

What To Think About Remakes?
Article from Mar - Apr 2008 Buckeye Trapper
by Mike Marchewka

We trappers develop theories and conclusions too quickly at times. I don't want to come off as a "know it all" by writing this article, as the Lord only knows I still fumble around trying to catch my share of fur out in the woods, fields, and water every season. But I was considering how much quality information is available to trappers now compared to when I first started out. Sometimes I think the worse thing a "rookie trapper" can do is to read too much about old time trapping methods since some of these methods can put a "monkey wrench" into the thought process. Building elaborate cages and contraptions to catch mink, raccoon, or muskrat just isn't very practical most of the time, and the "ultra clean" methods written about for wild canine trapping is just too complicated to consider. But I think there too, if a man has common sense, things can be learned from some of those publications as well.

Back in the early 1980's, a few articles were published in trapping magazines by some good trappers commenting about the tactics that should be followed after making a catch at sets for predators. I say predators because to call a set for example a "fox set" or a "coyote set" in most parts of the country would mean that no other animal should get caught. This rarely happens in reality. Yes, a trapper could increase pan tension in attempts to target only the heavier bodied coyote but after trying that tactic I discovered that the opossum, raccoon, and fox just got caught deeper in my footholds. Pan tension does help to avoid the true non-targets like birds, squirrels, rabbits, and even some of the smaller predators, but it is not the true answer to steer away from other curious predators.

Others commented that lure selection at predator sets is crucial to success. Some suggested that the lure chosen would only catch the animal it was intended for. For example, a bottle of "Mike's Coyote lure" would only attract coyotes and nothing else. Another theory gone bad. Predator lure odors are attractive to all predators and at times deer, cattle, and the previously mentioned non-targets.

There were other theories on trap positioning. Let me say here that this theory drove me crazy as I admittedly bought into this one. I remember reading about setting foothold traps for fox six inches back from the attractor and four inches offset from center. This type of trap positioning would insure a right paw caught fox. Then I remember going to a trapping convention and watching a demo by a well-known trapper who caught hundreds of fox and coyote every season. He instructed the audience that, "The most important thing to remember was to position the trap ten inches back from the attractor and two inches offset to the right." Huh? Then I read about other setting positions eight inches back and four over, fourteen inches back and two over, the trap set right up to the attractor, etc. Very confusing. Consider a novice trapper just beginning to read some writings on trapping. These different theories can be quite awkward and even detrimental to that trapper's catch and confidence. I got off track a bit discussing this trap setting information. Now back to remake sets.

So, is there a definite answer to setting up remakes? Truthfully, I'm not sure because after trying several methods I find most work at times. The old train of thought was if a opossum or a skunk was caught in a fox set the trapper might as well pull the trap up and leave that set location as all was lost. The fox now knew that the trapper was there and it would never visit that set area again. Others wrote about catching multiple fox at the same fox catch circle. They theorized that other fox came to investigate odors from the trapped fox and became caught. I remember Old Trap Trader Vic Kadish from Indiana telling me about bounty trapping for fox in the 50's and 60's. Vic told me about a "royal flush" which he described as catching five red fox at one trap setting. Vic said the best fox attractor was where a previous red fox had been caught. So Vic and other trappers of the time just re-set their traps in the same catch circle.

Western coyote trappers dealt differently with remakes – in particular skunk catches. Writings from the coyote men tell of using skunk as coyote attractors. The trappers either re-set the catch circle where the skunk was

captured or they utilized the skunk carcass as the attractor in a trash pile or dirt hole set. The trap was positioned in front of the skunk (let's not get into how far back or offset the trap was positioned). The obvious odor from the skunk – and at times some trappers advocated leaving just a bit of the tail visible – would attract the coyote into the trap. Another effective re-set method.

Soon stories started coming out about some trappers re-setting the foothold back into the circle after catching a raccoon or even a opossum and catching a fox or coyote. What? How could that happen? Suddenly, there was a surge of new information. A trapper could re-set back into the old catch circle and catch fox and coyote. Other writings indicated that using a trap on a drag permitted even better results because the investigating predator left its scent inside the set area and then got caught, left the set area via the drag, and didn't destroy the set. Still others wrote about setting the outside perimeter of the catch circle and having success catching more wild canines. Still others wrote about making a new set nearby using different attractors to catch more fox and coyote.

So what works? They all do. Is there a better or best method of making a re-set? I think there is, but you are not going to like my answer. You need to be the judge of what to do in that re-set situation. Let me give a few examples. It's early in the trapping season and the ground is dry and easy to work with. You have just set up a piece of ground with several foothold traps for predators. Dirt holes, flat sets, and a few post sets are all in place. The next day you see that you've caught a variety of animals. A opossum was caught in a dirt hole. A large boar 'coon was also caught, but in your best urine post set (don't you hate that?). A red fox and a coyote were also caught. You are satisfied, but now what to do? Consider a few things before re-setting. What's the set area look like? Is the set in a low area that might get your animal muddy if rain moves in? Is there any cover nearby to blend in a new natural looking set just outside the catch circle? Is the set area workable or pretty much destroyed? I could go on but you get the idea.

If the set is ruined by say a hard digging raccoon or a badger, for example when the set is deeply bowled out, a guy could pull up his trap and move outside the catch circle and remake a trap set there. I like to make a flat set just outside the catch circle. I either use a dropping as my attractor or just a toothpick size drop of lure there on say a medium backing like a fist sized dirt clod or rock. Blend in with debris from the catch circle and you are in business. Be patient with these types of remakes as it can be a while before connecting.

If you are expecting rain in the next few days and your set is in some low ground, I like pulling up and resetting on high and dry ground. No, your catch won't be completely dry because of this new locale but it does make re-setting a lot easier. When initially making my sets, I prefer setting up on locations where I can make an easy remake nearby. I prefer using grass sets as a back up. So when I first set up an area I might make two or three dirt-type sets along with three or four grass sets. They are very subtle and deadly on predators. It takes time getting used to making them. When remaking these grass sets in high ground, it's a breeze as the surrounding area is basically grass and weeds and not typically plowed up ground or roadways. I dispatch my catch, re-set the trap back in the same bed, and begin cutting up grasses to blend my trap and set location back in. Yes, after a few catches the set area can be destroyed but I can always switch back to dirt-type remakes then.

What about remakes in snow conditions, you might be thinking. I like setting another trap attached to my original one. Two trap sets can help a guy out when working in the snow because often times the predator will destroy your backing or the snow covers up your backing. Both scenarios allow predators to work the set anywhere they want. Having a second trap at the set allows you to cover both doors, so to speak – the front and back. I'll set a trap in front of the attractor hoping that the wind doesn't change and the second trap behind, covering the other side just in case. I do like a longer 24-36 inch chain and the biggest legal foothold you can use in snow conditions. Things get easily clogged up in the snow.

My advice is to try it all. Challenge yourself to slow down and evaluate your situation. If you don't try to

change, you can't attain more knowledge. Of course you'll fumble, but you'll eventually score. Hope this helps. Get out there and find out for yourself. ### Mike Marchewka 1235 Alexandra Blvd Crystal Lake, Illinois, 60014.