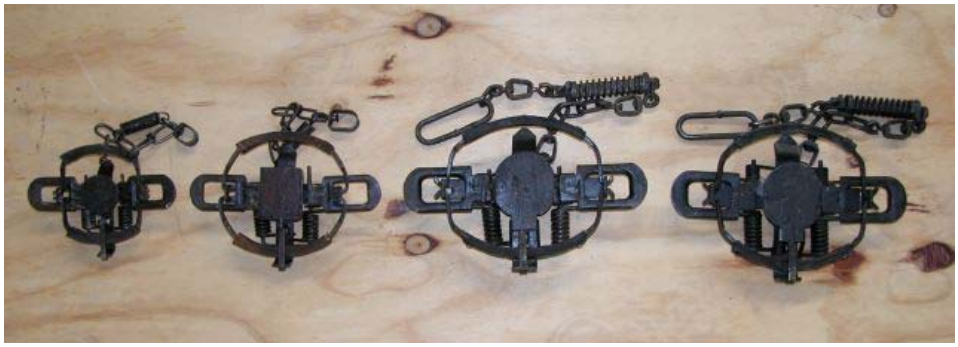
Foot-hold traps

Foot-hold trap (Rubber Padded Jawed and Offset and or Laminated Jawed)
Although foot-hold traps have not been widely used in Queensland in the past, they can be effective in dealing with problem animals. They are most effective in situations where more traditional control methods such as 1080 can not be used or as a follow up to baiting programs. Although very labour intensive, trapping should be considered as another tool in an integrated approach to wild dog control.

All traps are made from steel and therefore the term steel jawed trap applies to all traps including padded jawed traps, which have pads over the steel jaws. The term foot-hold traps refer more to effectively matching the size of the animal's foot to the size of the traps used.

The difference between the term leg-hold trap and foot-hold trap is that a leg-hold trap is much larger by nature and catches the animal higher on the leg, often above the foot. The foot-hold trap is based more on the target animal's foot size catching the animal across the tougher padded area of the foot.



All Three Sizes of Victor Softcatch #1, 1 #1/12 , #3 and #3 modified Four-Coiled Matching the Trap to the Animal (Foot-hold Traps). Photo courtesy of Ed Carroll

The objective of these traps is to hold the animal firmly at the foot, but prevent damage to underlying tissue. There are many types of foot-hold trap designs including traps with padded, jaws and those with laminated and / or offset jaws. All may be effectively used to control wild dog impacts while reducing non-target captures and limiting animal welfare concerns.

Padded Jaws:
Padded jawed traps have been developed to minimise injuries sometimes caused by foot-hold traps. The effectiveness of padded jawed traps in minimising injuries, does not just relate to the padding of the jaws. It relates to the size of the trap and the material used for padding. In all types of traps the length of the chain, location of the chain on the trap and the number of swivels in the chain relate directly to efficiency and improved animal welfare.

Offset Jaws:
Offset jaws are a factory or after market modification that produces a gap between the trap jaws. When closed a 3 to 6 mm gap between the jaws reduces the impact of the trap and allows for increased blood flow to the animal's paw. Animals trapped in traps with offset jaws tend to fight the trap less reducing stress and injury.

Laminated Jaws:
Expanding the thickness of the trap jaw by 6 to 10 mm increases the surface area of the jaw on the animal's trapped foot. Research has shown that the addition of lamination to foot-hold traps significantly reduces injury caused by the impact of the trap on the animals foot and increases holding efficiency.

Lamination is normally an after market modification which requires a metal strip, welded above and/or below the jaw increasing its thickness. All unpadded foot-hold traps should ideally be laminated increasing jaw width by at least 6 mm.

How They Work
Foot-hold traps are buried in the ground so that when the animal steps on the plate, the plate is depressed freeing the tongue from the notch allowing the jaws to spring shut, holding the animals foot until it is dispatched or released by the trapper.

All traps should be checked and maintained on a daily basis, target animals should be destroyed humanly and non-target animals treated for any injuries and released.

Advantages of foot-hold traps
- Operator and Public Safety
- Low risk of physical injury to animal
- Traps grasp the animal's foot over the hard padded area
- Highly effective when used correctly
- Flexibility of placement and set type
- Target specificity can be increased with the addition of (Paws-I-Trip, gun notch or night latch triggers) trigger systems
- Small in size and easy to set
- Better public acceptance
- Pads can easily be replaced
- Not a threat to large non-target wildlife or livestock
- May be modified with two extra coil springs increasing holding ability

Disadvantages of foot-hold traps
- Public may not distinguish between leg-hold trap
- Animal welfare concerns (monitoring of traps, animal stress and injury)
- Labour intensive
- High level of training required
- Reduced target specificity without (Paws-I-Trip, gun notch or night latch triggers) trigger systems
- Small plate or pan increasing skill required to capture animal
- Foot-hold traps require regular maintenance to ensure their effectiveness
- Padded jawed foot-hold traps require that the pads be replaced on a regular basis