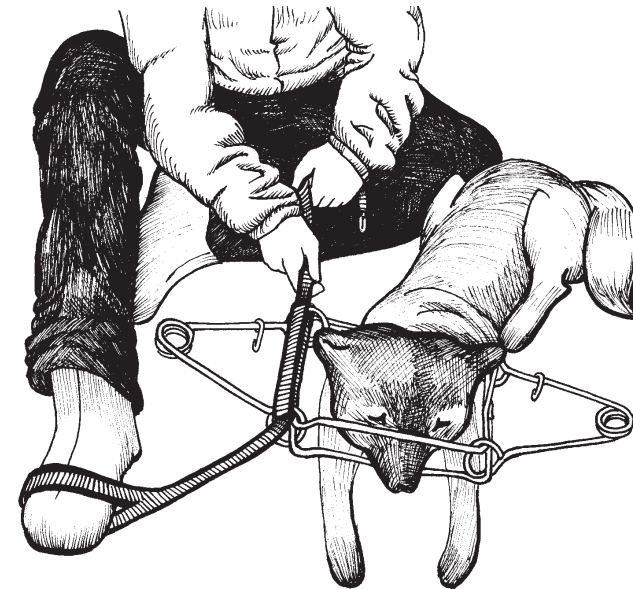
Step 1: Place your foot through the loop end of the leash and run the free end through both spring eyes on one side of the trap. A piece of rope or belt can be substituted for a leash, but first create a loop for your foot to go in.



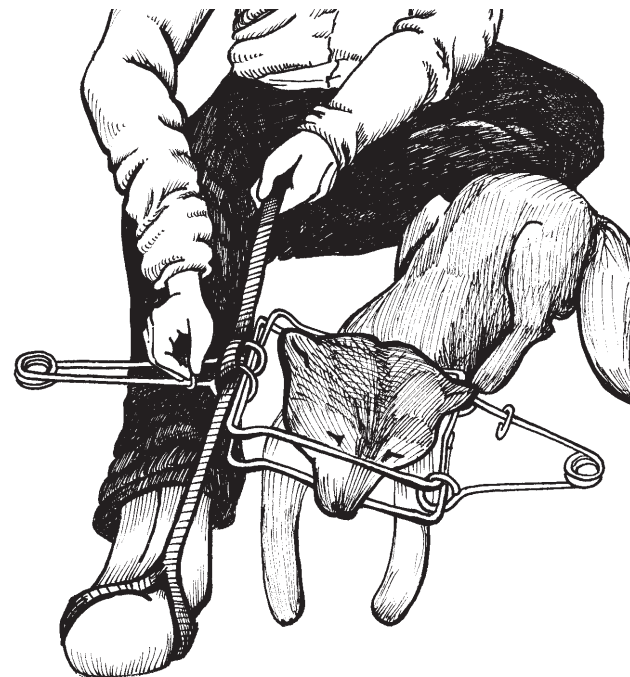
Step 3: Sit down and extend your leg with the leash attached under the trap to keep it in a horizontal position. (This will prevent injury to your pet's neck). **Stabilize the trap and pull hard!**



Step 2: Loop the leash again through the eye of the spring farthest away and pass it back through the eye closest to you. The leash now should be looped through both eyes twice. This approach creates a make-shift pulley.



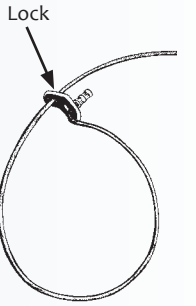
Step 4: Latch the safety lock across the spring. If the safety is missing, wrap a piece of wire, large zip-ties or rope around the spring arm to hold trap open.



You are not yet done! Repeat these steps on the other side of the trap to release your pet.

Snares

Snares are generally constructed with thin wire cable and are equipped with various types of snare locks that prevent the cable from relaxing when the snare closes. Remain calm so your pet also remains calm. The harder the captured animal fights, the tighter the snare gets as the lock prevents the snare from loosening. The snares most likely encountered by dogs are those set for fox, coyote, and lynx due to their size similarities to many domestic dog breeds.



How To Remove a Snare

Step 1: Restrain and calm the dog so the snare does not tighten further around the neck.

Step 2: Find the lock and grab it. Now push the cable away from you through the lock opening to open the snare.

Step 3: Slip the snare back over the dog's head.



Other considerations:

- You may need to release the "anchor" of the snare (where it is attached to a fixed object) to allow for better maneuvering.
- Leave the snare in place after you remove your pet. **Remember you must report incidents of trap removal or tampering to Alaska Wildlife Troopers so trappers will be informed of the situation.**