

A PORTABLE ROOT-DOOR HOG TRAP

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Abstract: Since the early 1960's, over 4,500 wild hogs (*Sus scrofa*) have been relocated through Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission trapping operations. The trap now used by the Florida Commission is described. It is basically an open-top, sectional trap consisting of 4 separable panels with a multiple-capture root-door in one panel.

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Management of wild hogs by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission consists primarily of setting hunting regulations and moving hogs from areas where they are especially plentiful or have become a nuisance (mostly from state parks) to public hunting areas. Over 4,500 hogs have been relocated annually since 1960.

The first traps used were built of rough-cut pine lumber which was bolted together. These traps were approximately 2.4 m (8 ft.) square and 1.5 m (5 ft.) high with a vertical sliding drop door and a standard root-peg trigger. In the mid-1960's the capture mechanism was changed to a push type door (locally referred to as a root-door), which was efficient, but difficult to assemble, disassemble and transport. The trap was then re-designed with 4 wire-covered, pipe-frame panels, one of which contained a root-door.

The trap presently in use is a result of several modifications to the original portable root-door hog trap and is described here for the first time. This trap has evolved through the input of several people working on the hog trapping project over the years, but special acknowledgment goes to Wildlife Biologist D. H. Austin and former Wildlife Management Specialist J. A. Peoples for their major contributions to the trap design.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The portable root-door hog trap consists of four 2.6 m (8½ ft) long by 1.2 m (4 ft.) high panels, which are constructed of 1.9 cm (¾ in.) galvanized pipe (Fig. 1).

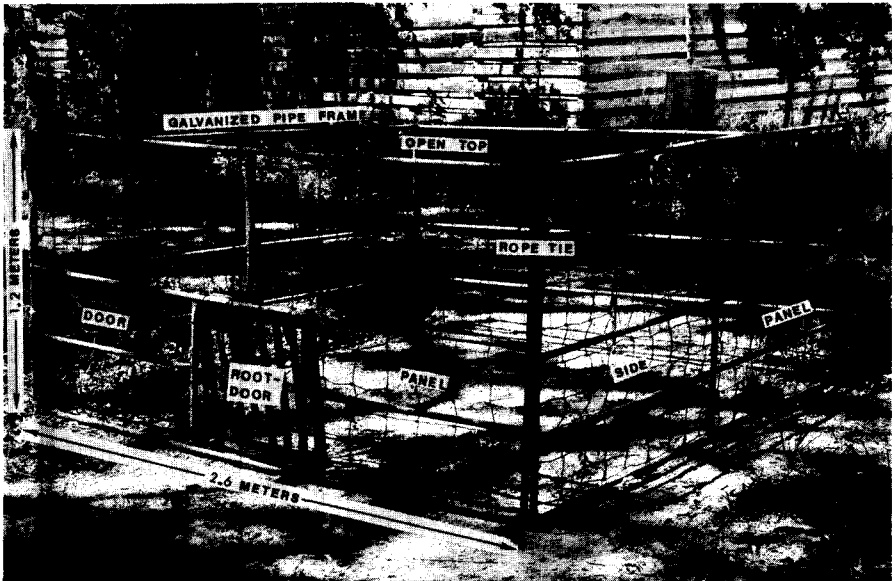


Fig. 1. Assembled portable root-door hog trap.

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Black iron pipe was used in earlier models, but was found to rust too quickly. Galvanized pipe has been more suitable. Galvanized pipe elbows are used on the corners; all other joints are welded. The panels are covered with 15.2 cm (6 in.) mesh or smaller No. 9 gauge woven "bull" wire. Experience has shown that ordinary American woven wire is not strong enough for wild hogs. Punch Lok Hose Clamps (galvanized steel-open end standard No. 0-.311 in. inside diameter) are available from Punch Lok Company, 321 North Justine Street, Chicago, IL. They are the most convenient method of attaching the wire to the pipe (Fig. 2). These clamps do rust after several years of use, however, and attaching the wire by twisting short pieces of No. 9 gauge wire around the pipe frame and woven wire, even though more difficult, is more durable. One panel contains the root-door. This door is made from 5.1 cm (2 in.) flat bar steel, .3 cm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in.) thick, hinged to the pipe framework so that it will rest inside the trap on a framework of angle iron and swing into the trap (Fig. 3).

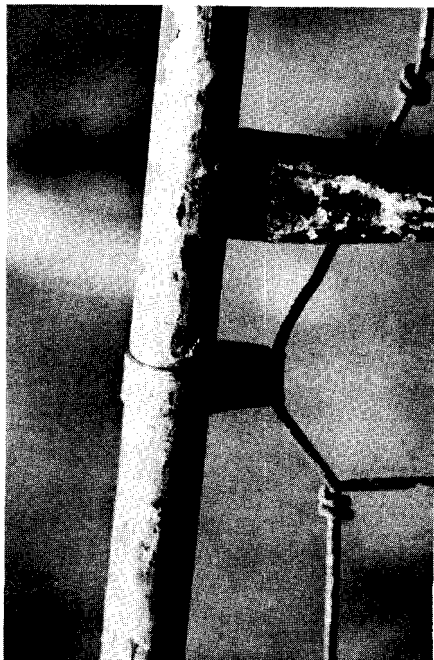


Fig. 2. Punch Lok Hose Clamp attaching "bull" wire to galvanized pipe frame.

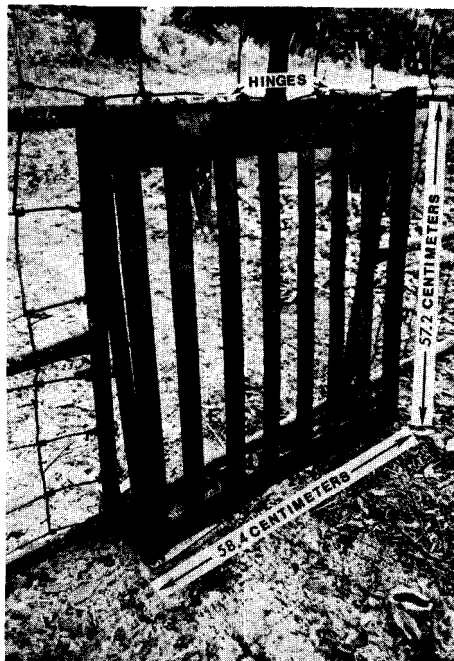


Fig. 3. Inside view of root-door.

The panels are tied together with nylon rope or similar material. Hogs are prevented from rooting under the trap by tying the trap corners to trees and/or fence posts, or by staking down each corner with stakes. Trap stakes are made of 1.3 cm (0.5 in.) by 45.7 cm (18 in.) steel rods with a "U" in one end.

Traps are placed near feeding or wallowing areas or in areas previous experience has shown to be good trapping sites. The trap door is tied open and shelled yellow corn is scattered in a trail leading into the trap. When hogs begin to use the bait, the door is propped open with a stick. The stick is short enough that the back of the first hog through the door will cause it to fall out and allow the door to close. When one hog is captured, it attracts other hogs which will root into the trap.

DISCUSSION

The portable hog trap described by Matschke (1962) is a great improvement over earlier hog traps in that it is both movable and escape-proof. The trap described by Williamson and Pelton (1971) is not only movable and escape-proof, but it is also sectional. This allows several traps to be carried in a pickup truck at one time and by

the use of pins and links, one person can set up the trap in less than 15 minutes. Both of these trap designs, however, utilize a drop-door mechanism.

The portable root-door hog trap has the advantages of being sectional plus the advantage that the panels are tied together with rope or similar material. This eliminates the need to keep up with pins and links or the more complicated fasteners such as nuts, bolts, and screws. The most important advantages of the portable root-door hog trap, however, are its multiple capture ability, its relative insensitivity to the influence of other wildlife species, and its open top.

Multiple captures are the rule rather than the exception with the portable root-door hog trap. Fox (1972) using the trap described by Williamson and Pelton (1971) reported only 13 multiple captures out of a total of 46 captures (28%). Both Fox (1972) and Matschke (1962) stated that when they did get multiple captures, the hogs were primarily immature. The majority of the multiple captures with the root-door hog trap are adults and older juveniles.

Fox (1972) reported that 23 percent of 207 occasions in which hog activity was evident around his traps, there was also evidence of other wildlife species. He stated that in many such cases, hogs fed heavily outside the traps which were already thrown by raccoons. Other wildlife species have a minor effect on the root-door hog trap in that the trap cannot be thrown by other species and hogs can still enter and be captured even while other species are feeding on the bait.

The fact that the top of the portable root-door hog trap is left open is both an advantage and a disadvantage when compared with closed top traps. It is much easier to handle hogs in the open-top portable root-door hog trap, but the trap is not entirely escape proof. Some particularly large or agile hogs can go over the top of the trap. With the efficiency of the multiple capture system, however, this loss is not significant. When absolutely necessary, these escapes can be prevented by covering the top of the trap with hog wire.

LITERATURE CITED

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