

## Trapper Guidelines for Placement of Ground Sets

Ground sets are traps placed on the ground to capture and hold furbearing and predatory animals. Ground sets are the most common type of trap placement and include several different trap designs. However, when using a body-gripping trap, typically a quick-kill conibear, Montana trapping regulations are rather specific as to their use. The following recommendations and state regulations are intended to focus the importance for trappers to avoid or minimize the accidental capture of non-target species, particularly pet dogs, trained hounds, and bird hunting dogs.



Two examples of "7" X 7" body-gripping" ground sets with secure enclosures that provide openings no greater than 52 square inches. When the conibear is placed inside, the trigger must be set back at least 7 inches from the opening.

### FWP Recommendations To Trappers

- Where there is public use of an area, avoid using conibear sets on the ground. Use foothold traps instead and check them often.
- When a conibear set is used, and the area has dogs present, it is always best to elevate sets where target species have to climb or jump to reach the set.
- Use baits and lures that attract target species, but not other animals when using a conibear set.
- Avoid placing conibear sets near trailhead areas.
- Avoid placing conibear sets and snares on public lands that are frequented by upland bird hunters with dogs, until after the season is closed Jan. 1. Post signs or flag snares on private lands used by upland bird hunters with dogs.

## Montana Trapping Regulations

**Ground Set** – (Definition) Any trap originally set in or on the land (soil, road etc.). This includes any traps elevated less than 36 inches above the natural ground or snow level.

**Body-Gripping Ground Sets**– On public land, ground sets using 7"x7" or larger body-gripping traps must have the trigger recessed a minimum of seven (7) inches within a secure enclosure that provides an opening no greater than fifty-two (52) square inches.

**Ground Sets Along Public Roads** - Ground sets using 7"x 7" or larger body-gripping traps are prohibited within the right of way, or if no right-of-way exists then thirty (30) feet from the centerline, of any publicly-owned and maintained road.

**Public Land Roads and Trails**– Ground sets, including snares, require a 50-foot setback along open roads and hiking trails on federal and state lands that are designated by administrative signs or numbers.

**Public Trailheads** – Ground sets, including snares are prohibited on public land within 300 feet of a designated or marked trailhead (accessible by highway vehicle).

**Public Campground** – Ground sets, including snares are prohibited on public land within 1000 feet of a designated public campground or fishing access site (accessible by highway vehicle).

**Occupied Dwelling** – Ground set traps including snares are prohibited within 1000 feet of an occupied dwelling without written notification of the occupant.

**Landowner Permission** – Resident trappers and hunters must obtain permission of the landowner, leasee or their agent before trapping or hunting private land. It is unlawful to set snares on private property without landowners permission (MCA 87-3-107).

**Montana Stream Access Law** – Trappers are required to obtain permission from the landowner to trap or snare on navigable streams and rivers between the low and high water marks.

Trapping is an important wildlife management tool in Montana and remains an active pursuit by nearly 3,000 license holders. No wildlife populations are threatened by trapping seasons. Ethical trapper behavior and animal welfare are important factors in regulated trapping today. Trapper education programs in the state involve hundreds of participants every year. Traps and snares are rarely encountered by bird hunters, skiers, or hikers in Montana, but it can occur. However, remember that a recreational trapper has the same right to be in an area as a hunter or recreationist. State law prohibits people from disturbing traps or trapped animals. State laws and regulations govern trappers and furbearer trapping seasons.

### FURBEARER SEASONS

#### Beaver

Western & Southwestern: Nov. 1 - April 15  
Central & Eastern: Sept. 1 - May 31

#### Otter, Muskrat and Mink

Statewide season dates: Nov. 1 - April 15

#### Marten, Fisher and Wolverine

Statewide season dates: Dec. 1 - Feb. 15

#### Bobcat

Western & Southwestern: Dec. 1 - Feb. 15  
Central & Eastern: Dec. 1 - March 1

There are no season restrictions for Coyote, Red Fox, Weasel, Skunk, Raccoon or Badger. These animals can be harvested year round, but trapping for these species usually occurs between October - February.

### BIRD HUNTERS

When securing permission on private land, we suggest that you ask the landowner if anyone is trapping on the property - prior to hunting with your dog.

For more information on regulated trapping visit our website at [www.fwp.state.mt.us](http://www.fwp.state.mt.us) or call 444-2612 or contact the MTA at [www.montanatrappers.org](http://www.montanatrappers.org)



Montana Fish,  
Wildlife & Parks



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## Recreationist Guide to Releasing Traps and Snares



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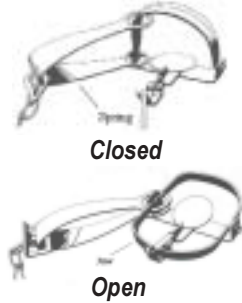


# Recreationist Guide to Releasing Traps and Snares

This guide is intended to serve only as a reference to familiarize you with the mechanical operation and common release techniques of traps and snares. This guide is intended for bird hunters, hound handlers, dog trainers, pet owners and hikers/skiers that are accompanied by companion animals.

## Single Longspring Foothold

Use both hands to depress spring, or if trap is on solid ground, then hold onto animal and position a foot on the spring and step down on it to depress the spring. The trap jaws will relax or open so the animal can step out.



## Double Coilspring Foothold



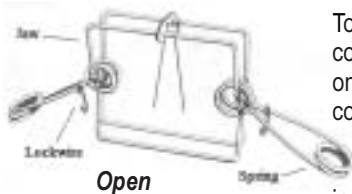
Closed



Open

To open jaws use two hands to push down with equal pressure on spring handles. If the trap is placed on solid ground then it is easier to straddle the animal and use two feet, one on each spring, stepping down with equal pressure on spring handles at the same time. The trap jaws will relax or open, so the animal can step out.

## Body-Gripping Conibear



Open

To open the jaws of a conibear, both springs on each side must be compressed. Trap is in open position with spring eyes around jaws compressed to allow trap jaws to relax or open.

Conibears are designed to snap shut around the neck and quickly suffocate an animal. Conibear springs are heavy duty, making it extremely difficult to compress them with hands alone, although using leverage by putting one spring on a knee first and using both hands, it may be compressed. Another option is to carry spring pliers available at local trap dealers.

**If an animal is caught in a conibear, remember YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY, but remain calm. An animal may lose consciousness in several minutes.**

Easier techniques to open a conibear include using a rope, belt, or leash. By making a loop at one end of any of these, large enough to fit around your boot, you can run rope or belt through the spring eyes to compress the springs. Use the lockwires to keep the springs compressed.



1. Using belt make a loop at buckle end that will fit around your boot. Next run the belt from boot up through both spring eyes that enclose trap jaws.



2. Bring belt down around and back up through the bottom spring eye.



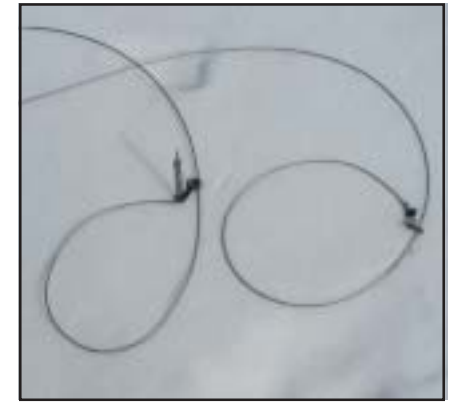
3. Pull belt up and away from the loop that is around your boot, providing the necessary leverage to compress the spring.



4. Tighten the belt to compress the spring completely. Use the lockwire to secure spring in closed position, or if it is missing, twist a piece of wire through spring eyes. Repeat technique on the other spring to relax trap jaws.

## Cable Snares

Snares are used mainly as trail sets, designed to allow an animal to walk through the open snare loop with its head and neck, but then tighten and close around the neck to suffocate the animal quickly. Some dogs used to being on a choke collar may not pull away, and then the cable can be worked backward through the lock device to open the loop. However, if a dog struggles in the snare, the cable will close and tighten. **YOU MUST ACT QUICKLY** first to restrain the dog, or attempt to cut the cable between the dog and anchor, or if a stake is used, pull up the stake – in any case to relax the snare loop. Next you need to get your fingers or pliers on the lock device and work the cable backward to open the snare loop. Otherwise attempt to cut the cable from the neck.



Cable snares with locking devices that allow the snare loop to close one way and tighten around an animal's neck.



1. Restrain your dog immediately to relax the snare cable. If you cannot restrain your dog, attempt to cut the cable or detach the anchor.



2. Quickly get your fingers or pliers on the lock device and work the cable backward to open the snare loop, or attempt to cut the cable from around the animal's neck. However this usually requires a pair of lineman's pliers or cable cutters.