

How to set a Hancock trap for beavers

1. Choose trapping location with good backing and appropriate depth (3"-6", pan must be submerged) and remove any boulders/logs that will be in the way
2. Pull triangular frame up and position the short metal swivels to allow rings to come up over them and lock the frame in the upright position.



3. Lay trap flat with rigid metal backing on ground

For the next steps, always remember that you are pulling against very strong springs! The trap is strong enough to keep a 65 lb. beaver from escaping...which means that fingers, face, or any small appendages will be in a world of hurt if they find themselves between the frames when it closes. It is very important to be vigilant to keep hands, fingers, and face out of the inside of the trap once it's open.

4. Pull trap open by the chainlink by standing on triangular frame. (Remember to lift latch to open.) As you pull the frame back against the spring tension, it may be necessary to shift your body weight to keep in balanced control. If trap starts to pull you forward, be prepared to let go and start over. (Do NOT grab over the top of the frame to try and stop it—good way to get mashed fingers.) When you've got trap partially open and are in a good position, carefully move so your hands are on top of frame/edge; this will allow you to use your body weight to fully open trap. Once you get the trap open against the ground, place your knee on the frame to securely hold it open as you carry out the next steps.



5. Put pin in notch (through chain link). Make sure pin is positioned so it won't get caught in the chain link when the trap closes.
6. Rotate lever bar over pin (make sure dog is out of the way).
7. Place dog over lever bar and set pan on dog.



8. Slip safety ring over lever bar. Check to make sure the safety will come off easily.
9. Slowly back off the trap. Make sure you don't feel the trap closing before you come all the way off. If you do, the trap is not set correctly.
10. Working from the back side of the trap, weave grass/willow/etc into the rigid backing for the lure. **Always keep fingers/hands out of the trap and off the frame.** Grass should be centered on the horizontal axis and one to two bars down from the top. The reason for placing lure near the top of the backing is to help ensure a beaver will be fully inside the trap as he investigates the smell and steps on the pan.
11. If you want, you can weave grass into the entire backing for a camouflage effect. Periodically check to make sure safety ring is still on as you work. The lure should still only be placed in the location described above.
12. Grabbing the trap from the outside of the back (**remember—no fingers wrapped around the frame or hands inside trap!**), carry the trap to the chosen location, making sure safety does not fall off (it is safest to carry the trap sideways or at an angle so that the safety falls on to the trap, not off). Position trap so that it is leaning against the backing, and the pan is submerged.
13. With rope/p-cord, secure the trap using rebar/nails/natural anchors. This is especially important in locations where there is the possibility of drowning. Remember that you

may catch a large, squirming beaver, so your anchors need to be robust enough to hold the trap and keep it from sliding underwater.

14. Liberally apply lure using a stick. Make sure your hand and face are not in the way of the trap!
15. Position guide sticks at 30-45 degree angle from back corners of trap (near bank) pointing out to encourage the beaver to enter from the front of the trap. You can weigh down guide sticks with large rocks if necessary. Watch for currents or possibility of guide sticks floating into trap.
16. After double-checking your setup, carefully flip the safety ring off the lever bar using a long stick (always keeping hands out of trap!).

General thoughts when selecting a trap location and when to set and check traps:

- 1) Water current: look for eddy or quiet water; better not to set in fast current
- 2) Possible fluctuations in water level: no one wants to start their morning with the discovery of a drowned beaver in a trap! Spring snow melt and/or storms can cause water levels to rise rapidly overnight. We try to check the weather forecast and forecasts for nearby stream hydrographs online (e.g., the Northwest River Forecast Center: <http://www.nwrfc.noaa.gov/river/station/flowplot/flowplot.cgi?PATW1>). If the river level shows a rising trend, we may decide it's safer not to set traps. Otherwise, try to set the trap as shallow as possible, to leave enough room for the trapped beaver to remain above water, should water levels rise.
In some locations, you may have to trap in a stretch of river between dams. It has been our experience that it's difficult to know when water will be released from dams, but water levels can rise dramatically when it is. We have sometimes found it necessary to camp out nearby and establish watches through the night, to make sure traps don't become inundated and drown a beaver.
- 3) Temperature: in colder temperatures, we try to set traps later in the day and check at first light in the morning, to minimize the amount of time a trapped beaver will be subject to cold temperatures while immobilized. We'll also try to set the traps shallower to help keep more of the trapped beaver out of water. When the weather turns hotter, we'll check traps in early morning while the temperatures are cooler, and will often drape a wet canvas tarp over the trap (and wet the beaver itself) during truck transport.
- 4) People/animal conflicts: when trapping on private property or public parks, it may be prudent to request that the landowner keep any dogs out of harm's way while traps are set. In campgrounds or parks, we try to select trap sites away from areas where kids or dogs may come across them.