



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY • COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE



Coyote

Managing Coyote Problems in Kentucky



AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES • FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES
4-H/YOUTH DEVELOPMENT • RURAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Coyote

Managing Coyote Problems in Kentucky

*Frederick A. Servello, Assistant Professor, Wildlife Ecology,
Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky;
Thomas L. Edwards, Furbearer Program Coordinator, Kentucky
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources;
Bernice U. Constantin, District Supervisor, U.S. Department of
Agriculture, APHIS—Animal Damage Control*

Contents

Approach to Managing Coyote Problems	3
Legal Status of the Coyote	3
Understanding the Coyote	4
Preventing Livestock Losses	5
Investigating Livestock Deaths	7
Removing Problem Coyotes	8
Methods Not Recommended for Kentucky	11
Planning Your Response to a Problem	11
Who Can Help	11

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the staffs of the USDA, APHIS-ADC, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and to the Extension specialists who reviewed this publication.

Photo credits: Robert Henderson (cover, Figure 1, Figure 2, adapted), Jay Lorenz (Figure 3), Guy Connelly (Figures 4 and 5).

The text and figures on trapping were adapted from publications of the New York Department of Environmental Conservation and are used with that agency's permission.

In the last 30 years the coyote (*Canis latrans*) has gradually spread throughout the eastern United States from its historic range in the plains and mountains of western North America. Except for the eastern mountains, the coyote is now common in all parts of Kentucky.

Although the bulk of their diet consists of small wild mammals, carrion, fruits, and vegetable matter, some coyotes will kill livestock if given the opportunity. Coyotes' most common prey is lambs (less often adult sheep), calves, swine, and poultry. Not all coyotes live by killing livestock, however. Livestock losses often are due to individual "problem" coyotes that have learned to kill livestock or that have been afforded an easy opportunity by the farmer. Free-ranging dogs also kill and injure livestock. For example, in Kansas dogs account for an estimated 25 percent of the livestock predation losses.

Fortunately, ranchers, Extension personnel, animal damage control specialists, and wildlife biologists in western states have a wealth of experience with coyotes and with coyote/livestock problems. This publication is based largely on that experience. Although range conditions and livestock management differ between western states and Kentucky, the coyote behaves basically the same everywhere, and many predation management practices used in the West are applicable to Kentucky. Kentucky producers should take full advantage of their western counterparts' knowledge.

Approach to Managing Coyote Problems

The management of coyote problems has five parts:

- Understanding the coyote,
- Employing preventive livestock management when feasible,
- Learning how to identify coyote kills when they occur,
- Learning how to control problem coyotes, and
- Developing a plan of action before a problem occurs.

Understanding the coyote is necessary so that you will know why the different preventive and control techniques are effective and how to successfully apply them. Coyote depredation on livestock can be reduced in two ways: (1) keep predators and livestock apart or (2) remove depredating coyotes. All of the methods discussed in this publication fall into one category or the other. Preventive livestock management may not be

possible in every situation, but most producers can take some steps to reduce the risk of predation. Good management not only reduces livestock losses, but it also reduces the amount of time and effort spent eliminating problem coyotes.

The time to decide how you are going to deal with a livestock kill by coyotes is before it happens. If you wait until after you have a problem to make requests for information or assistance, the problem could get worse or the ideal control opportunity may be lost. Learning how to manage coyote problems and planning a course of action beforehand is the best approach.

Legal Status of Coyotes in Kentucky

Coyotes are not protected in Kentucky and may be taken year-round by hunting or with traps or non-locking snares during the furbearer trapping season. Coyotes may be hunted during daylight hours only. Hunters may use hand- or mouth-operated, mechanical, or electronically operated calling or attracting devices to aid in taking coyotes. Coyote trappers are restricted to non-locking snares and number 2 or smaller foothold traps. More information on trap requirements, hunting and trapping license requirements, and trapping season dates is available in the *Kentucky Hunting Digest* and *Kentucky Trappers Guide* or from your local conservation officer.

Kentucky law allows individuals whose property is being damaged by coyotes to kill such animals at any time of the year, but only by means allowed during the hunting and trapping seasons. Landowners must, however, report any destruction of coyotes outside the trapping season to a Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' local conservation officer for carcass disposal.

In certain instances, the Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources may allow persons other than the landowners, tenants, or their dependents to assist in trapping coyotes outside the trapping season on property where a problem is known to exist. Persons assisting landowners in removing problem coyotes during the closed trapping season must obtain written approval of the Commissioner by contacting the local conservation officer. This does not in any way limit individuals possessing a valid Kentucky trapping license from volunteering or contracting their services to assist landowners in removing problem coyotes during the legal trapping season.

Understanding the Coyote



Figure 1.

Physical Description. A typical adult coyote weighs 29 to 33 pounds; adult weights, however, can range from 20 to 42 pounds, with males usually larger than females. Coyotes have a slender snout, erect ears, and a bottle-shaped tail carried at a downward angle (Figure 1). A light gray coat with lighter colored underparts and legs is most common. However, the coat may vary considerably from buff yellow to reddish yellow or black. The long, coarse guard hairs on the back and tail are typically black-tipped.

Coydogs. Coyotes occasionally breed with dogs, producing the “coydog” hybrid. Research, however, has shown that hybrids are seldom found in the southeast United States and are likely rare in Kentucky.

Reproduction. Coyotes mate in late February or early March; 60 to 63 days later the female gives birth to three to seven pups in an underground or brushpile den. Litter size and pup survival can vary greatly in relation to the food supply. Most female coyotes do not breed until their second year, unless food is abundant or the coyote population density is low. Coyotes breed only once a year and are monogamous, meaning males and females have only one mate in a single year. The male helps care for the young, which begin to travel with adults at about eight weeks of age.

Diet. The coyote is an opportunist and will eat whatever is easiest to obtain and consistently present. Rodents, rabbits, and similarly sized mammals and carrion (dead

animals) make up the bulk of their diet during the winter. In the summer, coyotes eat substantial amounts of vegetable matter, fruits, and insects. Where deer are abundant, coyotes may prey on fawns in late spring. Livestock also are taken most frequently in the spring because it is then that young livestock usually are most abundant and adult coyotes have to hunt more often to feed pups. Predation, however, can be common any time of the year that young livestock are available.

Density. Where coyotes are present, one adult coyote per 1 to 2 square miles is an average population density over a large area. However, population levels often vary considerably between areas or from year to year. The low point in the annual coyote population cycle occurs in the spring just before pups are born (whelping); the high point occurs just after whelping.

Social Behavior. Coyotes are basically solitary and do not travel in packs like wolves, although family groups (up to six to eight animals) may be seen. Coyote pairs or family groups live in distinct, nonoverlapping territories. A family group usually includes a mated pair, nonbreeding offspring from the previous year, and pups from the current year. Family groups do not always travel together, so it is more common to see single coyotes or pairs.

Territory boundaries are maintained by scent marking, rarely by fighting. A small percentage of coyotes are nomads and do not respect territorial boundaries. In fall, many young coyotes disperse from their natal territories in search of a place to settle. Dispersal movements often cover 10 to 50 miles. Unpaired adults also may roam in late winter in search of mates.

Home Range and Movements. The size of a coyote’s home range may vary from 5 to 13 square miles or more, but daily activity is usually confined to smaller areas. Coyotes are most active at night and at dawn, often traveling 3 to 8 miles each night within their home range. During the daytime, coyotes usually rest or “bed” in different locations each day (except when adults are caring for pups at a den). In one Texas study, bedding locations were an average of a half mile to one mile apart on successive days.

Mortality. Human activity is a major cause of coyote mortality in many areas. Coyotes also are susceptible to a number of canine diseases including distemper, hepatitis, mange, parvovirus, and rabies. Average annual mortality rates of 30 to 40 percent for adults and up to 70 percent for juveniles are typical.

Preventing Livestock Losses

The key to preventing livestock losses to coyotes and dogs is to use livestock management practices that keep farm animals and predators apart, that do not encourage coyotes to congregate near farms, and that do not teach coyotes to associate livestock with food. Below is a summary of preventive management practices for sheep, swine, cattle, and poultry.

Sheep

Because most sheep losses occur in pastures, **corralling sheep at night** can reduce or eliminate predation by coyotes. Sheep can be trained to return to a corral every evening. Corrals should be located near buildings and human activity. Outdoor lights further discourage coyote activity near security corrals. If necessary, construct corrals using “canine-proof” fence designs, several of which are discussed below.

Confined lambing can reduce losses of highly susceptible newborn lambs. **Lambing in late fall** (possible for some breeds only), when coyotes are not hunting to feed growing pups, also reduces the potential for predation losses.

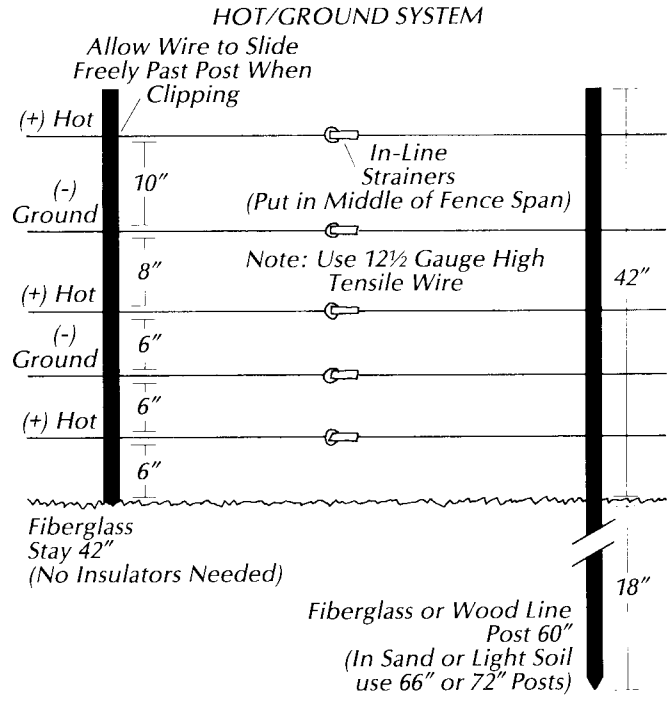
Minimizing the use of high-risk pastures by lambs during problem periods of the year may help reduce losses. Pastures highly interspersed with wooded and brushy areas, ravines, and streams that provide daytime resting sites for coyotes and concealed approaches to sheep are where losses are more common.

Sheep producers who **remove or bury dead livestock** tend to have fewer coyote problems. For example, one western study found that sheep producers who hauled away or buried sheep carcasses had only 40 to 50 percent of the sheep losses of producers who left carcasses in pastures. Leaving livestock carcasses in pastures or open pits not only encourages coyotes to associate livestock with food, but also causes coyotes to congregate near farms.

Sheep losses to coyotes and dogs are sometimes severe enough that **specialized fences** designed to exclude coyotes or hinder their movements are economically feasible. No practical fence is completely coyote-proof, but some designs are effective. Specialized fencing can be used on a small scale for security corrals or small pastures. High tensile electric fences (Figure 2) will keep most coyotes out of corrals or pastures and are relatively inexpensive. Adding electric strands to the outside of existing fences also can be effective. Net wire fences 5 1/2 feet high with a top strand of barbed wire will exclude many coyotes and hinder the movement of others. You can improve the

effectiveness of net wire fences by adding a 24-inch apron turned outward at ground level and by slanting the top 18 inches of the fence outward. Coyotes prefer to go under or through a fence, not over it. Therefore, well-maintained net wire fences help reduce the number of

a.—High Tensile Electric Fence



b.—Exclusion Fence

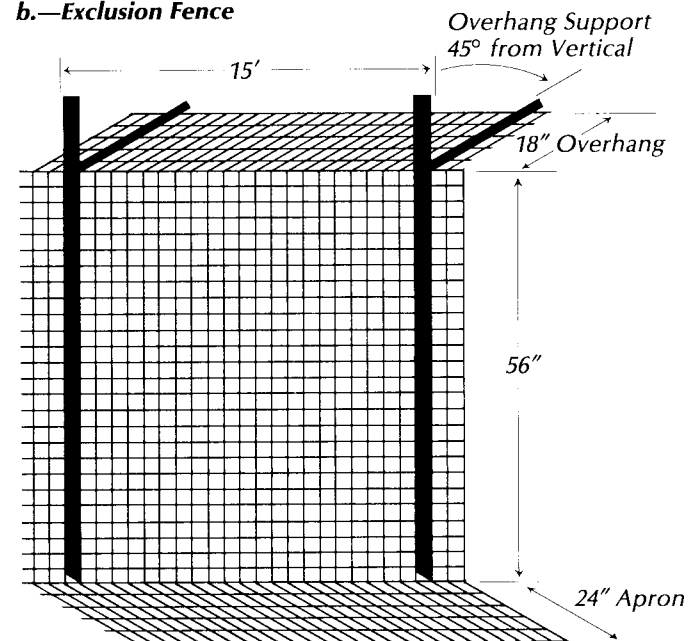


Figure 2.—Two fence designs that can be used to exclude or hinder coyote movements. (a) High-tensile electric fencing is the most effective and is relatively inexpensive. (b) The effectiveness of this net wire fence was improved by adding a 24-inch apron turned outward at ground level and by slanting the top 18 inches of the fence outward.

entry points into pastures, which makes it easier to trap a problem coyote. When fencing new pastures or replacing old fences, consider designs that will exclude coyotes and dogs.

Guardian dogs are becoming popular with sheep producers in Kentucky. The most popular breeds are the Great Pyrenees, Komondor, Akbash, and Anatolian (Figure 3). These large breeds have been selectively developed to protect livestock, but the dog must be handled and trained properly to be effective.



Figure 3.—Guardian dogs are proven effective for protecting sheep from coyotes.

A guardian dog is best acquired as a puppy and raised with sheep. As it grows to adulthood, it develops an “attachment” to or bond with the flock. This bonding and their natural aggression to intruders make these dogs effective guardians. Although keeping and training any dog takes much effort and can be expensive, many livestock producers feel that guardian dogs are cost effective in preventing losses to coyotes. Not every guardian dog performs well, however, nor are these dogs suitable for all situations. Guardian dogs are not a substitute for livestock management that discourages coyote predation.

Frightening devices such as propane gas exploders, flashing lights, sirens, and transistor radios may temporarily discourage coyote attacks. These devices are only useful, however, as a stop-gap measure while you are deciding on a better long-term solution. Moving these devices to different locations every one to two days will make them more effective.

Swine

An Illinois study on the relationship between husbandry practices and coyote predation found that swine losses to coyotes were most common for operations that: (1) farrowed in March and had large numbers of small pigs at that time, (2) had escaping swine, and (3) disposed of swine carcasses in areas accessible to coyotes.

Apparently, a large number of small pigs in the spring attracts coyotes and probably dogs as well. Recognizing this, **greater vigilance** during the spring and effectively confining piglets reduce swine losses to predators and other causes. As noted above with sheep, improper **carcass disposal** may encourage predation. In the Illinois study, 12 of 46 swine producers who did not properly dispose of dead swine had coyote problems, compared to only one of 34 producers who removed or buried dead animals—a ninefold difference.

Cattle

Most calves killed by coyotes are less than one week old, and many are killed immediately after birth. Cows left to calve in large pastures often seek secluded locations where the newborn calves are more likely to attract coyotes, thus contributing to the problem. **Keeping cows about to calf and young calves in smaller pastures near buildings** can reduce losses to coyotes. Scheduling calving to occur in several distinct intervals during the calving season minimizes the problem of holding cows in a smaller pasture. **Minimizing the use of high-risk pastures** until young calves have gained weight and strength may also help reduce losses. If a predation problem is severe enough, producers should consider installing high tensile electric fence around selected pastures to use during peak problem periods. Portable electric fences are another option.

As with sheep and swine, **proper disposal** of dead cattle may help avoid coyote problems. On a related note, cattle producers have observed coyotes eating afterbirth in pastures. The availability of afterbirth may attract coyotes to calving pastures, thereby increasing the risk of predation. This is another argument for restricting calving to easily monitored pastures.

Poultry

Confining free-roaming poultry is the most effective prevention. If complete confinement is not practical, confining poultry at dusk may reduce losses.

Management Option Summary

Sheep

- Corraling at night
- Confined lambing
- Lambing in fall
- Pasture selection
- Proper disposal of dead livestock
- Specialized fences
- Guardian dogs
- Frightening devices

Swine

- Confinement
- Proper disposal of dead livestock
- Specialized fences
- Frightening devices

Cattle

- Pasture selection for calving and for young calves
- Proper disposal of dead livestock
- Specialized fences
- Frightening devices

Poultry

- Complete or partial confinement

Investigating Livestock Deaths

When you find livestock carcasses, do not assume that a partially eaten carcass is the result of a coyote or dog kill. Careful examination will usually reveal whether the animal was killed by a predator or died of other causes. Some common causes of livestock loss other than predators are starvation, exposure to severe weather, diseases, bloat, suffocation, poisonous plants, lightning, snake bite, and theft. If the animal was killed, the responsible predator species usually can be identified from wounds, tracks, and other evidence. The following steps will help determine if predation occurred.

1. Look around the carcass to see if it died where you found it. If it appears to have died in a different location, it may have been dragged away from the site of death by predators or scavengers.
2. Look for signs of a struggle. Blood, hair and hide, broken vegetation, and displaced soil and rocks indicate a struggle and are usually good evidence of predation.
3. Look for predator signs around the carcass, such as tracks, droppings, and hair. When looking for predator signs, avoid unnecessary driving and walking over the area and inadvertently destroying useful evidence.

4. Note the position of the carcass. Animals killed by predators are usually found on their sides with limbs extended. Livestock lying with legs folded under them are more likely to have died of other causes.

5. Examine the carcass for signs of hemorrhaging (bleeding) and general damage. Evidence of hemorrhage is the most important factor in determining whether an animal was killed by predators. Bleeding can occur before and for only a brief time after death. Therefore, hemorrhaging will occur (around bite marks) in livestock that are actually killed by a predator. Livestock that died of other causes (e.g., sickness) before the coyote began feeding will not hemorrhage. If there are no external signs of blood, the carcass should be skinned (especially around the head and neck) to look for hemorrhaging under the skin since blood may not have permeated the hair or wool around a wound (Figure 4).



Figure 4.—Hemorrhaging (bleeding) is the most important evidence of predation. If there are no external signs of blood, the carcass should be skinned to look for evidence of bleeding.

6. Distinguish between feeding on stillborn livestock and predation on newborn livestock. When a newborn lamb or calf is found dead and fed upon, it is sometimes difficult to determine if it was born healthy and preyed upon or stillborn and eaten as carrion. Several characteristics can help you determine this. If the animal was born alive, the exposed end of the umbilical artery will show a distinct blood clot; stillborn animals will not have a clot. The lungs of a live-born animal will be light pink; the lungs of a stillborn will be a dark scarlet color. Milk in the stomach indicates that the animal nursed before it died. Also, the membrane covering the soles of the hoof wears away when a newborn lamb or calf starts to walk. Dirt on the hooves is evidence of live birth.

7. Distinguish between coyote and dog kills. Dog and coyote kills can usually but not always be distinguished by evidence at the site. Coyotes typically kill sheep by biting them on the throat just behind the jaw and below the ear (Figure 5). Death usually occurs from suffocation. Very young lambs may be bitten in the head, neck, or on the back from above.



a.



b.

Figure 5.—(a) A single bite on the throat just behind the jaw and below the ear is strong evidence of a coyote kill. (b) Note the more extensive injuries on the neck and flanks of the dog-injured animal.

Dogs usually attack indiscriminately and mutilate their prey, although large, experienced dogs may attack the throat of the prey, just as coyotes do. Livestock attacked by dogs may have intestines pulled out, hams and shoulders skinned and chewed, and noses or faces lacerated. However, inexperienced coyotes may chase their prey and bite at the sides and rear of the animal, much like dogs. This most often happens in the fall when young coyotes are learning to hunt, but it is not restricted to that time of year, as some coyotes habitually kill in this way. Dog packs also harass livestock and frequently chase animals for several hours. Careful searching where this occurs often reveals numerous attack sites with tracks, hair or wool, and pieces of skin widely scattered. Finding tracks also may help determine whether the prey was attacked

by coyotes or dogs. Coyote and dog tracks are similar, but coyote tracks are generally longer and narrower than dog tracks (Figure 6).

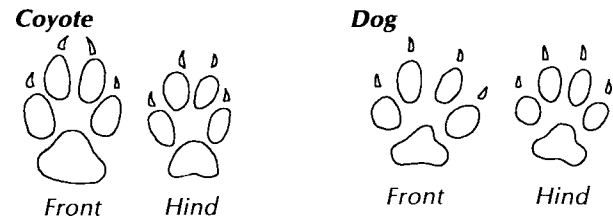


Figure 6.—Coyote tracks are generally longer and narrower than dog tracks.

Although dog and coyote feeding behavior differs at kill sites, it is difficult to distinguish between coyote and dog kills solely on this behavior. Domestic dogs consume their prey less often than do coyotes. Coyotes normally feed in the flank area or just behind the ribs. The internal organs (liver, heart, lungs, etc.) are usually eaten first, as are the milk-filled stomachs of young animals. Feeding on the hindquarters is also common, especially on calves. Small animals may be entirely consumed or carried away.

Removing Problem Coyotes

Livestock losses to coyotes can be reduced or eliminated by removing problem coyotes. In Kentucky, trapping is the most common method of removing coyotes, but predator calling and hunting and killing coyotes at den sites can work in some situations.

Coyote Trap and Snare Sets

Detailed publications showing how to trap coyotes are available (see the section on “Who Can Help”). The summary provided below is only intended to familiarize you with the basic techniques of coyote trapping.

Problem coyotes often follow predictable routes to get to livestock. The successful trapper identifies areas coyotes frequent by finding tracks, fur, scats, and remains of kills or by actually observing the coyote. Because most coyotes rarely enter cage or box traps, foothold traps and snares are most often used. Foothold traps should be set in the open on level ground where the coyote will likely stop to investigate. In typical Kentucky farm country, three to five sets per 100 acres will be sufficient. Examples of good locations for trap and snare sets are shown in Figure 7. Depredating coyotes are often easier to trap away from the pastures where damage occurs.

Three basic trap sets are commonly used for coyotes: dirt-hole, scent post, and blind (snare) sets. These trap sets exploit the coyotes’ normal hunting and territorial

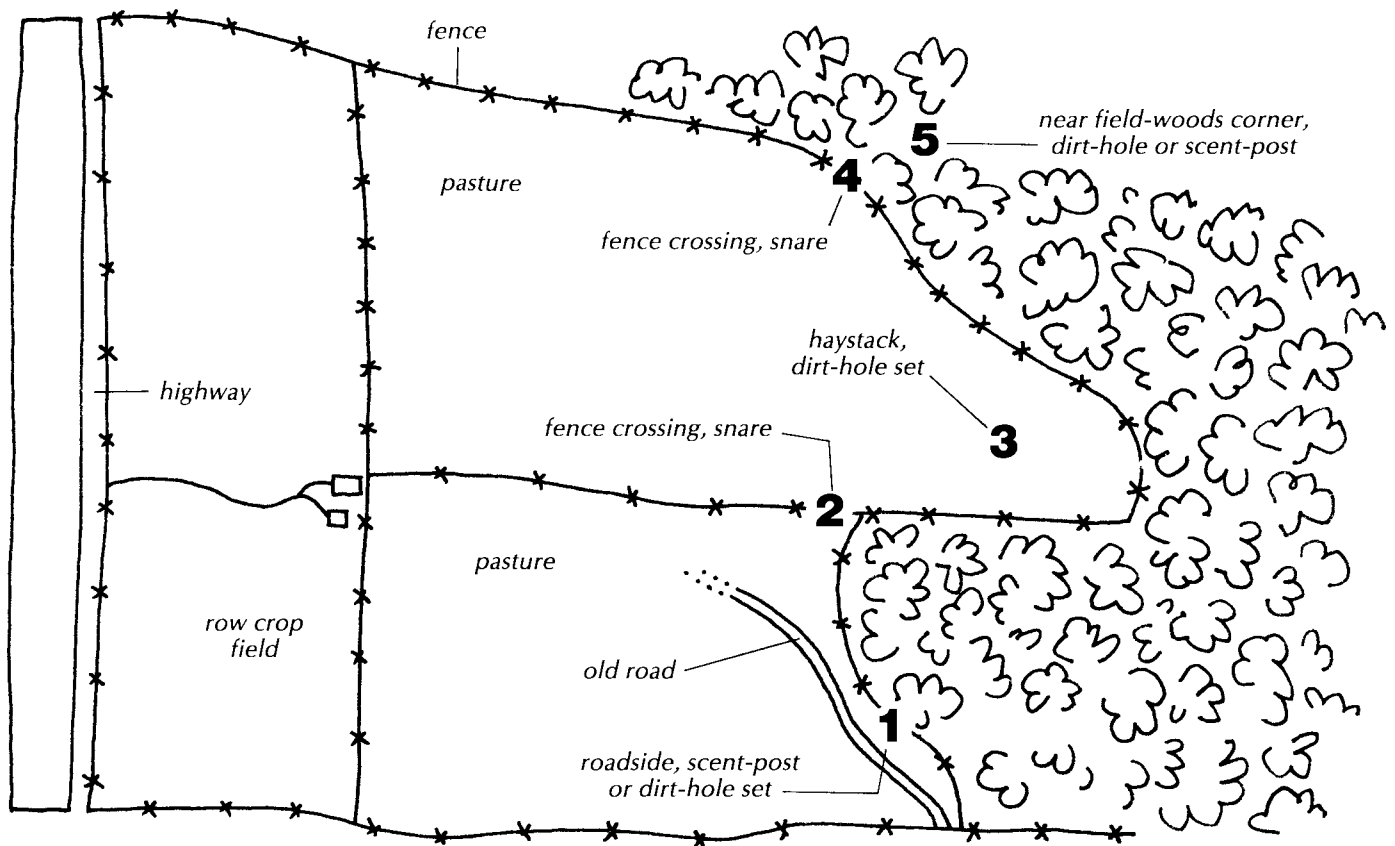


Figure 7.—Good locations for coyote traps and snare sets. Note these locations are set along fence lines and near woods, not in the open field.

marking behaviors. Equipment necessary to make foothold trap sets includes traps (sizes 1 3/4 to 2), stakes, trowel or small shovel, hammer to drive stakes into ground, soil sifter, trap pan covers, clean cotton or rubber gloves, and coyote lure and/or urine (both are commercially available). Great care should be taken to keep equipment and trap set locations free of human or unnatural odors. Adjusting or modifying traps so that 1 to 2 pounds of pressure is needed to set them off will reduce the number of opossums, skunks, etc. caught. Traps and trapping supplies can be purchased at local hardware stores, farm supply stores, or by mail order.

Dirt-Hole Sets. A completed dirt-hole set (Figure 8) appears as a small hole in the ground where mice or other rodents live or where a predator has attempted to dig to reach prey. Bait or lure is placed in the hole to attract the coyote to the set and into the hidden trap. Site selection is very important. The set should be made in a relatively open spot where visibility is good on all sides.

The bait hole should be dug in front of a clump of weeds, a rock, a small stump, or some similar object used as a backstop. The hole should be about 2 1/2 to 4 inches

in diameter, 6 to 8 inches deep, sloping back under the backstop. All dirt removed should be placed in the sifter.

Next, remove a triangle of sod about 10 inches on each side in front of the hole. The point of the triangle should touch the hole, giving it the appearance of a small hole dug by a fox or coyote. Remove soil from the triangle until it is deep enough for the trap to sit below the surface. Some trappers offset the trap slightly to the right or left of center to help assure a front foot catch.

Stake the trap so that the stake and chain will be directly under it. Only about 8 inches of chain should be used, and the chain should have a swivel. Cover the stake and excess chain with a smooth layer of earth and position the trap carefully so it will not rock or shift position. In wet or freezing weather, the trap should be bedded in dry sand, anthill soil, or dry dirt mixed with ground hay or grain hulls. Trapping antifreezes also are available.

Place a cover over the trap pan and under the jaws before covering the trap with shifted soil. This prevents soil from obstructing the trap pan. The pan cover can be a piece of clean cloth, a small plastic bag, nylon window screen, or waxed paper.

The soil should be level, and the trap should be buried no more than one-half inch below the surface.

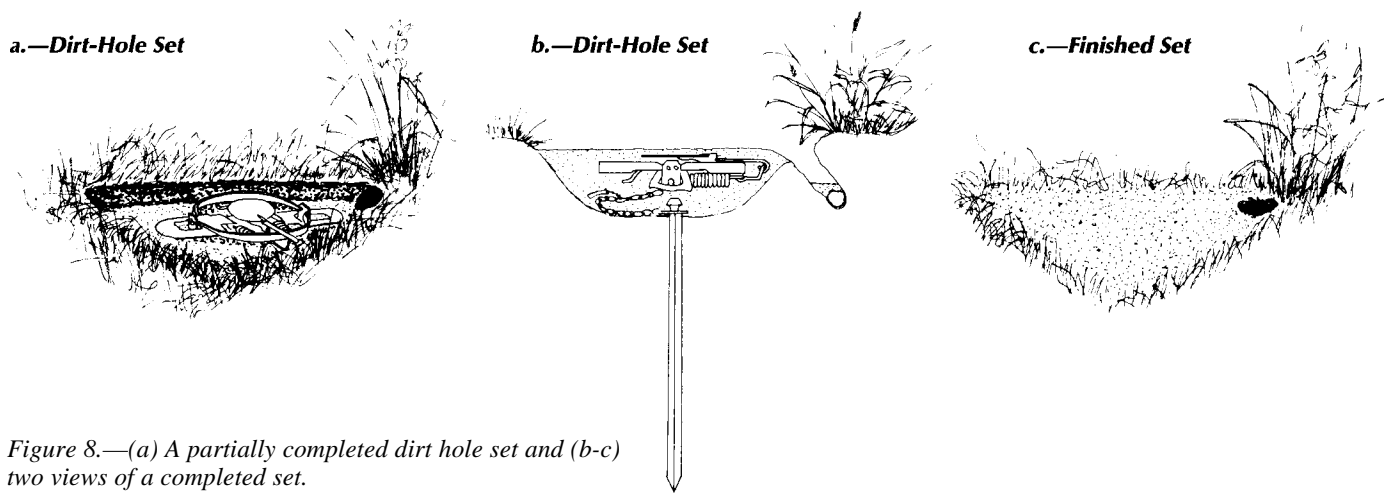


Figure 8.—(a) A partially completed dirt hole set and (b-c) two views of a completed set.

Finally, place a commercially made bait or lure in the bait hole, and sprinkle a few drops of coyote urine on the backstop.

Scent Post Set. Like domestic dogs, coyotes urinate on prominent objects along their lines of travel. Trappers can take advantage of this habit to catch coyotes. A small prominent object, like a protruding stone, grass tuft, or stick, serves as the post for this set. Place a liberal amount of coyote or fox urine and a few drops of gland lure on the post. Coyotes, believing another coyote has moved into the area, will re-mark the scent post in defense of their territory. The trap should be carefully bedded and concealed 9 to 18 inches away from the post on the downhill side or on the side which is least obstructed so that the animal will step on it while urinating. Stake and cover the traps as described for the dirt-hole set (Figure 8).

Snare Sets. Snares may be set where coyotes crawl under or through fences or in trails (Figure 9). Scents

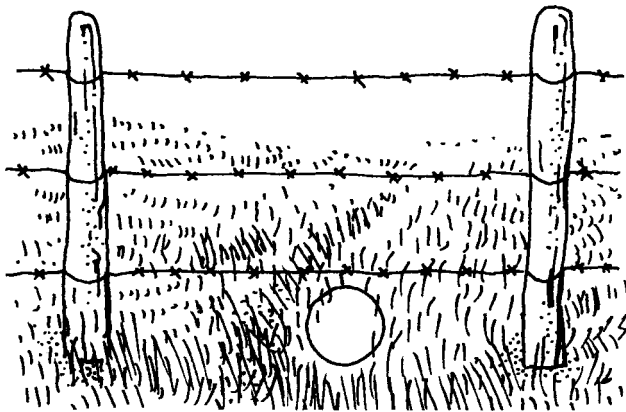


Figure 9.—Snares are most effective when placed in travel routes such as well-worn fence crossings.

should not be used at these sets, but snares can be used effectively along paths leading into a baited area (e.g., remains of a livestock kill). Snare loop size is not as important as snare position. The bottom of the snare loop should be about 10 inches from the ground (except in crawl spaces under fences, where it should be 2 inches above the ground). The loop should be centered in the trail and wide enough to cover the width of the trail. If the trail is too wide, find a constricted location or use a few small weeds or sticks to narrow the path. Snares must be adequately anchored to trap stakes, trees, strong fence wire, or fenceposts with a good swivel. If wire is used to attach snares and swivel, at least two strands of 14-gauge wire wound together are needed.

Predator Calling

Coyote hunting using a predator call can be an effective method of taking coyotes, but considerable experience and skill are needed to be successful. Predator calling involves the use of mouth-operated or electronic calls that emit sounds to attract predators. Coyotes responding to predator calls can be shot with a 12-gauge shotgun loaded with BBs or number 4 buckshot up to distances of 35 yards, or with an accurate rifle at longer distances.

Den Removal

If you can locate the den site of coyotes that are causing damage, removing all coyote pups will usually stop depredation, even if the adults are not killed. However, the problem will likely recur next year unless the adults are also removed.

Methods Not Recommended for Kentucky

Bounty. The bounty system has been used in the United States for more than 300 years with little success. Experience has shown that bounty payments are ineffective in controlling predation on livestock. Coyotes compensate for losses in their population by breeding at a younger age or having larger litters and by increased pup survival. To be effective, control measures (trapping and shooting) should be aimed at eliminating the individual coyotes that have become predators of livestock, not the entire population. Bounties are costly, and they promote the illegal trafficking of skins for bounty collection. When confronted with the suggestion of a bounty, stockmen and citizens should ask how effective this method of control has been in the past and what the costs were.

Toxicants and Repellents. There are no toxicants registered for use on coyotes in Kentucky, and there are no repellents registered for use or proven effective for coyote damage control.

Planning Your Response to the Problem

If you are sharing a farm with coyotes, decide how you are going to react to a coyote or dog kill before it happens. First, plan on spending the time needed to identify the actual causes of livestock deaths. Do not assume that every lost or partially eaten animal is a coyote kill. Trapping is a lot of work, and you would not want to waste your time trapping coyotes when there is another cause of your livestock losses.

If you do have a coyote kill, trapping should begin immediately to increase the opportunity of catching the offending animal before it can do more damage. If you intend to trap problem coyotes yourself, you will need to have the equipment on hand and know how to use it. If you plan to use the help of a local trapper, you need to make contacts in advance.

Decide in advance what options you have or can develop for protecting livestock or lessening the chance of additional kills while trapping a problem coyote. As discussed earlier, some possibilities are corralling sheep at night, confining pigs, moving calves to pastures near buildings, and using frightening devices. Coordinate your efforts with neighbors who also have vulnerable livestock.

Who Can Help

District wildlife biologists from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources are available to investigate livestock losses to coyotes. Suspected coyote depredations should be reported immediately to the local conservation officer. With a trapping season and a year-round hunting season on coyotes, trappers and hunters are a potential source of help for livestock producers with problem coyotes. The department keeps a listing of private trappers who are willing to help landowners alleviate coyote problems. These trappers are not employed by the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and do not represent the department. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture is authorized to pay for livestock losses due to coyotes. Claims must be reported to the local county dog warden within 72 hours after the loss or damage incident.

Extension personnel, both county agents and state specialists, can help producers acquire information on coyotes and on how to solve coyote problems. The USDA Animal Damage Control Office can also provide information.

A number of publications and videotapes on coyote trapping, snaring, and calling; guardian dogs; and other methods of preventing coyote problems are available for distribution or loan from the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Damage Control office in Louisville, or the Cooperative Extension Service, University of Kentucky.

