

Pets and Wildland Safety



Pet owner's guide to releasing traps

Western lands offer unique recreational opportunities for dog owners and their pets. Millions of acres of federal land are open to dogs. In many places dogs are allowed off-leash as long as they are under the voice control of their owners and do not harass wildlife or disturb cultural or historic sites. Many of these same lands are also open to trapping which poses very real dangers to hikers and pets. UtahPAWS was formed to help raise awareness of trapping dangers and to provide basic safety and rescue information to pet owners. Always obey leash laws for your pet's safety.

UtahPAWS
www.utahpaws.org

*Report all related incidents to UtahPAWS and to the appropriate government agency.
Utah Division of Wildlife Resources: DWRcomment@utah.gov | 801 538 4700
Idaho Department of Fish and Game: 208 334 3700 | idfginfo@idfg.idaho.gov*

Snares

Snares are cable nooses often hung along fences or over narrow pathways traveled by coyotes and foxes—pathways that might also be attractive to dogs. Once an animal's head and neck pass through, the cable cinches tight and the result is suffocation.

There are several things that can be done to release a dog from a snare. It's always a good idea to cover the dog's head to calm it and restrain it from biting you. The more an animal struggles in a snare the tighter the noose will get. Try to relieve the tension on the snare by removing the stake or post to which it is attached, or move the animal closer to the post. A pair of lineman's pliers or heavy duty cable cutters could be lifesavers and might be a good thing to include in your hiking pack (a Leath-



Snares catch animals around the neck and eventually suffocate them.



1

Put a jacket over the dog to help calm and control it.

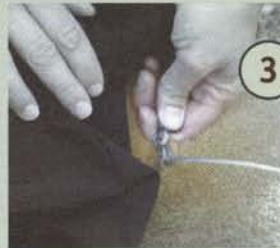


2

Use a strong wire-cutting tool to cut the snare off.

erman-style tool or normal wire cutters will not be strong enough to cut through steel cable). After the dog has been restrained, feel through its fur for the cable and use the diagonal pliers to cut the cable—this is not as easy as it sounds especially with a heavy gauge cable.

A second option is to find the locking device, a metal piece that keeps the snare from losing its loop, and push or pull back on this (the pliers can be useful for this as well). It may seem counterintuitive to pull back on the lock and the cable connected to it as it pulls the noose tighter, but once you've done this it will make it easier to loosen the snare.



3

You can also pull back on the locking mechanism. This initially tightens the snare.



4

Once it is pulled back you can push the connector to loosen the snare.

It is illegal to remove or disable a trap. It's best to keep your pet away and leave it alone. However, if you do encounter a trap in an area where it seems likely to harm children or pets, or if your dog is caught in a trap, contact the regional office for Fish and Game or Wildlife Resources, the local sheriff's office, or the local animal control officer. Always remember to inquire about leash laws before letting your pet run free.

Trappers in Utah are required to check their traps every 48 hours.

Trappers in Idaho are required to check their traps every 72 hours.

Foothold Traps

There are two common kinds of foothold traps. Both use springs that clamp metal jaws down on the foot of an animal. In Utah, foothold traps are required to have spacers that don't allow the trap jaws to completely close. Nevertheless, such traps can cause serious leg injuries or broken bones and may send an animal into shock. Foothold traps are sometimes placed in water so that an animal may drown after capture and not escape.

A dog caught in a trap will be frantic. Put a jacket or shirt over its head to keep it calm and prevent injury to yourself.

Try using your feet to open the trap. If it's a single spring foothold, step down hard on the release (see below). While standing on the release, carefully separate the jaws and free the dog.

With a double spring foothold (right) also try to calm and immobilize the dog with a jacket. Then step down on both release blades, applying equal pressure to each one. This should separate the jaws but you may still need to carefully spread them apart to release the dog. Remember to keep pressure on the blades and use extreme caution.



Single spring foothold trap in set position. Blade of metal to the right is the release.



Foothold traps grip the animal's foot or leg. The blade of metal to the right is the release.



Step firmly down on release blade.



Using extreme caution, further separate the jaws of the trap.



Double spring foothold trap in set position. The blades of metal on either side are what you step on to release it.



Double spring foothold trap. The release blades angle up at about 45 degrees when the trap is sprung.



Step down firmly on the release blades.



Apply equal pressure to each release blade.



The trap should open enough to release the dog without having to use your hands.

Large Footholds

Nearby western states are working on or have approved plans to hold trapping seasons for larger predators. The Idaho Fish and Game Commission has approved a plan to allow wolf trapping for the 2011-12 hunting season. Trapping of large predators such as wolves or cougars requires much larger foothold traps with a jaw diameter of 6.5 to 9 inches. These traps are more powerful, more dangerous for people, pets and even horses. They are also considerably more difficult to release an animal from without setting tools.

The actions one should take to help release a pet from one of these traps are the same as those in the foothold trap section of this brochure, but will require much more strength. More than likely, if your

pet is caught in one of these traps and you do not have someone in your party who is big and strong you will have to leave the scene and go for help.

Photos below show 6.5 and 9-inch traps in the set position.



Trap being set with necessary setting tools.



Stuffed animal held by the smaller trap. Larger trap is shown nearby to the right.



Two men releasing the stuffed animal from the trap.

M-44s

M-44s are small, baited cylinders designed to shoot sodium cyanide into the mouth of any curious animal. They're used in areas where livestock have been reported killed by predators and can be legally placed only by Wildlife Services, an agency of the Federal Government. The cylinder is mostly buried with the top couple of inches poking out of the ground. This exposed end is baited to attract coyotes and other canids.

Two dogs were killed in Utah in 2006 by M-44 devices. The first occurred on BLM land in Uintah County near Vernal where a man and his dog were rabbit hunting at a popular hunting and fishing area. The second, also on BLM land, occurred in the Lawson Cove area in Millard County where a woman was with her dog at a community rock pit.

M-44s kill. Nothing can be done once the poisonous gas fills an animal's lungs. Dogs generally start vomiting and foaming at the mouth, and are usually dead within minutes.

The use of these traps is regulated by the federal government. They may only be used after evidence of predators harming livestock or threatened or endangered species. They are not to be used on federal lands designated for recreational use; however, federal lands in Utah, especially BLM lands, are often used for ranching as well as recreation.



The upper two-inch portion of the M-44 is baited and exposed above ground.

DANGER!

Poison Devices In The Area!

These devices are Dangerous.
They contain Deadly Cyanide.
Stay Away and keep your dogs away.



These devices are the property of the United States government and are used for the protection of livestock and poultry, federally designated threatened and endangered species, and for the control of species that are vectors of communicable disease. Tampering with this sign or these devices and / or molesting animals taken with these devices is a Federal offense.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE
WILDLIFE SERVICES

Notices such as the one above indicate the nearby use of M-44s.

M-44s have also poisoned people. Signs in both English and Spanish must be posted at common access points to an area where M-44s are in use. Elevated signs are also required within 25 feet of each device. Pets, and especially children, should be kept away from all known M-44 use areas.

Pets lost to M-44s often go unreported. Government agencies have records that are fragmentary at best. If you lose a pet to an M-44, it will be helpful to other pet owners and government agencies alike to have a necropsy (animal autopsy) performed so the cause of death can be verified.

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For a directory of Veterinary Clinics:

Utah: <http://www.uvma.org>

Idaho: <http://www.ivma.org>

For more information on trapping contact your hunting management authority for furbearer rules and seasons.

UTAH: <http://wildlife.utah.gov/dwr/hunting/hunting-information/furbearer.html>

IDAHO: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/?getPage=141>

Primary furbearer seasons extend from early October to mid-February but trapping is allowed year-round for some species. Government-sponsored trapping for "nuisance animals" can occur anytime.

Since 1983, the combined coyote harvest by both Wildlife Services and trappers in Utah has averaged over 9,000 animals per year.

*UTAH FURBEARER ANNUAL REPORT, 2009-2010

Trapping occurs throughout Utah. The total furbearer harvest for 2009-2010 is estimated at 28,660 animals.*

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