Colony Trap For Kids By Keith Daniels



hen I first started trapping I made a lot of colony traps, mostly from wire scraps I could scrounge up, and with no special tools. What I'm going to show here is how to do that for the younger trappers and this is also what we will be doing as a youth demo at the convention in London. This will be a hands on demo, every youth who takes part in the demo will build his own trap with the help of an instructor, and take the trap home to use. We'll have a sign up sheet at the OSTA booth, so the more of you that can sign up ahead of time the better, that way we'll know if we need to get more wire!

Besides the wire, the only thing you will need is a hammer, a pair of good pliers, such as linesman pliers, a piece of 2x4 a couple feet long, and a good sized nail, like a 16 penny.

For this we are going to use new wire, and make a trap that is five inches square and twenty four inches long. You can make traps any size in width, height, or length you want. The only thing you need to make sure of is that your door is an inch narrower than the width of the trap and the door needs to be one or two inches longer than the height of the trap. You'll see this as we go through building one.

Our wire roll is 24" wide so that will be our length. We want to make a trap that is 5 inches on each side, so multiply 5"x4 sides and we have 20 inches. The openings on the wire are 2 inches long and 1 inch wide so you need 20 full squares. (pic 001)

After 20 squares we are going to cut the wires tight against the beginning of the next square. (**pic 002**)

Cut every square for the width of the wire. This will leave you with 20 full squares, and a "leg" about an inch long. (pic 004)

Since the wire is 24 inches wide, and the squares going the 24 inch direction are 2 inches apart, you'll have 13 of these one inch legs along one side of the wire now. These legs will be wrapped around the other side of the wire after it is bent to hold it into the colony. We don't need that many to hold it together solidly, so we're going to cut some of them off. Let's leave the first two legs, cut off the third one, and then cut off every other one, except for the last two on the other end. It should look just like the end you began with. (pic 005)

Now we're ready to bend our wire into the body of the colony trap. Lay your wire down with the 24 inch long wires up so they'll be on the inside of the trap, this way you won't have wires going cross ways on the inside of the trap for the door to catch on. Count over 5 squares on your 20 inch side and lay your 2x4 right along the fifth wire, if you have a 24 inch long board it will go the full length of your wire. (**pic 006**)

Most of this type of wire is pretty soft, you can probably either just hold the board down with one hand, or stand on it with your foot, and start bending the wire up with your hand. If it's too tough you'll need to enlist the help of a friend to hold the board. Start at one end and bend it up against the edge of the board and keep bending it for the full length of your wire. (**pic 007**)

After you have made the bend the full length by hand, keep the board held down and take your hammer and tap the wire up against the board for the full length. This will make your corner almost square, you'll nee to do a little adjusting by hand when you're done. (pic 008)

Now move your board over 5 squares and repeat the process, first bend by hand, then tap with your hammer for the full length. Now it's going to start looking like a colony trap! (pic 009)

Notice the legs sticking out? These are what you will wrap around the other edge of the colony after you move your board over 5 more inches and repeat your bending process for the third and final time.

Now you'll need to do just a little bending by hand to square things and you're ready to start wrapping the legs around the other side of your wire to hold it all together. The reason we left two legs on at each end was so we could put a little bend on each one so they both wrap inside of the same rectangle. This will keep your edges solid so they won't want to slide sideways while you're building or using the trap. (pic 010)

Now push both legs down into the rectangle to begin your wrap. (pic 011). Now put your pliers over the bent leg, with just enough pressure to keep the pliers from opening, just push the handles forward, like you're rolling the leg over the wires it's going across until you come against the next cross ways wire. (pic 012)

There will still be a little bit of the leg to wrap yet. Take your pliers out and put them back in from underneath, the end of the leg will be pointing toward the hinge of the pliers now instead of out the end of the jaws like it was before. (pic 013) It will take a little more pressure when you squeeze the pliers now, just roll it again and it will bring the end around and make a nice tight wrap. (pic 014) Repeat this process for all the legs for the length of the trap. Each leg will line up with the same with the wire that goes around the trap. You'll have to make a slight bend to one side or the other for each one, it doesn't matter which side you go on. When you get to the other end you'll have two legs just like the end you started on. You can wrap both of these through the same square just like at the beginning and your colony will be very sturdy.

Now we need to make our doors. Since our traps are 5 inches high, a 6 inch door, one inch longer than the height of the trap, works out perfect. By going length ways it works out that we can get 3 doors from our 24 inch wide wire. Our trap is also 5 inches wide so we want to go an inch narrower with the door, 4 inches. Count over 4 squares and cut right tight against the outside of the wire so you have no legs, but 4 full squares. The legs you left on will be perfect for the body of the next colony trap anyway! (pic 015)

Since this is the direction with the 2 inch legs, you'll need to leave 3 full rectangles, which is 6 inches, then cut

tight against the next crossways wire. This will leave you 2 inch legs on one end of your door, and no legs on the other end or either side. (pic 016)

Now we have our door cut out with 5 legs on one end, we don't need all five, so let's cut off the second and fourth one, leaving just the ones on each end and one in the middle. (pic 017)

O K, we're almost done now, all we need to do is attach the doors to the trap. Here is where a big nail, a 16 penny common works well, comes in handy. Lay your door down with the long wires up, this will put your crossways wire laying on the lengthways ones inside the colony when you're done. This means less cut edges to catch on one another that could make your door stick closed. Lay your nail across the legs right at the top cross wire. Since this leg is 2 inches long it will bend pretty easy. Bend each leg over the nail so they are pointing the opposite direction from where they were. This will give you a bigger "eye" in your door hinge so it will open and close a lot easier. (pic 018)

Now slide your door into your trap bottom first. As you put it in the trap you need to slide your 3 legs you bent over the nail, over the end wire on the top of the trap. Bend the end of the leg on around until it comes back over the top of the trap. The long legs will bend pretty easy. (pic 019)

To finish the bend you will need your nail again. If you bend the leg on around without it you will end up with a tight wrap like you had when you wrapped the corner of your trap together. That's what you wanted on the corner, but you want this one loose so the door works freely. To finish the bend you will need to put your pliers on the leg to wrap it just like you did on the corner, only you will need to lay your nail along the door hinge and put the point of the nail in the loop you made with the nail earlier. (pic 020) You only need to wrap it a little more, make it so the leg is pointing toward the bottom of the door, right along the door wire, pull your nail out and do the next one. (pic 021)

After finishing the wrap on all 6 door legs, all you need to do is a little bit of adjusting by hand to make sure the doors all work freely, then you're ready to put your tag on and start catching muskrats! (pic 022)

Step by step pictures are to right \rightarrow

