



URBAN COYOTE MANAGEMENT

URBAN COYOTE SOLUTIONS

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BIG MESS NO MESS

As far back as I can remember, I have been fascinated and intrigued by the coyote in my wildlife control career. Back then, I knew very few people, except Rob Erickson and Mike McMurray, who were experienced enough to catch coyotes in numbers consistently. Rob Erickson, a legend in the wildlife control industry, had special guest Mike McMurray give a talk on coyotes at one of his seminars. I quickly signed up for my first professional training from Mike in approximately 1995.

I was excited to head to Utah, where Mike controlled coyotes on sheep ranches over thousands of acres. Mike was a big man who walked with a limp from an injury he sustained during the Vietnam war. Although Mike was a relatively quiet man, we had lots of laughs driving through what I called the desert, sandy, rocky conditions,

with lots of two-tracks, fences, and draws. Although this may not look like pretty scenery to some, I was excited to be with a professional coyote trapper, learning how the chess game was played with this formidable adversary.

Three important points stuck out to me during this trip—location, wind direction, and type of set—particularly big messy sets and very subtle, what he called no mess sets. I was there for about a week, and by the end of that week, I was making sets while Mike stood by, critiquing the direction of the set, the construction, and the type of set I was utilizing. Mike described his sets in two elementary groups, BIG mess and NO mess. I still follow that rule today. Big, loud, and visual or blended and subtle, which I like to call the Sleeper. Keep it simple but effective!

The sets I use today for urban and rural coyote management fall

into those two categories. Like every coyote trapper I know, everybody has their own twist, turn, and variation of these two set categories, and I am no exception. The first one I will talk about is my variation of the most commonly known predator set, a dirt hole set, which I like to call the ridge hole. I played with variations of this set for a long time before settling on this particular one.

I used this set in the 2021 trapping season and trained a friend in Montana using them exclusively. No sleepers or other sets were made over 11 locations, with only two of these exclusive sets per location. This set resulted in 47 coyotes in three weeks. Because of this success, with this particular variation of the dirt hole, it has proved itself to be a keeper and go-to set part of any location strategy. There are four parts to its construction and then finished with bait, lure, and urine. It's simple, fast, and deadly on the coyote or any other canine.

Step 1: Dig your trap bed so the levers are pointed toward where the hole will be drilled. **Never drill the hole first.** Utilize the dirt you removed from the ground to create the trap bed. Packing the dirt inside and outside the jaws creates a firm bedded trap with **no soft spot**. The rule is to make sure that the bedded trap area is just as consistent in firmness as the

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ground around it. Remember, **no soft spot!**

Step 2: Take the rest of the dirt excavated from the trap bed and move it to the right or left side; either is okay, your preference, outside edge of where the trap is underground. This hump of dirt acts as a guard for either side. I always go to the right, but I don't believe it makes any difference.

Step 3: Remember where your lever is pointing, and about 2 inches in front of it, drill a well-angled (towards trap pan) 3-inch hole towards the trap bed, approximately 20 inches deep. Bring this drilled coarse dirt out of the hole **easy** as to make a pile right in front of the hole and somewhat over the trap bed.

Step 4: With four fingers slightly cupped, take your hand behind the dirt pile, in front of the hole, and drag it across the trap bed, creating a ridge on both sides. While doing this, you should almost uncover part of the trap pan while dragging your cupped hand across it. Continue dragging your hand across the trap until there's no more dirt left. Add bait, lure, and some scattered urine **last**, and walk away.

As you can see in the pictures to the right, the ridge hole set resembles a molehill, but you will find canines will step right in between those ridges, almost always with their front foot. The trap pan is only approximately 7 or 8 inches from the drilled hole's outside edge. This set is very deadly at any location but shines on corridors!

This is a very visually messy set and my go-to at any set location. As I indicated earlier, I usually only use two of these, approximately 20 feet apart, at a location. Some set locations have a third set about 20 feet away, which I call a sleeper. This is a well-blended scent post that is there to pick up the coyote, usually a female, that doesn't want to come in close to



these loud, messy sets and allows you to pick this experienced coyote up in the very subtle, well-blended set. This set is usually in the grass, blended with the natural grass already there.

In my opinion, you want to look down at this set and not see any trap placement pattern. The ridges themselves lightly cover either side of the bedded trap, so there's no trap pattern. It's the same with a blended sleeper. You'll often forget the exact location and have to

search for it, which is good!

Remember, we're dealing with coyotes, a trapper's most formidable adversary, in my opinion. They have very acute senses and are relatively experienced even after a year of life. The older they get, the wiser they get! The coyote you see below is approximately a 12 years old female who walked by this set for ten days before giving up her life.

Big mess, No mess, that's the rule! ■

