

§ 44. Furbearing species

1.0 Authority

1.1 This rule is promulgated pursuant to 10 V.S.A. §§ 4081, 4082, 4084, 4828, and 4861. In promulgating this rule, the Fish and Wildlife Board is following the policy established by the General Assembly that the protection, propagation, control, management, and conservation of fish, wildlife, and fur-bearing animals in this State is in the interest of the public welfare and that the safeguarding of these valuable resources for the people of the State requires a constant and continual vigilance.

1.2 In accordance with 10 V.S.A. §§ 4082 and 4084, this rule is designed to maintain the best health, population, and utilization levels of the regulated species.

1.3 This rule shall apply to all persons who take or attempt to take fur-bearing animals by any method.

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of this rule is to regulate the taking of fur-bearing animals.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 “Accompany” for the purpose of pursuing coyote with the aid of dogs means that:

- a) Any person engaged in the control, handling, transporting, or intercepting of dogs used for taking coyote with the aid of dogs shall be under the direct supervision of the permit holder and shall be considered a “Sub-permittee”, and
- b) A Sub-permittee who is in any way involved in the use or handling of taking coyotes with the aid of dogs shall be under the direct control and supervision of the coyote dog permit holder.

3.2 “Bait” means any animal, vegetable, fruit, mineral matter, or any other substance capable of luring or attracting coyotes or any other wildlife.

3.3 "Board" means the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Board.

3.4 “Commissioner” shall mean the Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

3.5 “Compensation” shall mean money.

3.6 “Control of dogs(s)” means that when transporting, loading, or unloading dogs from vehicle(s); and handling, catching, restraining, releasing, or following dogs at all times during training dogs and taking of coyote with the aid of dogs; the permittee shall be able to locate and remotely recall the dogs. Collar(s) with GPS functions, track log capability, and training/control

features in the collar(s) shall be required to locate and track dogs at all times while taking coyote with the aid of dogs. At no time shall dogs be in pursuit of coyote without a GPS track log being maintained by the permit holder.

3.7 “Coyote Dog Permit” means a permit issued by the Commissioner to a person who wishes to hunt, pursue or take coyote with the aid of dogs.

3.8 "Department" means the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

3.9 “Department Registered Dog” means a dog bearing a numbered identification dog-tag (Department Registration Dog-Tag) approved or issued by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department, with the permit holder's coyote dog permit number and a number one through four.

3.10 "Fur-bearing animal" means beaver, otter, marten, mink, raccoon, fisher, fox, skunk, coyote, bobcat, weasel, opossum, lynx, wolf, and muskrat or as amended pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4001.

3.11 “Legal Trail” shall mean a public right of way designated as a trail by a municipality as defined in Title 19 V.S.A § 301(8), that is not a highway but is shown on the highway maps of the respective towns made by the Agency of Transportation and:

- a) was previously a designated town highway; or
- b) is a new public right of way laid out as a trail by the selectboard for the purpose of providing recreational use or access to abutting properties.

3.12 “Pack of Dogs” means one to four dogs, acting as a unit during taking coyote with the aid of dogs.

3.13 “Public Highway” for the purposes of this rule, means town, state, and United States roads, shown on the highway maps of the respective towns, made by the Agency of Transportation.

3.14 “Public Trail” for the purposes of this rule, means:

- a) a path or corridor open to the public, used for nonmotorized recreational purposes such as hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and other similar activities; that is designated and mapped by a municipality on municipal lands, the managing agency or department on Vermont state owned land, or a federal agency on federal land; within the state of Vermont;
- b) a path or corridor open to the public, commonly used for nonmotorized recreational purposes such as hiking, walking, bicycling, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and other similar activities; that is designated, managed, maintained and clearly marked as a trail on municipal lands, on Vermont state-owned land, or on federal land, within the state of Vermont; or
- c) Vermont Rail Trails designated and mapped by the Vermont Agency of Transportation, the Appalachian Trail designated, mapped and managed by the National Park Service, and the Long Trail designated, mapped and managed by the Green Mountain Club.

3.15 “Relaying packs and dogs” means the removal and replacement of one or more dogs,

during taking coyote with the aid of dogs, to the original pack of dogs once the pursuit has begun.

3.16 "Sub-Permittee" means any person with a valid Vermont hunting license designated by the coyote dog permit holder to assist or take coyote with the aid of dogs, in accordance with the permit issued by the Commissioner.

3.17 "Taking Coyote with the aid of dogs" for the purposes of this rule means that one or more dog(s) with Department Registration Dog-Tags are on the ground whether in pursuit of a coyote or not.

3.18 A "tanned" pelt is one that has been treated to turn the skin into leather.

3.19 "Training/control" collar is any family of collars that deliver audible tones and electrical stimulation of varying intensity and duration to the neck of a dog via a radio-controlled electronic device incorporated into the collar.

3.20 "Trapping" means to hunt, take or attempt to take fur-bearing animals with traps including the dispatching of such lawfully trapped fur-bearing animals.

3.21 A "trap" means a mechanical device used to capture, kill and/or restrain fur-bearing animals excluding firearms, muzzleloaders and archery equipment.

3.22 "Unregistered dog" means a dog that does not have a valid numbered Department Registration Dog Tag as described in 3.9.

4.0 Restrictions

4.1 A person trapping for fur-bearing animals under this rule shall visit their traps at least once every calendar day, except as provided in paragraph 4.2, and dispatch or release any animal caught therein.

4.2 A person who sets body gripping traps in the water or under the ice, colony/cage traps underwater or foothold traps under the ice shall visit their traps at least once every three calendar days and remove any animal caught therein.

4.3 A person shall not set a trap on lands other than their own which does not have their name and address permanently and legibly stamped or engraved thereon, or on a tag of rustless material securely attached thereto.

4.4 All traps under ice will be marked with a tag visible above the ice.

4.5 All foothold traps set on land must:

- a) Have base plates that feature a center chain mount with swivel, with free moving chain and at least two additional swivels that allow mobility for a captured animal;

- b) Be anchored with a minimum of 12” chain and a maximum of 18” chain between the base plate and the start of the anchoring system. Extra swivel and/or shock springs can be added to the chaining system, but the additions cannot cause the chain to exceed the 18” length;
- c) Be padded, offset, laminated, or have a minimum jaw thickness of 5/16th of an inch, or fully encapsulate the foot;
- d) Have a spread of no more than 6 ¼ inches measured inside the widest expanse of the jaws; and
- e) If a foothold trap is triggered by downward pressure, it must be adjustable for pan tension.

4.6 No body-gripping trap shall be set on land unless:

- a) it is under 40 square inches, without the use of bait, or
- b) it is over 40 square inches and less than 60 square inches and is set 5’ or more above the ground, or
- c) it is over 40 square inches and less than 60 square inches and is in an anchored enclosure with openings no greater than 60 square inches and with a trap trigger that is recessed at least 12” from all openings.
- d) Any body-gripping traps over 60 square inches shall only be set in the water.

4.7 All meat-based bait shall be covered at the time that a trap is set. Covering shall include, but are not limited to, brush, branches, leaves, soil, snow, water, or enclosures constructed of wood, metal, wire, plastic, or natural materials.

4.8 A person shall not use toothed foothold traps or snares when trapping under this section.

4.9 A person shall not set a trap between December 31 and the following fourth Saturday in October unless the trap is in the water, under the ice, or on a float in the water.

4.10 A person shall not possess a living fur-bearing animal, except as provided by rules of the board or 10 V.S.A. part 4.

4.11 A person shall not possess a fur-bearing animal trapped outside of its legal season without the written authorization of the Department, not to include animals taken pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4828.

4.12 A person shall not possess fur or skin of a fur-bearing animal unlawfully taken.

4.13 A person shall not take a fur-bearing animal by use of any explosives or, chemical or poisonous mixture, with the exception of a carbon dioxide chamber used in accordance with the recommendations of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

4.14 A person shall not take a fur-bearing animal from dens by cutting, digging, smoking, by the use of mechanical devices other than a legal trap set in accordance with these rules.

4.15 Trapping Set-backs:

- a) No foothold traps or body-gripping traps shall be set on or within 50' of the travelled portion of a legal trail, public trail or public highway, unless set in the water or under ice. Setbacks shall not apply to public trails on Wildlife Management Areas except those public trails the Department specifically designates as requiring a setback. The Department shall post signage on Wildlife Management Areas advising the public of hunting seasons and locations where setbacks apply.
- b) No foothold traps or body-gripping traps, unless set in the water or under ice. shall be set on or within 100 feet of the buildings, parking lots, and maintained (cleared, continuously maintained or landscaped) portions of designated wildlife viewing areas, visitor centers, parks, playgrounds, picnic areas, shelters, pavilions, schools, camps or campgrounds, and recreational facilities such as ball fields or tennis courts; owned and managed by municipal, state or federal entities except that trapping may occur with the explicit permission of schools, camps or campgrounds.

4.16 Dispatch of Trapped Animals: Upon discovery, a trapper shall immediately dispatch a live trapped furbearer with a muzzleloader or gun fired at arm's length; or a bow and arrow, or crossbow; or a carbon dioxide chamber in compliance with the American Veterinary Medical Association guidelines. This subsection shall not be interpreted to prevent a trapper from releasing an unharmed captured animal, or a domestic pet.

4.17 Beaver Muskrat

- a) When trapping muskrat between March 1 and March 31, body gripping traps are restricted to 5 inches or less.
- b) A person shall not disturb or destroy a beaver or muskrat house or den or place a trap therein, thereon, or in the entrance thereof.
- c) A person shall not set a trap within 10 feet of the nearest point, above the water, of a beaver house or dam during the month of March.
- d) A person shall not interfere in any manner with dams, dens, or houses of beaver except upon prior written approval from the Commissioner.

4.18 Bobcat; Otter; Fisher.

- a) The skins of bobcat, otter, and fisher legally taken may be possessed, transported, bought and sold only when tagged and marked as hereinafter provided.
- b) A person who takes bobcats, otter, or fisher during these seasons shall notify authorized Department staff within 48 hours of the close of the season. Pelts shall be presented to authorized Department staff for tagging. Such tags shall remain affixed to the pelts until tanned. Carcasses shall be surrendered to authorized Department staff at the time of tagging.

- c) A person who legally takes bobcat, otter, or fisher may keep the edible meat prior to submitting the carcass to the Department.
- d) No bobcat, otter, or fisher pelts or carcasses taken during these seasons shall be transported out of the State of Vermont prior to being tagged by authorized Department staff.
- e) A person who takes bobcat, fisher, and otter pursuant to 10 V.S.A. § 4828 and who desires to keep the pelt shall notify authorized Department staff with 84 hours of the taking. Pelts shall be presented to authorized Department staff for tagging. Such tags shall remain affixed to the pelts until tanned. Carcasses shall be surrendered to authorized Department staff at the time of tagging.

4.19 Raccoons

- a) A person shooting raccoons during the raccoon hunting season shall use a 0.22 caliber rimfire firearm or a shotgun with #2 shot or smaller.
- b) A light may be used to illuminate and shoot a raccoon once treed by a dog(s) during the raccoon hunting season. A light may also be used to illuminate a raccoon once treed by a dog(s) during the training season.

4.20 Taking Coyote with the Aid of Dogs

4.20.1 Authority - In accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 5008 and § 5009 (b), this rule establishes a process and standards for the issuance of a permit to take coyote with the aid of dogs, either for the training of dogs or for the taking of coyote.

4.20.2 Purpose - The purpose of this subsection is to establish a process and standards for the issuance of permits to pursue coyote with dogs, establish training and hunting seasons for the taking of coyote with the aid of dogs, and to define legal methods of take.

4.20.3 The Taking of Coyote with Aid of Dogs.

- a) Licenses and permits.
 - (1) Any person who intends to train, hunt, pursue, harvest, or in any manner take a coyote with the aid of dogs shall apply for a permit from the Commissioner on an application form provided by the Commissioner.
 - (2) Only applications received by the Department's central office during the official application period will be considered. Applications must be received prior to the deadline established by the Commissioner.
 - (3) The Commissioner will consider only complete applications. For an application to be

complete it must be legible, must contain all the information requested by the Department, must bear the applicant's original signature, or, in the case of electronic or facsimile applications, attestation under the pains and penalties of perjury. To be considered complete the form must be accompanied by any required application fee, or means of payment, such as a valid credit card payment.

- (4) The Commissioner may deny any person a permit in their sole discretion.
 - (5) Any person training, hunting, pursuing, harvesting, or in any manner involved in the taking of a coyote with the aid of dogs must hold a valid Coyote Dog Permit issued by the Department, or accompany a Coyote Dog Permit holder. The Permit shall be carried at all times by the permittee while taking coyote with the aid of dogs, and exhibited to a game warden, landowner, or law enforcement officer upon demand.
 - (6) Any person hunting, pursuing, harvesting, or in any manner involved in the taking of a coyote with the aid of dogs must hold a valid Vermont Hunting License, and use only Department Registered Dogs.
 - (7) In any given year, the number of permits available to non- resident hunters shall not exceed ten (10) percent of the total number of permits issued to resident hunters the previous year. If more than ten (10) percent of non-resident permit applications are received, the Department will award up to ten (10) non-resident permits on a first come, first serve basis, provided that the number of permits to be issued does not exceed 100.
- b) Lottery –In the event that more than 100 permit applications are received, all those who have submitted completed eligible applications and who wish to be entered into the lottery will be entered into the lottery. The Department will hold, or cause to be held, a transparent, random drawing to select 100 permits and to ensure that not more than 10% of permits issued by the Department are issued to non-residents.
- c) Legal Methods
- (1) A person shall not take a coyote into their possession except by killing the coyote by legal means or methods. Legal means includes utilizing a muzzleloader or gun fired at arm's length; or bow and arrow, or crossbow.
 - (2) A person taking coyote with the use of a bow and arrow or crossbow shall, upon demand of a game warden or other law enforcement personnel, show proof of having a prior archery license, or of having passed a bow hunter education course in Vermont, another state or a province of Canada approved by the Commissioner.
- d) Dogs and Packs

- (1) A person shall not take coyote with the aid of dogs unless the person is in control of the dog(s).
- (2) No person shall take a coyote with the aid of dogs by using any Unregistered Dog. No person shall have an Unregistered Dog in their possession (including in a vehicle) while hunting, pursuing, or taking a coyote.
- (3) A person hunting with dogs, pursuing, and taking coyote with the aid of dogs shall attach a collar or collars with GPS functions, tracklog capability, and training/control features for remote recall; and shall attach a Department Registration Dog-Tag and a metal identification name plate with the person's name, address and telephone number to the dog's collar.
- (4) A person taking a coyote with the aid of dogs shall maintain a GPS location log of each dog taking coyote and shall maintain the log for at least 30 days after the close of the season.
- (5) A person taking a coyote with the aid of dogs shall only take a coyote with a Pack of Dogs as defined in this rule. No person shall pursue, hunt, or take coyote by Relaying any Dog or Pack of Dogs.
- (6) Two or more permit holders may hunt together and combine Department Registered Dog(s) to form a Pack of Dogs. The combined Coyote Dog Permit holders shall not take coyote with the aid of more than four dogs combined forming a single pack of dogs. The combined Coyote Dog Permit holders shall not possess any Unregistered Dogs while hunting, pursuing, or taking coyote with the aid of their dogs.

4.20.4 Seasons and Shooting Hours for Taking Coyote with the Aid of Dogs.

- a) Coyote Dog Training Season: For Vermont Resident and Nonresident Permit Holder: June 1 through September 15, all dates inclusive, except that a nonresident may train dogs to pursue coyote only while the training season is in effect in the nonresident's home state and subject to the requirements of these rules.
- b) Coyote Dog Hunting Season December 15 through March 31, all dates inclusive.
- c) Legal hours for taking coyote with the aid of dogs: One half hour before sunrise until one half hour after sunset.

4.20.5 Prohibitions applicable to Taking Coyote with the Aid of Dogs

- a) A person shall not advertise, barter, exchange goods or services, or otherwise sell the use of a dog(s) for the purpose of taking coyote with the aid of dogs.
- b) While taking coyote with the aid of dogs, no person shall have in their possession an Unregistered Dog while possessing Department Registered Dogs.
- c) It shall be a violation for a Vermont resident to apply for a coyote dog permit for the purpose of allowing a nonresident coyote dog owner to take coyote in Vermont with the aid of dogs.

4.20.6 Reporting - A person taking coyote with the aid of dogs shall, no later than 48 hours after the close of season, report the taking of all coyotes during the season in a manner required by the Commissioner.

4.20.7 A person hunting coyotes with dogs shall not release the dogs on land posted in accordance with Title 10 V.S.A. § 5201, without the written permission of the landowner. In addition, a person hunting coyotes with the aid of dogs is encouraged to seek landowner permission before releasing dogs or entering land that is not posted in accordance with Title 10 V.S.A. § 5201. Hunter education shall include the recommendation that persons hunting coyotes with dogs seek landowner permission prior to pursuing coyotes with dogs.

4.21 Taking Coyote by Bow and Arrow and Crossbow: No person shall take coyote with or without the aid of dogs, with a bow and arrow or crossbow if the arrow or bolt has an arrowhead that measures less than seven-eighths of an inch at its widest point or that has less than two sharp cutting edges.

4.22 Lynx

- a) Any person who incidentally captures a lynx shall notify the Department immediately.
- b) The following regulations on traps and trapping shall apply within Wildlife Management Unit E.

(1) From the fourth Saturday in October to December 31, both dates inclusive, all body gripping traps must be set:

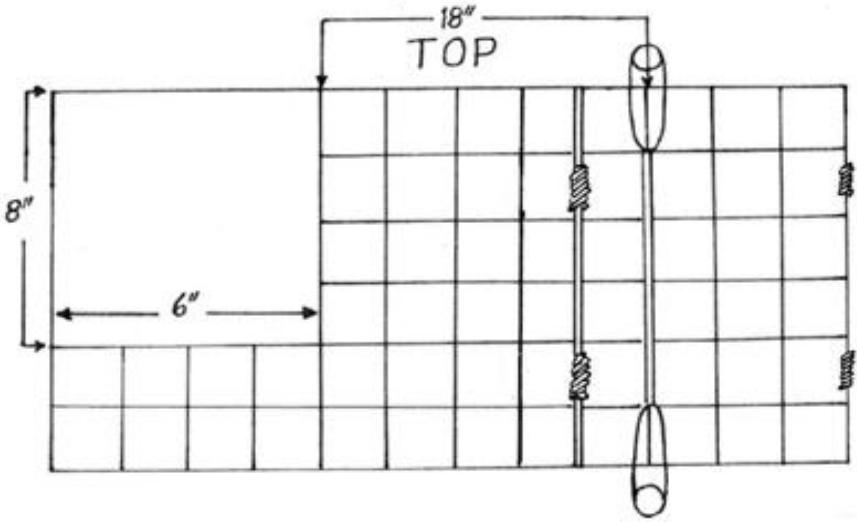
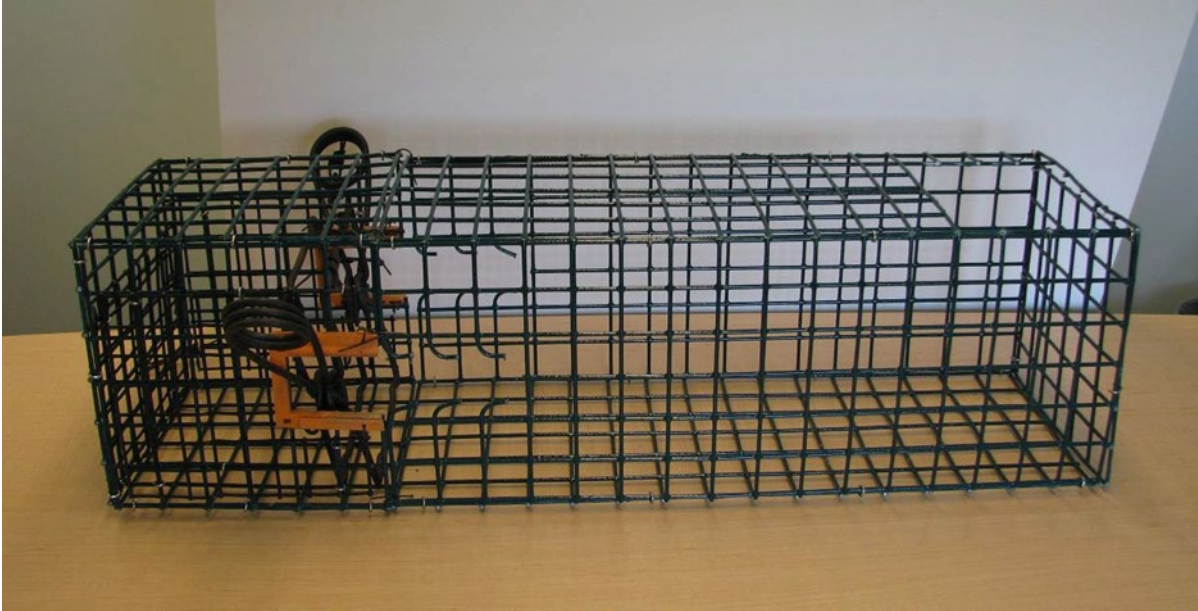
- i. In the water, or;
- ii. Within a Canada lynx exclusion device as described below and as depicted in Diagram 1:
 - a. the trap jaws shall be completely within the device;
 - b. the trap springs may extend outside of device through openings no larger than 7.5” wide by 1.5” high;

- c. the device shall not have an opening greater than 6" by 8";
 - d. the opening shall not be directly in front of the trap but shall instead be either on the top or side of the device;
 - e. the trap set within the device shall be a minimum of 18" from the closest edge of the opening to the trap;
 - f. there shall be at least two attachment points for each side of the device where there is a joint or where panels come together;
 - g. the device shall be constructed of wood or of wire mesh of 16 gauge or less wire (.05" diameter wire or greater) and having a mesh size with openings no greater than 1.5" X 1.5" or 1" X 2"; and,
 - h. the trap shall be anchored outside of the device; or
- iii. Off the ground as described below and as depicted in Diagram 2:
- a. at least 5' above the ground or if snow is on the ground at least 5 feet above snow level with the exception of the 24-hour period immediately following a snowstorm;
 - b. affixed to a standing tree which is free of branches below the trap or to a leaning section of pole that has not been planed or otherwise altered except for the removal of branches and is less than 4" in diameter at the trap and is angled at least 45° along its entire length from the ground to the trap; and
 - c. in an area that is free of any object within 4' of the trap.

c) The rules set forth in this subsection 4.22 shall expire on January 1, 2027 ~~2024~~ unless such rules are either extended or amended by the Fish and Wildlife Board. The decision to extend or amend these rules shall be based on an evaluation of the following key criteria:

- (1) Reliable evidence of the presence or absence of a resident, breeding population of Canada lynx;
- (2) The availability of more effective and/or practical alternatives for avoiding the incidental capture of lynx; and
- (3) The outcome of Maine's Incidental Take Permit application process.

Diagram 1. Canada lynx exclusion device for body gripping traps.



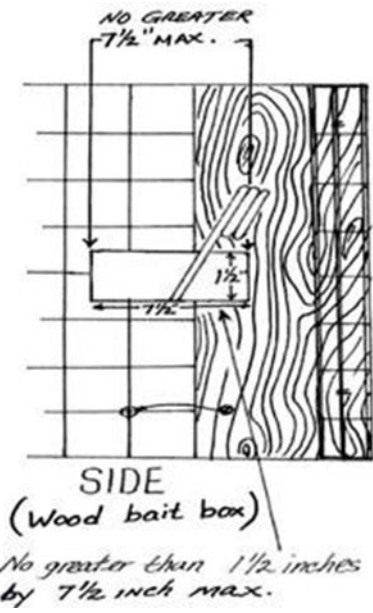
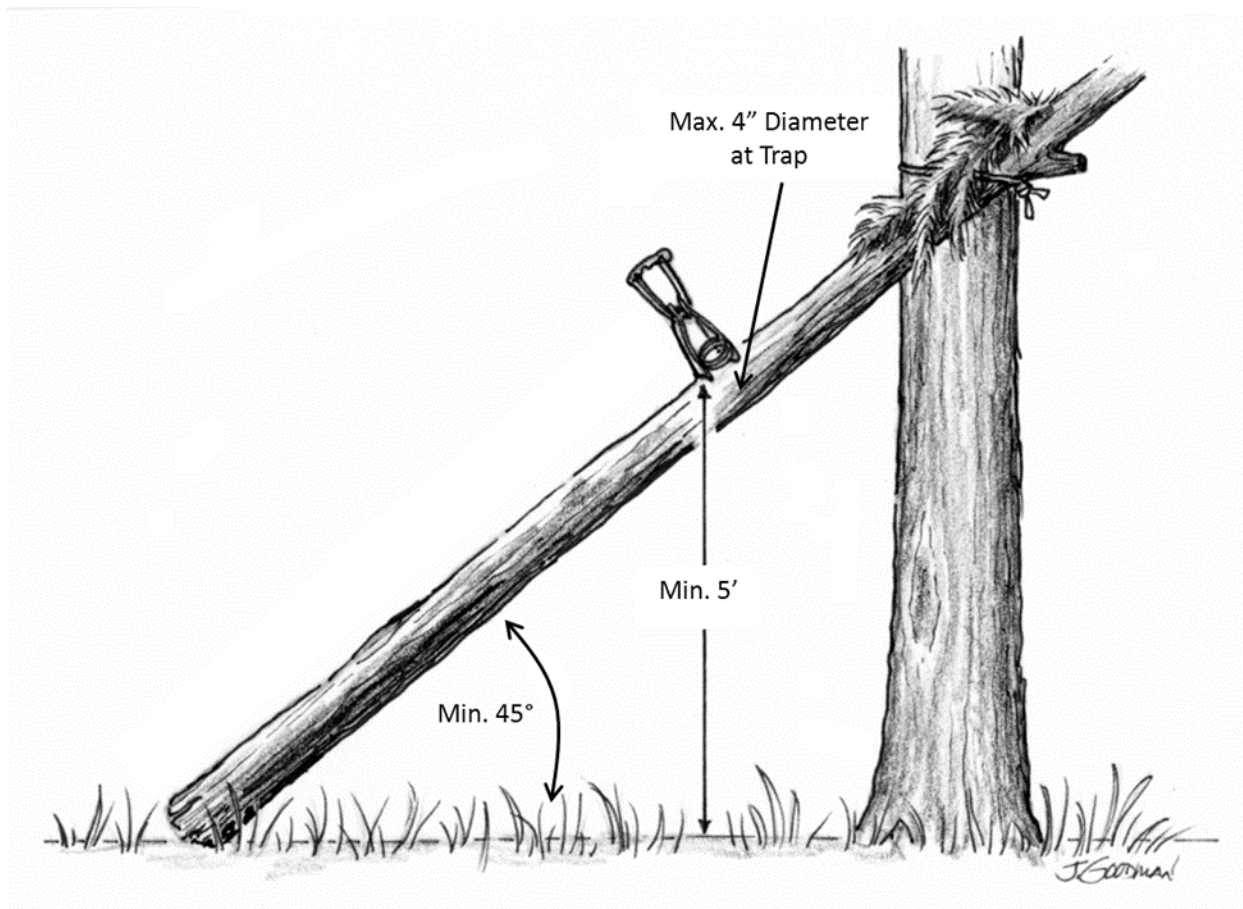


Diagram 2. Off the ground sets for body gripping traps.



4.23 Biological Collection

- a) Except for persons exempt from the rules under section 4828 of title 10, any person who traps any animal obtains a trapping license and traps for furbearers shall complete and submit an annual biological collection trapper survey, including the reporting of taking of incidental wild animals, for the license season to the Department, within the timeline specified by the Commissioner.
- b) Any person who traps furbearers and traps a dog or cat shall report the taking to a warden within 24 hours of discovery.
- c) The failure to complete and submit a biological collection survey to the Department shall be a nonpoint violation under 10 V.S.A. § 4502.

5.0 Seasons, Bag Limits

The following seasons, methods and bag limits are hereby established for the species listed. All hunting seasons will be with or without dogs, except as otherwise provided. Below is the exclusive, exhaustive list of seasons and means of take of fur-bearing animals. The taking of fur-bearing animals at other times or by other means, except where otherwise provided by law, is prohibited. All dates are inclusive.

Seasons	Dates	Bag Limit
5.1 Beaver		
By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct. through March 31	No Limit
By hunting	No open season	Zero
5.2 Otter		
By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.- last day of March	No limit
By hunting	No open season	Zero
5.3 Marten	No open season	Zero
5.4 Mink		
By trapping	Fourth Sat in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
By hunting	No open season	Zero
5.5 Raccoon		
By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
By hunting	Second Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
5.6 Bobcat		
By trapping	December 1-December 16	No limit
By hunting	January 10-February 7	No limit
5.7 Fox (red or grey)		
By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit

	By hunting	Fourth Sat. in Oct. through the second Sun. in Feb.	No limit
5.8	Skunk		
	By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
	By hunting	No closed Season	No limit
5.9	Muskrat		
	By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-March 31	No limit
	By hunting	March 20-April 19	No limit
5.10	Coyote		
	By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
	Hunting/Taking Coyote without the Aid of Dogs	No closed season	No limit
	Hunting/Taking With the Aid of Dogs	December 15 through March 31	No limit
5.11	Fisher		
	By trapping	December 1-December 31	No limit
	By hunting	No open season	Zero
5.12	Weasel		
	By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
	By hunting	No closed season	No limit
5.13	Opossum		
	By trapping	Fourth Sat. in Oct.-Dec. 31	No limit
	By hunting	No closed season	No limit
5.14	Wolf	No open season	Zero
5.15	Lynx	No open season	Zero

5.20 With the exception of state and federally listed threatened and endangered species, seasons shall not be applicable to any person, who takes a furbearing animal in defense of persons or property for compensation, in accordance with 10 V.S.A. § 4828.

6.0 Trapping Rabbits and Furbearers in Defense of Property for a Fee

In accordance with Sec. 11 of Act 170 from the 2017-2018 Adj Session, the following sections and subsections of Board rules set forth in Title 10, Appendix § 44 are applicable to trapping rabbits and furbearing animals in defense of property for compensation: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.10 (however, possession is allowed for the purpose of moving the animal to a more appropriate

place for dispatch), 4.11, 4.12, 4.13, 4.18 e), 4.22 a), and 4.23.