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South Dakota Extension Trapper Program



A. Wentz

revised 2005 by A. Smith

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department

Most of South Dakota's predators are valuable furbearers and provide recreation for hunters and trappers. Predators are normally useful, since their regular diet consists of rodents, rabbits, insects, and other small animals. But because most predators are opportunists, they occasionally cause damage to domestic livestock or crops.

Residents of South Dakota can call on an Extension Trapper for help with predator or furbearer problems. The Trappers are employees of the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks Department and have two main duties: 1) animal damage control through direct control, teaching, and assistance, and 2) the encouragement of sport trapping.

Animal Damage Control

Individuals suffering crop or livestock losses due to wildlife may request the assistance of an Extension Trapper directly through the regional offices of Game, Fish and Parks, county Extension offices, wildlife conservation officers, or the Extension Service at South Dakota State University.

The Extension Trapper attempts to visit promptly, usually within 48 hours after receiving the complaint. He examines the damage, identifies the species of animal responsible, and suggests appropriate methods to alleviate the problem.

Extension Trappers are familiar with a wide range of wildlife damage problems, including those caused by beavers to field corn and shade trees, sheep losses to coyotes, and poultry losses to various small ground and avian predators. The Trappers will use numerous techniques to not only stop wildlife damage but also to prevent it from happening again.

When wildlife damage can be controlled best by trapping, the Extension Trapper will use the proper techniques. The landowner may be asked to assist in resolving the problem. In some situations the Extension Trapper will provide necessary training, enabling the landowner to handle any recurring nuisance problems. Occasionally the Extension Trapper may suggest that the landowner try alternatives such as guardian dogs, improved fencing, or range rotation as ways to reduce or minimize livestock or property damage caused by wildlife.



As a rule, the Extension Trapper is able to adequately resolve the problem. He will make additional visits concerning some complaints since he normally takes an active part in control work. Extension Trappers do not distribute any type of poisons, nor do they participate in large scale suppression of predator populations.

Recurring and persistent problems are often indications that farm management practices may need changing. In these cases, the Extension Trapper may suggest changes or refer the problem to the county Extension educator.

Landowners experiencing damage caused by ground squirrels, pocket gophers, birds, and other animals should contact their Extension agent for information on these problems.

Trapping as a Sport

Some of the Extension Trapper's time is spent conducting educational programs on sport trapping as a form of recreation and an important part of furbearer management. These programs cover the life history of furbearers, the art of trapping, how to prepare pelts for sale, wildlife damage control, predator calling and other related topics.



The Extension Trapper uses colorful media, free literature on trapping, demonstrations, and displays in the presentations. Programs can be given in classrooms, meeting halls, summer camps, or any other group meeting place.

Teachers, FFA chapters, 4-H clubs, sportsmen's clubs, Scout troops, and other groups are encouraged to request these presentations. Programs may be arranged by directly contacting the Extension Trapper, local county Extension offices, or conservation officers.

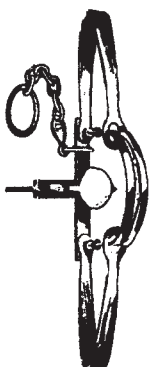


South Dakota has 19 Extension Trappers assigned to wildlife damage control, as well as one or more individuals per county (county educators and conservation officers) who can refer damage complaints or requests for trapping presentations to the Extension Trappers.

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