

DOC Trap instructions

DOC 150 and 200 traps

DOC traps are a family of spring traps (killing traps) designed for the Department of Conservation (DOC) in New Zealand. The intention was to replace older spring traps with a new generation that would meet humaneness standards based on emerging international agreements. These are now the preferred trap in New Zealand's struggle to conserve native birds from the devastating impact of introduced European stoats, weasels and rats.

Currently only the DOC 150 and 200 traps are available in the UK. The DOC 150 requires the same tunnel dimensions as the Fenn Mk IV or Springer No 4 traps, an advantage where it must be fitted into a pre-existing space (eg. in a dry-stone wall). The two traps have a similar strength, but because of its larger dimensions, the DOC 200 is actually easier to set. Based on field comparison, the DOC 200 is our preferred choice where grey squirrels are the main target species.

WARNING – In order to kill small mammals humanely, these traps are extremely powerful. They should be considered **VERY DANGEROUS** both once set, and during the setting process. We strongly advise that tunnels should be fitted with a warning label, and that they should never be set where small children or vulnerable pets could have access to them. To ensure a safe grip when setting and unsetting these traps, we recommend that you do **NOT** wear gloves.



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The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

For over 75 years our scientists have been researching why species like the grey partridge, water vole, corn bunting and black grouse have declined. We are continually developing practical measures to reverse these declines.

Our aim is simple - a thriving countryside rich in game and other wildlife.

We are an independent charity reliant on voluntary donations and the support of people who care about the survival of our natural heritage.

Approval for use

The DOC 150, 200 and 250 traps, manufactured by or under the authority of the Department of Conservation, Wellington, New Zealand, were approved for use in England by means of The Spring Traps Approval (Variation) (England) Order 2007. Approval for use in other parts of the UK (a devolved issue) is expected to follow, but should not be assumed. We

also anticipate that the DOC 250 will be tested and approved for use against mink.

The Approval Order stipulates that the traps 'shall be used only for the purpose of killing grey squirrels, rats, stoats and weasels. The trap must be set in the tunnel provided by the manufacturer of the trap for use in the UK and must be used in accordance with the instructions

Contact

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(if any) provided by the manufacturer.' This is because the tunnel design is crucial to the humaneness, selectivity and safety of the trap. **It is therefore illegal to alter the tunnel, or to operate the trap in any other tunnel.**

The trap is currently supplied in the UK in a single-entry (blind-ended) trap tunnel. In the New Zealand context traps

are always baited, hence a run-through version involves two traps, one either side of the bait, requiring a longer tunnel. This means that for trapping in the UK there are two unanswered questions: whether the use of bait increases catch in a UK context (we have more linear landscape features to exploit such as hedges and walls that channel the movements of mustelids);

and whether for unbaited traps a run-through tunnel is significantly better than a blind-ended tunnel. Our field trials with grey squirrels using bait have discovered no advantage of run-through tunnels compared with single-entry tunnels. We will run trials in the near future to answer the same questions for stoats, weasels and rats.

Features



The trap is robustly built for long life, and tunnels are of rot-proof tanalised timber. Because their power would otherwise

make them unmanageable, DOC traps are fixed to the tunnel floor allowing easy and safe setting.

The wire mesh excluders (see left) have two intended functions: to exclude large non-target animals (including some protected on *Schedule 6 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act*, notably pine-martens, polecats and hedgehogs), and to slow down and align the target animal so that it receives the strike in the head, causing virtually instantaneous death.

The treadle plate is large to ensure that animals cannot skirt around it. Underneath

the treadle plate is a small secondary spring which maintains the height of the treadle. This unique feature prevents many false trips caused by mice, voles or shrews, and prevents the progressive lowering of the treadle by repeated passage of such animals until it eventually trips. It cannot, however, prevent the trap firing if small mammals arrive in twos or threes, or if they jump about on the treadle plate!

Setting instructions

Open the lid of the trap tunnel. If you are using bait, place it at the back of the tunnel now, before setting the trap. Position yourself behind the upright part of the trap (see picture 1).



Hold the tunnel down with one hand or one knee while pulling up on the wire loop with the other hand to raise the moving jaw of the trap (see picture 2).



Once this jaw is raised sufficiently to hook the thumb of that hand over the side of the tunnel nearest to you (see picture 3), you can bring in the other hand to help, but keep both thumbs firmly hooked over the tunnel side (see picture 4). While your thumbs are firmly hooked on in this way, your hands cannot be pulled down and caught in the trap should your grip slip.



As the moving jaw is raised, it will catch momentarily on the upper end of the hanging trigger arm, causing the lower end of that arm to flick forwards (see picture 5), then drop back down onto the treadle plate (see picture 6).



Now slowly let the moving jaw ease back slightly (see picture 7), pushing the



top flange of the trigger arm and allowing the bottom end to ride up the curved neck of the treadle plate and lodge against the far side of the sear (the small square raised knob on the top side of the treadle plate). Make sure that the wire loop is in the horizontal position, laying against the trap frame.

If the trigger arm falls back on the near side of the sear, you will need to pull it forward again. First ensure that you have a very strong grasp of the moving jaw and



tunnel side with one hand, then use the other hand cautiously to ease it forward again (see pictures 8, 9). Then ease the moving arm into the set position. Carefully close the tunnel lid. Ensure that the tunnel is stable in its final position.

To un-set a trap safely, reverse the procedure just described. Use both hands to pull back the moving jaw, take a strong grip with one hand around the wire loop handle and the top edge of the tunnel,



then use the other hand to pull forward the bottom of the trigger arm, allowing its top edge to slip under the moving jaw (see picture 7). Now hold the trap tunnel steady with one hand, while you slowly lower the moving jaw down onto the treadle with the other, using the wire loop.

The safety clip can be used in any operation that requires the hands to be placed between the moving jaw and the treadle plate (eg. cleaning the treadle plate, replacing bait).

Problems?

DOC traps are well engineered and we do not expect you to experience problems with them. However, occasionally (perhaps due to the trap taking a knock during transit), we have experienced traps firing spontaneously, or firing and jamming. If you find the trap will not set correctly, you will need to adjust it slightly as described below. These adjustments must be made only when the trap is un-set (ie. moving jaw on treadle plate).

If the trap has been firing spontaneously, the short arm on which the trigger hangs

will need bending upwards very slightly. If the trap fires, but the jaw lodges against the hinged end of the trigger, the same arm will need bending downwards very slightly. Adjustments can be made using a pair of pliers or mole grips. Do not try to make adjustments using a hammer – you may damage the trigger hanger hinge.

Any other mechanical problems should be reported to the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust immediately, and the trap returned. On receipt of the faulty trap, a replacement will be sent to you.

More information

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust's Advisory Service can provide further advice on feeding systems for gamebirds, and on all aspects of game management. For information, please contact 01425 651013.



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