Holding Raccoon
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With all the numerous methods of anchoring a trapper's catch, raccoon trappers must use the most appropriate method for any situation. Besides the trap itself, using the proper method can mean the difference between catching critters and looking for missing traps. The focus of this article is to share anchoring techniques that I use on my water line. Some of the information may seem like common sense to some of you. However, I hope that the younger, less experienced readers will gain some knowledge on the subject.

Stakes, whether they are wood or steel, are the most commonly used anchoring device on my line. I use 3/8-inch re-bar that is used in concrete construction for my metal stakes. Two different styles make up my metal stake arsenal. T-shaped stakes are ideal for soft bottom situations. These can easily be shoved into the creek bottom, usually with a few stomps from my foot. T-stakes are 12 to 24 inch long pieces of re-bar with a 3" piece welded on top. The other types of metal stakes I use are the same length as the T-stakes, but it has a washer welded a 1/2-inch from the top in place of the 3" piece. These are used in snaring application and when the stake must be driven into a hard bottom. The wooden stakes that I use are reserved for ponds and other areas with silly, muddy bottoms. While some trappers prefer to find "natural" stakes on their line, I like to make mine from scrap lumber at home. Wooden stakes that I use vary from hardwood to treated lumber. I have found that the treated lumber stakes hold up better than the non-treated pine lumber. The stakes are ripped to one and one half inch by one half-inch and a hole is drilled through the top of the stake for wire attachment. The lengths vary from 18 inches to 48 inches in length.

Some creek bottoms contain either solid rock or other hard material not suitable for stakes. For these types of bottoms, I use several anchoring methods. Cement blocks work very well when placed in deep water with a drowning setup. Sometimes I am fortunate enough to find blocks along my line. Farmers often remove these blocks from old foundations, etc. and discard them along the creek to control erosion. Sometimes I transport the blocks from home. These blocks, along with bricks, can also be used as drags.

Other solutions for rock bottoms are railroad tie plates. Railroad lines use tie plates to fasten the rails to the ties. These can be found along railways after the track has been replaced or repaired. A word of caution: never remove anything from railroad property without obtaining permission from the railroad! I have been told that it is a felony to remove railroad property, even scrap. It is better to be safe than sorry. Along with stakes tie plates are one of my favorite anchoring devices. Several holes in the plates make them ideal for wire or S-hook attachments. One plate is heavy enough to use as a drag. With two plates, a drowning wire can be used.

Livestock farmers use metal fence posts to secure wire fence or high tensile wire. These make great anchors for trapping. One way to use fence posts is as a drag. A doubled piece of wire fastened to the trap can be twisted around the center of the post. I have found that by bending the post into a 90-degree angle, the post is more effective. The "v" shape tends to grab better. Unlike logs, which float away in high water, fence posts drags are too heavy to float away. Fence posts are also "tile resistant". This means that they cannot be pulled into a tile by a raccoon. They are too wide to fit into a tile. Another fence post strategy is to use them as stakes. There are several areas on my line where the landowner has driven fence posts in front of the tiles to keep critters out. Over the years, however, the posts have shifted enough for the furbearers to start using the tiles. These make great anchors for the bank end of a slide-wire drowning rig. On occasion, caught animals may get wrapped up in the posts and not make it to deep water. Losses are minimal though.

Grapples are also part of my raccoon trapping gear. Although they are used by some land trappers for fox, coyote, but I have found them to be right at home on the waterline. The coyote size grapples seem to have an advantage over the fox size because they have more weight and reach, but I also use the fox size. With a slight modification, the fox grapple willow down the biggest boar raccoon. Some fishermen use a "trailer" or

"stringer" hook behind their regular hook to catch short striking fish. I incorporate this same strategy into my fox grapples. I use a piece of number nine snare support wire and bend a "trailer" grapple into shape. The size is similar in size to a fox grapple. I then attach this to the "eye" of the grapple. A four to five foot piece of 2/0 chain is used to connect the grapple to the traps.

There are many ways of anchoring your catch, such as the easy-stake types. Although I haven't used them yet, they look like they would work great. The anchoring devices I have mentioned are the ones that I use on a regular basis. If a suitable anchor is found along my line I use it. Otherwise, I prefer to have all materials in my truck, ready to use. Searching for a suitable anchoring device in the field isn't my idea of efficient trapping.

In order to be an efficient "raccoon trapper", one has to be organized. Grapples go in buckets, as do tie plates. I use a fence tool instead of pliers. This tool is more useful than pliers are because they can open and close s-hooks and swivels. The tool can be used when trap/drag or trap/stake set-ups need to be replaced. I store my wooden stakes in plastic storage containers. Metal stakes are grouped by T-handles, washer heads, and by length in separate canisters. I make the canisters from two-inch sections of PVC pipe. I glue a cap on one end and use a non-glued cap for the open end.

In summary, the methods described are just some of the ways you can anchor raccoon. There are other methods and variations or anchoring "raccoon" which are sure to work at given times. If the selection of anchor and trap are chosen wisely, misses on ringtails will be minimal. Good luck and happy trapping!