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When it comes to procuring meat in the wild, you will have to work for your next meal. Usually, it takes a lot of work and then you will most likely have to lower your meat standards a bit. You may prefer beef, but in the field, you will be lucky if you dine on squirrel or rabbit. Animals are difficult for the inexperienced hunter to catch. They are very shy of man and often their senses are highly tuned toward survival. However, you can trap most small game, if you know what you are doing.

Now, there are all kinds of traps that can be made in the bush. Some use boulders, huge logs, deep pits, and so on. Those are more work than they are worth. Well, at least they are for the average person who needs meat quickly and is not hoping for a lion, bear or other large game. We will concentrate on small game. Mainly because they are easier to trap and they are more abundant. Not to mention, they are less dangerous to catch.

The most common method of catching small game is by using snares. Snares can be made using line, cord, wire, or even vines. I can tell you from experience, it will take a lot of traps to yield one animal. Unless you get lucky and discover a place that is full of small game! I recommend you set them out by the dozens and check them first thing each morning. Try to find small game trails, which are small trails through the grass and weeds. Often, rabbits and other small game use the same trails over and over to move to food and water sources. Like man, they are creatures of habit. You may also find trails that lead into briar patches, thorn bushes and other types of brush. Small game uses those types of places as protection, or places to hide. They are good places to put a snare as well.

Snares can be purchased ready made, with a locking loop. Or, if you prefer, you can make your own from wire, string, cord or vines. I have found wire to work the best and as you may have guessed, vines work less effectively. But, in a survival situation, if you don't have an item with you, then you must use what Mother Nature provides, or do without. I carry about 50 feet of snare wire and about 25 feet of parachute 550 cord. The parachute cord is nylon and has strands of smaller "string-like" cords inside. I simply cut the cord and remove a single strand of the smaller cord and use it to make my snares with. It is small, light, and very strong.

When making a snare there are two very common designs. One type of design simply holds the animal at ground level and may or may not strangle the victim. The second design will flip the animal into the air and hold the carcass off of the ground. Of course as the animal is held off of the ground it is strangled to death. While they are both easy to make, each design has strengths and weaknesses.

Both designs require the loop in the wire, cord, string, or vine, to tighten and hold the animal. The loop (see the illustration) should be free moving. This free movement allows the loop to tighten as the animal struggles or moves

forward into the snare. With the flip up design, movement of the wire will trigger the device and fling the animal into the air, which using the animal's body weight tightens the loop. Make sure the loop has free movement.

In both types of snares you should set the loop diameter for the type of animal you hope to catch. I am using the most common small game here, due to the fact that they are most abundant. Additionally, keep in mind that different animals require the loop diameter to be different sizes and to be placed at different heights on the game trail.

Rabbits, the loop should be about four inches in diameter and placed about two inches above the trail.

- Squirrels, the loop should be about three inches in diameter and two to three inches above the trail.
- Beavers, make the loop about five inches in diameter and place it about one to two inches off of the ground.

For the holding snare, lets say for a rabbit, you make a loop (about four inches in diameter) and place it about two inches above the center of the game trail. Make sure the end of the snare wire, opposite the loop, is secured to a bush, stake, or other stationary object. Make sure what you use to secure the snare cannot be pulled away by the animal. Then, if needed, use brush, logs or other debris to make a funnel toward your snare. In other words, force the animal to the snare and do not allow them to go around it. Since most animals will continue to use a trail they have used daily, this should not be a big issue. But, by using the tunneling affect the game will usually continue down the known trail. The animal's head will then enter the loop and as it continues to move forward the loop will slide and become smaller. Eventually the loop will be so small is size the animal cannot get out. Any struggling will only tighten the loop. Thus, you have dinner.

In the flip up snare (see the illustrations) the principle is the same as far as tunneling the animal. The difference is when the animal's head enters the snare it will eventually pulls the wire far enough to trigger the flip up part of the trap. At that point the animal will be flipped into the air and strangled. The diameter of the loop and the distances off the ground remain the same in this snare as in the other.

To make a trip snare, you need a flexible limb or bush, the snare wire, a trigger and a method to hold the trigger. The illustration shows a couple of examples. I do not recommend this type of snare in extreme cold because the flexible part of the trap often freezes in place and does not function as a spring any longer. If the weather is really cold use the standard holding snare.

I stated early in this article to check your traps each morning. This is important to remember. Some animals, if snared by the leg, will actually chew the limb off to get out of the trap. While I have no problems snaring my dinner, I do not want to cause pain or suffering to any animal. My goal is to kill the animal so I can survive, not to inflict pain.

When you approach the snare you will usually see right off if it has an animal. If an animal is there, use a club or spear (see my article on primitive weapons) to kill it instantly (Most animals caught in a snare will be dead already, but be prepared) Or, if you are an experienced hunter, you may have a different method. The choice is yours, but

keep in mind to kill quickly. Many animals, even small game, will be capable of inflicting pain on the person checking the snare. They may bite, scratch or claw you.

For some of you, snaring an animal may not be a very pleasant task. It may prove to be even more difficult to kill an animal so you can eat. In today's society we are rarely involved in the processing of our meals and it can be a shocker for some folks. I can understand your views, but in an emergency, you will need the fats and protein the animal will provide. Something must die so you may live. Survival is not a game. In a real survival situation your life may very well depend on your ability to snare game, eat insects, or even the eating of certain plants you may not like. It is necessary for your survival. Can you do what it takes to survive? Can you make a snare?