

MASS DESTRUCTION OF RABBITS

The following description of an effective method of reducing rabbit stocks on farmland is taken from an article in the *Scottish Journal of Agriculture*, July, 1940. As this method seems to have possibilities on forest land—especially where trapping and ferreting are hindered by thicket-stage plantations—it is reproduced (with suitable adaptations) here with acknowledgements to the author and inventor.

In essence the idea is to erect an oblong rabbit-netting enclosure (as in Fig. 1), the netting on one or two sides being held open by trigger sticks which can be quickly released to close the trap when the rabbits are feeding inside (see Fig. 2). In the forest a grassy opening or ride would form a suitable site and baiting the trap with roots or greens in the period before the trap is set off should help.

The following material is required:—

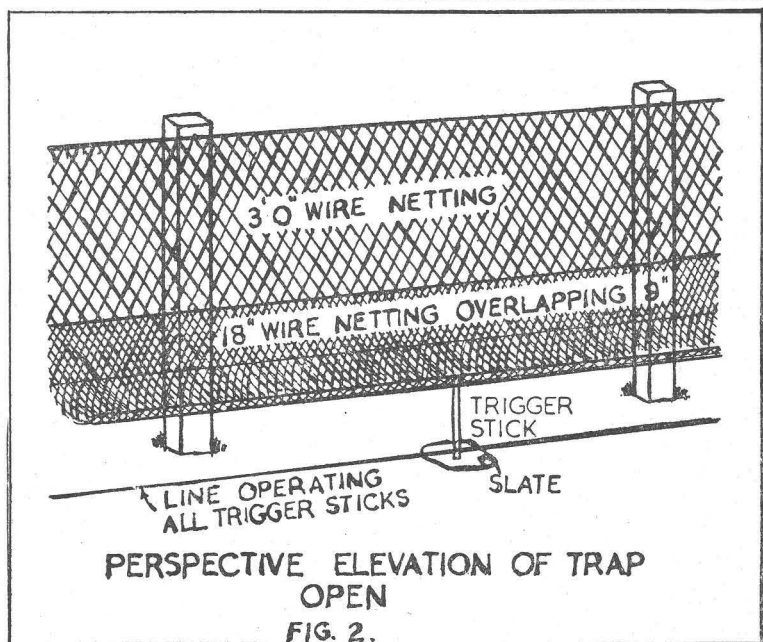
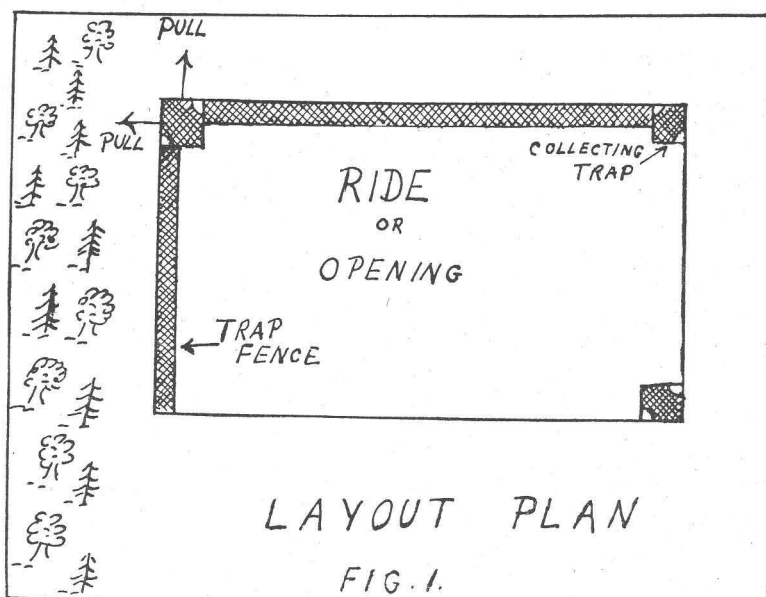
1. Rolls of $1\frac{1}{4}$ "- $1\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh rabbit wire netting 3-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide.
2. Rolls of $1\frac{1}{4}$ "- $1\frac{1}{2}$ " mesh rabbit wire netting 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide.¹
3. Paling Posts.
4. Staples.
5. Forestry tying wire.
- 6 A number of small slates.
7. A supply of wooden pegs 6 or 7 inches long. Tops smooth, notched one inch from bottom.
- 8 Flexible wire or strong cord for the pull.

ERECTING THE TRAP FENCE.

Posts should be erected as if for an ordinary wire fence. The distance between the posts should be at least seven feet. The 18-inch wire netting should now be unrolled on the outer side of the posts and at a distance of three to four feet from them. When this is done the three-foot netting should be unrolled nearer the posts so as to overlap at its bottom end a breadth of 9 inches of the 18-inch netting (see Fig. 2). Where the two sets of wire netting join they should be

¹ If the 18-inch netting is one gauge heavier than the 3-foot netting it will snap more strongly. On the other hand, the difference in gauge may cause some difficulty in rolling the netting.

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laced together with tying wire. This is necessary, as will be explained later, to give sufficient spring for the lower wire. The laced wire netting is now securely stapled to the stobs in such a manner that at least six inches of the lower wire sweeps along the ground. The bottom staples securing the two-ply portions of netting should be about five or six inches from the ground. Difficulties with bends or uneven ground can be avoided by pegging down the trap permanently for the necessary distance and by passing the pulling wire round a post set outside in the direct line of the pull.

The flap of the 18-inch wire netting is now propped up off the ground by pegs at a sufficient height to enable the rabbits to pass freely under the netting on their way to and from their feeding ground, care being taken not to spoil a run (see Fig. 2).

ERECTING THE DUMMY FENCE.

When this has been done the remaining part of the trap should be closed by erecting a light temporary rabbit-proof wire netting fence.

Rabbits will very soon resume their normal habits becoming familiar with the slates and cord and entering the trap underneath the flap. At an opportune moment, when most of the rabbits are feeding, the flap should suddenly be allowed to drop. All exits are then closed to the rabbits.

In order that the impounded rabbits may be easily taken, wing wire catches should be erected at the points where the wings of the dummy fence meets the trap fence. These allow the rabbits to enter but not to leave. To prevent rabbits escaping at the corners by piling up and jumping the fence, care should be taken to have these roofed over with netting wire. The man entering the killing pen should be careful to close a flap behind him.

FINAL SETTING OF THE TRAP.

Good results ought to be assured after ten or fourteen days. On the morning of the day when operations are intended to be carried out the temporary supporting pegs should be replaced by pegs to which a pulling cord or wire is attached.¹ This cord or wire should be fixed to the peg by a clove hitch about an inch from the bottom. By placing the lower end of the peg on a slate the peg slips easily when the cord is pulled. The top end of the peg should lean slightly away from the direction of the pull and just support the outer edge of the wire. When the pegs slip the double ply of netting wire acts like a spring and the flap of the wire comes firmly down to the ground. In placing these supporting pegs in position care

¹ The pegs with cord attached should be placed in a handy position when the fence is erected, so that the rabbits may become familiar with them. To introduce the cord only on the day on which it is to be used might spoil the scheme.

should be taken to have only one between each two posts. The end of pulling wire or cord should be run out to a point well clear of the trap to which the operators may approach unseen and unheard.

THE PULL.

One sharp pull ought to release the spring; if more than one operator is required the simultaneous pulling of the cords or wires can be effected by acting on a whistle signal. Once the cord or wire is pulled immediate steps should be taken to see that there have been no hitches and that the whole of the netting is lying close to the ground so as to prevent any rabbits escaping underneath. When this is done the beaters may be started. Torches and bicycle lamps or dogs and switch lines may be employed. Usually, however, the majority of the rabbits make a dash for home only to find that their retreat is cut off. The rabbits can easily be driven into the wing catchers where they can be taken.

Experience has shown that two men can erect a complete 300-yard trap in the course of a working day, and considerably more on existing fences.
