

## Feral Dog Capture Techniques:

By: Dave Pauli c 1993, 1997 revised 2001

Feral, wild, or under-socialized dogs tend to be somewhat more difficult to capture than stray domestics. This updated primer contains some of the field-tested techniques that should increase capture success and decrease animal stress and injuries.

### SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

**Always Use the Least Amount of Restraint Necessary.** These techniques differ from capturing socialized domestics. "Feral" animals may injure themselves or you when caught on a leash or snappy snare. Minimal handling techniques like **live traps** or **nets** become the preferred alternative. The majority of this primer will be devoted to advanced live trapping techniques, but hoop nets, drop nets, drive nets and landing nets all have their proper place in feral animal capture. Nets provide both a soft physical barrier and a psychological barrier helping to improve capture success and reduce injuries.

**Apply LOW, SLOW & SOFT Techniques:** Being LOW, SLOW, and SOFT minimizes stress and removes negative stimuli. Here are some examples:

- ✓ **Low:** Make yourself small, kneel down, turn sideways. Shield your net, leash or other capture device with your body. Crawl up to the captured dog in the live trap.
- ✓ **Slow:** Make slow direct movements. Avoid unnecessary movement/human traffic.
- ✓ **Soft:** Be quiet and use low volumes. Use head/eye covers on immobilized or injured animals. Minimize metal in traps (No cans, extra chain or wire). Use rawhide or rubber "worry toys" to minimize tooth/gum damage

**Reducing Stress and Animal Injuries Should Be First Priority:** By implementing low, slow and soft techniques you will reduce stress and animal injuries. Here are a few other well established positive protocols.

- Check your traps frequently, preferably with binoculars. When a dog is captured approach slowly but directly and put a trap cover or blanket on the trap.
- Have your processing plan and protocols well organized to minimize handling time.
- Avoid setting live-traps when ambient temperatures are below 40 degrees or above 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Animals can be live trapped outside this temperature range but special protocols for hypothermia or hyperthermia concerns must be implemented.

## Advanced Feral Dog trapping Techniques:

This feral dog primer assumes you have the basic live trapping knowledge like using only quality humane traps, and hand-checking them frequently for broken wires. Also, some knowledge of trap placement and baiting strategies. This primer will discuss three advanced techniques for consideration in catching feral or wild canids.

**Clean and Well-Bedded Traps:** A well-bedded (stable) trap with one quarter to one-half inch of floor covering is necessary to catch most under-socialized dogs. The floor covering should be dragged forward at the trap site and replaced over the trap floor giving the same tactile feel (to the dogs paw) on the inside and outside of the trap. This reduces the dog's reluctance to step on an unfamiliar surface. The floor covering also acts as an insulator to help protect the animal from temperature extremes.

In general, your traps should be washed every few days to remove negative stressed odor cues. But a trap may also be enhanced if it has held a submissive animal or female in heat. If the trap contained a dominant animal you should either sanitize it OR move it to an entirely new area with the intent to use it as a territory defense type trap. If sanitizing is not easy or available, try temporarily introducing a domestic cat, rabbit, chicken or other prey animal into the trap to provide an interesting and fresh cover up scent.

**Bait Acceptance and Placement:** Whenever possible, establish bait stations (future trap sites) for dogs several days to weeks prior to the capture program. If in a secure area (theft free), it is best to actually use the wired opened and well bedded traps as the bait station. Canines do NOT fear the TRAP; it is just another obstacle in their environment. What they fear (but yet are attracted to) is changes in their environment. So give them plenty of good quality bait... some a few feet from the trap, some just inside the door and most on top and behind the trap pan. Replenish the baits and when the target colony is eating well from your traps "fast" them for a day or two and then rebait and unwire the traps. Your traps should quickly fill up and because of prebaiting you should now catch the dominant and more difficult to catch dogs first, making it possible to catch a higher percentage of the animals.

Baits include anything attractive to the animal and could include food, water, scat, curiosity lures, sexual or territory (glandular) lures; sight attractors like cotton balls or eggs, and auditory baits like electronic squeakers. Baits should appeal to all the animals' senses and drives.

Baits can also double as "worry toys" to prevent tooth damage or nose rub. Pork rind, pig ears, rawhide chews and soup bones all make excellent baits and worry toys for feral dogs. These strong baits can also be directly tied with monofilament line to the release mechanism to circumvent the treadle pan and make the door catch release when the dog pulls on the bone/bait.

**Gang Setting or Saturation Trapping:** Truly feral dogs have stronger pack (family unit) and territorial behavior than stray domestics. Utilize this trait against them by saturating their territory with traps. This enables you to catch the majority of the family unit before the animals become "bait or trap" shy. This also allows you to use any captured family member as bait to capture the rest. A trapped pack member can be watered, worry-toyed, and tarped with traps placed on all sides. No bait is necessary although one or more should still contain bait. Other perimeter traps can be baited with scat, auditory baits or water to capture any pack members who frequent the area waiting for their trapped pack mate. Approach saturation trap sites carefully as you do not want to scare off the untrapped animals.

## Your Custom Animal Rescue Kit:

Your kit should be customized to the species and situations that you might stop to help an injured or stranded animal. But some basic safety and Animal Care items include:

### Animal Rescue:

Containment Box

Pillow case & Towels

Leash, para cord, Duct Tape

Multi-tool or knife\_

Basic Wound treatment \*

### Public Safety:

Flashlights

Flashers/cones

Paper towels, sanitizer, bags

Y-pole or bite stick

Latex Gloves

Another KIT item is to have and use your brain! **DO NOT MAKE MATTERS WORSE!**

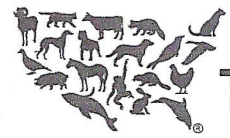
- Do not attempt to rescue an animal unless you are prepared and protected to be successful, and not put the animal or other drivers at risk.
- Use the least amount of restraint necessary.
- Most rescues can be done without physical hand contact. Blankets/sheets/pillow cases can be used to move and contain most small species.
- Have a plan BEFORE you go onto a roadway/river/ice sheet! Where will the animal go? How far is open clinic or sanctuary?
- Certain species like bats, snakes, skunks present extra challenges. Do not rescue species that you are not prepared/trained to handle.
- The first responder goal is to remove, stabilize, destress and transport.
- During transport turn off radio, minimize loud talking and noises.
- Do not worry about providing food and water! Transport the animal to a clinic.
- In spring/birthing seasons check the animal (even dead ones) for signs of lactation. There may be babies close by that need rescue.
- \* Refrain from wound treatment unless that is your profession and there is open bleeding which must be stopped. In general, secure, contain and transport.
- Provide appropriate warmth/coolness, quiet and darkness to lower stress!
- You will legally be protected to transport wildlife IF you notify someone and do not take the animal home to attempt to provide long term care!

8/20/2018 *Pets Are Worth Saving* networking day! Dave [dpauli@humanesociety.org](mailto:dpauli@humanesociety.org)



# HUMANE WILDLIFE CONFLICT RESOLUTION GUIDE

*visit us @  
wildlife doath*



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY**  
OF THE UNITED STATES