

Trapping Wild Pigs



Wild pigs are nonnative, invasive species that possess biological and behavioral traits that enable them to live in just about any environment and quickly populate new areas. As a result, their numbers and the ensuing damage they cause to the landscape can be difficult to control once a population has become established. In order to eradicate wild pig populations or reduce their damage to acceptable levels, land owners and land managers need to think in terms of large-scale removal on an annual basis. Currently, trapping is the most effective and efficient practice to remove large numbers of pigs.

Trapping is the most efficient means for controlling wild pig populations because it is a continuous activity requiring far less time and effort than other methods such as shooting and hunting with dogs—in other words, you do not have to be on-site to be successful. Prefabricated box traps and cage traps are more convenient from a logistics point of view and do not have to be constructed on-site, but larger corral-style traps allow for whole sounder (family group) removal per trapping effort. Shooting and hunting pigs with dogs should be used as follow-up removal practices to capture and remove elusive and trap-shy individuals. Be sure to check the hunting and trapping regulations specific to your area or contact your local conservation officer before beginning any wild pig trapping and removal program.

Successful pig trapping hinges upon several key components:

- locating high-use areas for potential trap sites
- prebaiting so that pigs become acclimated to safely entering and leaving the trap
- building adequately sized trap enclosures
- using game cameras to monitor wild pig visits to the trap
- patience

Note: Wild pigs do not acknowledge boundaries and land lines. Therefore, a cooperative trapping effort with adjoining landowners will prove more successful than conducting a trapping program on your own.

Trap Location

Building the trap right where the pig damage has occurred usually is not the best idea. Instead, scout the property for travel routes and bedding and loafing areas, and establish nearby bait stations using shelled whole-kernel, dried corn placed on the ground. Depending on the size of your property and the distance between locations with recent pig activity, you may want to establish several of these bait stations to determine which locations pigs are actively using. Monitor bait stations with game cameras to determine how many groups of pigs are using each site and the number of pigs in each group. Revisit the sites daily to determine if pigs have found the bait and check game cameras to determine how many pigs are visiting the bait sites.

Once you have identified an active location and the numbers of pigs visiting the bait stations, construct a corral trap of the appropriate size and begin the prebaiting phase. Establish your trap site on fairly level ground and in a shaded area out of sight of public roads. Ensuring vehicle access close to the trap site will save time and labor in constructing, baiting, and checking the trap, and also in removing euthanized pigs from the trap.

Note: In some states, it is illegal to use baits to attract wild animals for harvesting and photographing. Furthermore, improper use of baits can serve as potential health risks to deer and other wildlife. Consult your state wildlife agency to determine if a permit is required to lawfully place corn or other baits on the ground to attract wild pigs.

The Corral Trap

The most common type of corral trap is a circular enclosure constructed from 16-by-5-foot welded wire livestock panels—no larger than 4-by-4-inch openings—fastened to steel T-posts with U-bolts or heavy-gauge wire. The lack of corners provides added strength and prevents captured pigs from piling into corners and climbing over one another to escape over the top. Also, the open-topped corral allows nontarget species to escape over the top of the trap (Appendix I).

Corral traps are quick and easy to build—a two-person team can erect an enclosure in less than 1 hour—and are easily expanded by adding more livestock panels as needed. In addition, the materials needed to construct a four- to six-panel corral trap are usually less expensive than smaller, prefabricated traps.

What Size Trap Is “Appropriate”?

An appropriately sized trap is big enough to capture in a single event the entire group of pigs targeted for removal. In addition to being sufficient to hold a certain number of pigs, the trap should be large enough so that

- it is less confining and allows pigs to spread out and feed comfortably within the enclosure.
- the entrance and the trigger mechanism are far enough apart that all the pigs can enter before the trap is sprung.

The following are some suggested corral trap sizes in relation to wild pig sounder sizes. Trap sizes are minimal and are merely suggestions. They are based on observations and firsthand accounts from trapping and natural resource professionals.

Sounder size	Livestock panels (16 ft)	Corral diameter
14 (2 to 3 adults and juveniles)	4	19.5 ft
15 to 20 (3 to 4 adults and juveniles)	6	29 ft

Building a Circular Corral Trap

1. Set the trap door in place and drive a T-post firmly into the ground on each side of the door. Be sure the studded sides of the T-posts are facing the inside of the trap (Figure 1) and the posts fit snug against each side of the trap door. Fasten the door to the T-posts using heavy-gauge wire.
2. Position a livestock panel on each side of the door so that the panel ends and door frame meet. Be sure the horizontal strands of the livestock panels are on the inside of the trap and the panel ends are positioned on the inside of the T-posts (against the studded sides). Secure the panel ends to the T-posts on each side of the door using three U-bolts.

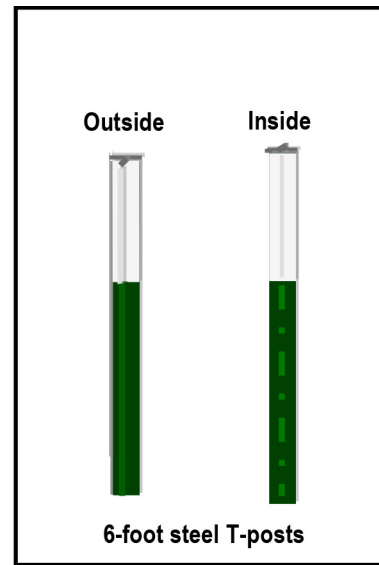


Figure 1. T-posts for a trap door.

3. Working from the free ends of the panels on each side of the trap door, connect the remaining panels to one another by overlapping the adjoining ends 8–12 inches and securing the sections together using 5/8-inch cable clamps or heavy-gauge wire (Figure 2). Complete the circle and “fine tune” the corral’s shape by pulling or pushing the joined panels in or out as necessary.
4. Finish the trap by working your way around the outside of the corral and driving a steel T-post in the ground at the middle of each overlapped panel section and at the middle of each panel. Be sure the wire panels fit snug against the T-posts. Include one or two additional T-posts driven into the ground on each side of the trap door to strengthen the trap (game camera footage of captured pigs suggests they tend to focus most of their escape efforts at or alongside the trap door).
5. Fasten the livestock panels to the T-posts; use two U-bolts per post, one at the bottom of the panel about 12 inches from the ground and one below the top strand of the panel (Figure 3). If using heavy-gauge wire to fasten the livestock panels to the T-posts, use a wire fastener every 1 foot, beginning a few inches from the ground (five per T-post).

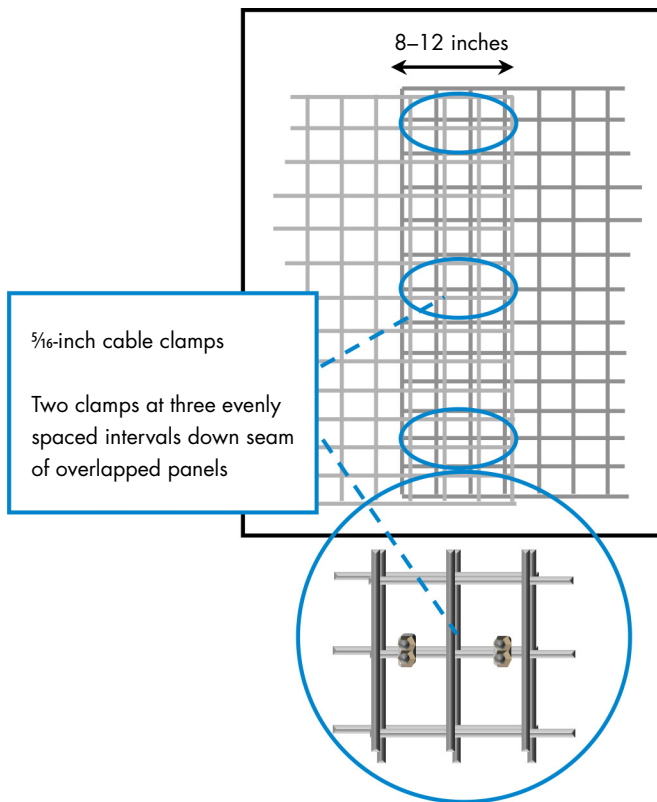


Figure 2. Connect the panels to one another.

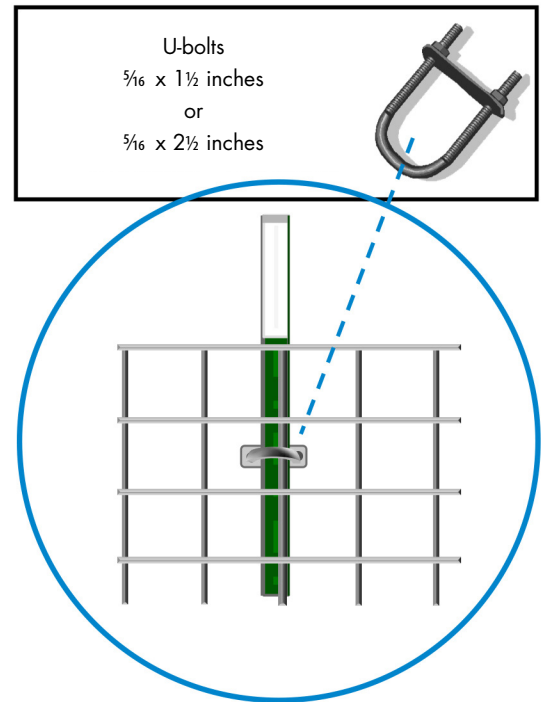


Figure 3. Use two U-bolts per post.

Prebaiting the Trap

Prebaiting is probably the most important component to successful pig trapping and perhaps the most overlooked by aspiring trappers. The goal of prebaiting is to get all of the pigs in a sounder comfortable with entering the trap to feed. Juvenile pigs are most often the first members of the sounder to enter the enclosure and begin feeding, so be sure the adult pigs also are entering the enclosure before setting the door to catch. Usually, 1–2 weeks of prebaiting is necessary before an entire sounder will enter the trap. During the prebaiting phase,

- tie the trap door securely open to prevent premature captures of wild pigs and to allow them continual access to the bait.
- place the bait on the ground inside the trap and scatter it on the ground in areas immediately surrounding the trap.

- continue to monitor the trap with a game camera (Appendix II).
- once pigs are “on the bait,” discontinue baiting outside the trap so that pigs must now enter the enclosure to access the bait.
- be sure to maintain a constant supply of bait in the trap so pigs will continue to visit the site. The use of a spin-cast automatic feeder suspended over the trap during the prebaiting period will reduce the amount of time and effort needed to keep the trap baited and will minimize human disturbance to the area. If using a spin-cast feeder mounted on a tripod, be sure to drive a T-post into the ground near the middle of each tripod leg and fasten the legs to the T-posts. This will prevent large pigs from pushing the feeder onto its side.

Trap Doors

The simplest and least expensive type of trap door used for trapping wild pigs is the guillotine or sliding drop-style door (Figures 4 and 5). These same style doors may also be constructed from steel. Steel drop doors are heavier and more difficult for one person to handle, but the steel construction allows for a wider door opening than wooden drop doors. While not scientifically proven, observations from the field seem to suggest that pigs are more likely to enter a trap sooner through a 5- to 8-foot-wide door. Drop-style doors are characterized as “single-catch” doors because once the trap has been sprung and the door falls closed, no more animals can enter the trap until it is manually reset. With proper prebaiting and game camera footage to help you decide when to set the trap, these doors can be just as effective at catching pigs as other types of trap doors.

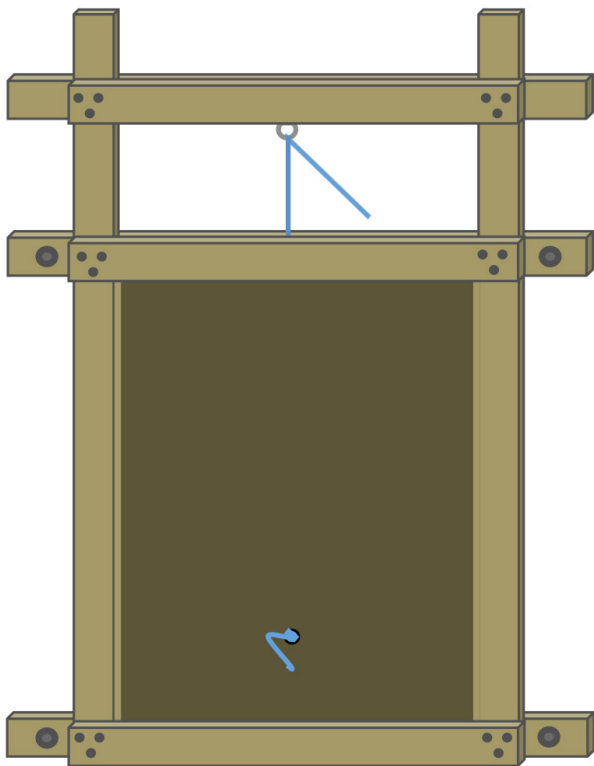


Figure 4. The “poor man’s” wooden drop door.

Other types of trap doors commonly used for trapping wild pigs include the root door and spring-loaded double and single doors (Figures 6 and 7). There are several variations in terms of structural design and materials used for both root doors and spring-loaded doors; doors are constructed from either angle iron or steel tubing (square or circular) or a combination of the two. Root doors and spring-loaded doors are characterized as “multicatch” doors because they are designed to allow additional animals to push through the doors and enter the trap once it has been sprung. While these trap doors can be effective for capturing pigs that are inside the trap when it is sprung, a recent study has shown that very few additional captures occur after the doors have closed.

To view plans and specifications for building trap doors, visit www.wildpiginfo.com.

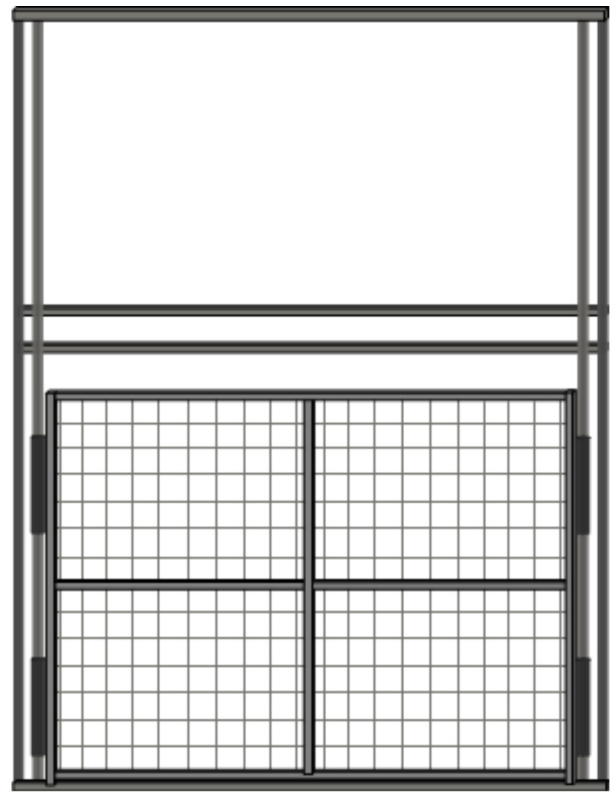


Figure 5. Steel drop door.

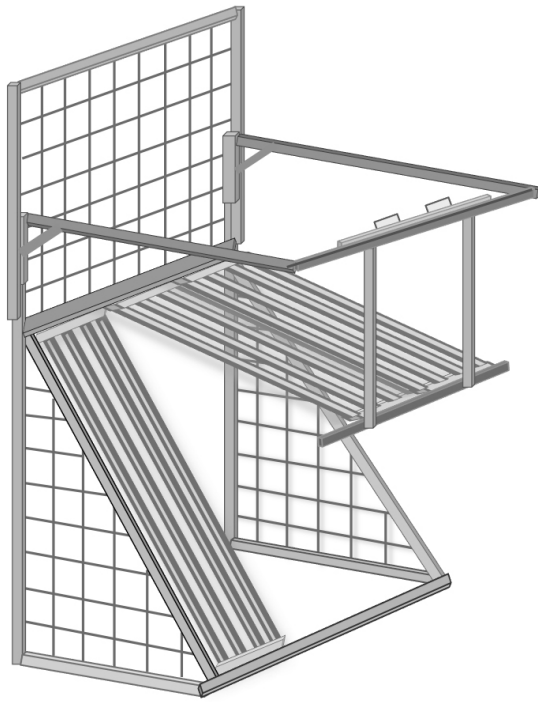


Figure 6. Root-style door with Missouri trigger.

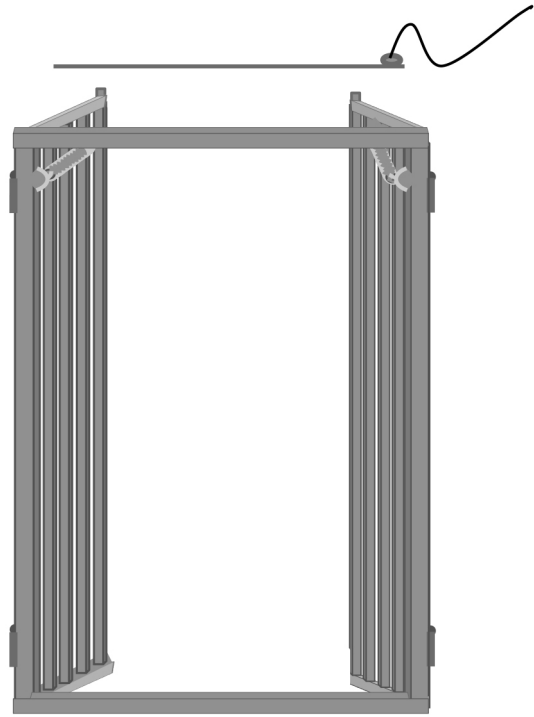


Figure 7. Spring-loaded double door.

Trigger Mechanisms

A variety of trigger mechanisms can be used when trapping wild pigs, but probably the two most common of these are the root stick and the trip wire.

The Root Stick

The root stick is a simple trigger mechanism consisting of two sections of rebar or two sticks, called set stakes, driven into the ground at a 45- to 60-degree angle—with the ends pointing away from the trap door (Appendix III). A length of rope or cord is attached at one end to the drop door and at the other end to the middle section of a strong stick or piece of scrap lumber, called the root stick. The door is lifted and held open by wedging the root stick behind the holding stakes. Bait is placed around and on top of the root stick, and the trap is sprung when pigs feeding on the bait “root” the stick out from behind the holding stakes. The root stick works best when used with a sliding drop door.

The Trip Wire

The trip wire is a continuous line or wire strung 16–20 inches above the ground across the rear section of the trap, up the side of the trap and across its top span, and attached to a release mechanism (pin, hook, or prop stick) on the trap door (Appendix IV). Bait is placed behind the trip wire, and when pigs walk into it, the pressure exerted against the wire pulls the release mechanism from its set position and closes the door. The amount of pressure required to spring the trap can be adjusted by increasing or decreasing the tension on the trip wire.

Note: Because of their varying levels of trigger sensitivity, there are times when it may be better to use a trip wire instead of a root stick with a drop door. Root sticks are less sensitive to disturbance, and if pigs seem to be purposefully avoiding the root stick trigger (eating all of the bait except for that around the root stick) or soils are too loose or too compacted to use a root stick, then a trip wire is the better option. Root stick triggers can be converted to work with a trip wire in just a few simple steps (Appendix V).

High-Tech Hog Trapping

In recent years, several U.S. companies have integrated text messaging and live video technology with wild hog trapping to develop several types of remotely activated trap doors or gates. These gates rely on a remote sensing camera—very much like a game camera—that records pictures or video of hogs (or nontarget animals) inside the trap or moving about near the outside of the trap. The camera sends real-time pictures or video to a person's smartphone or email address.

During the pretrapping phase, the user can remotely monitor multiple bait stations and gather information such as the total number of hogs in the sounder, number of juveniles and adults, feeding times, and travel directions. This information is important to determine the necessary trap enclosure size and the best location to position the gate. Once the trap enclosure is constructed, the user can employ this same technology to monitor the trap and decide when to close the gate—when real-time photos or video show the entire sounder is inside the enclosure. The user can then trigger the gate closed with a single text code sent to the camera.

Because of the technological component, these gates are more expensive to purchase than traditional trap doors. Also, location may sometimes be a limiting factor, depending on distance from cellular towers and signal strength. However, when employed in areas with adequate signal strength, these technologically advanced gates can reduce both time and fuel expense for trappers and greatly increase the chances of capturing the entire sounder in a single trapping event.

Baiting and Setting the Trap

Once you observe that all pigs in a sounder are routinely entering the trap to feed, it is time to set the trap. If using a conventional trap door and trigger mechanism, bait placement within the trap is a very important detail of the trapping process. Do not bait heavily around the trigger mechanism. All too often, traps are baited heavily around the trigger mechanism, so only the first few individuals to enter the trap are caught. Instead, bait heavily along the inside of the trap away from where the trigger is located, and place only a small amount of bait around the trigger mechanism (Appendix VI). The rationale behind this technique is that pigs will enter the trap and naturally gravitate toward the larger pile of bait. As more and more pigs enter the trap to feed, one or several pigs will be pushed aside from the larger bait

pile and turn their attention to the bait around the trigger mechanism, eventually springing the trap. Once you have set the trap, be sure to check it daily, preferably in the early to midmorning hours.

Euthanizing Wild Pigs

Although pigs are a nuisance or pest species, they are wild animals, and appropriate measures should be taken to minimize stress and ensure they are killed humanely. Pigs can be easily euthanized using a firearm chambered for .22 long rifle or larger calibers fired precisely into the brain cavity. The brain shot will ensure a quick, humane death while minimizing the amount of blood left in the trap. A shot placed about 2–3 inches above an imaginary line directly between the eyes, or at the midpoint of an imaginary line between the eye and ear, will effectively penetrate the brain cavity. Be careful not to shoot pigs directly between the eyes because this area is the beginning of the nasal cavity.

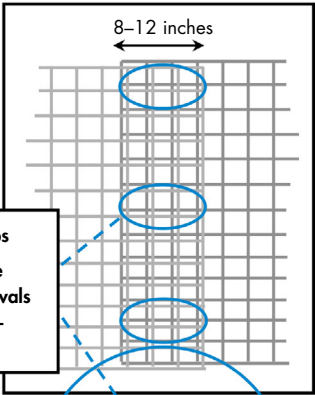
If euthanizing wild pigs with a rifle, do not insert the rifle barrel through the side panels of the trap. Pigs commonly will charge and ram into the sides of the trap trying to find a way out. If a pig happens to charge just before you shoot, it may strike the barrel of the firearm, with you on the other end of it. This could cause you or someone else serious injury. Instead, either shoot through the fence or shoot down into the trap from an elevated position (for example, while standing on an ATV or in the bed of a pickup truck). Always observe proper firearm handling and safety precautions.

Appendix I

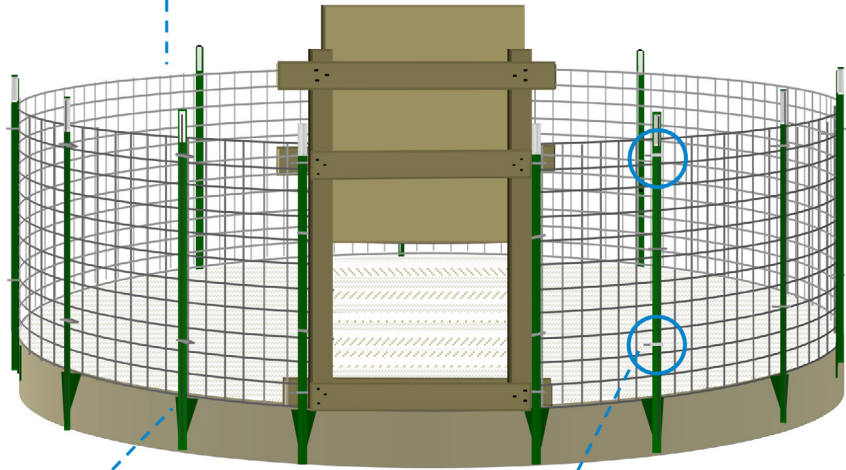
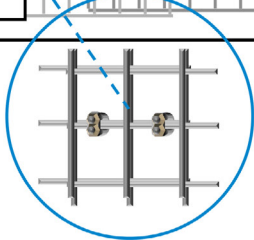
The Corral Trap

16-by-5-foot sections of 4-gauge welded wire livestock panels with 4-by-4-inch mesh spacing

Overlap adjoining ends of livestock panels 8-12 inches and fasten together as shown



5/8-inch cable clamps
Two clamps at three evenly spaced intervals down seam of overlapped panels



T-post anchor plates below ground level

U-bolts
5/8 x 1 1/2 inches
or
5/8 x 2 1/2 inches

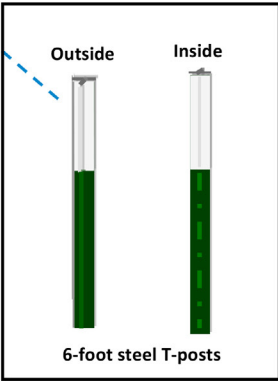
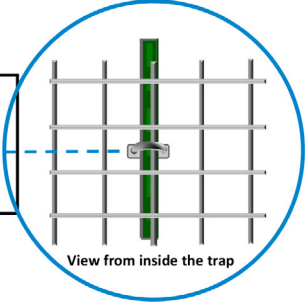
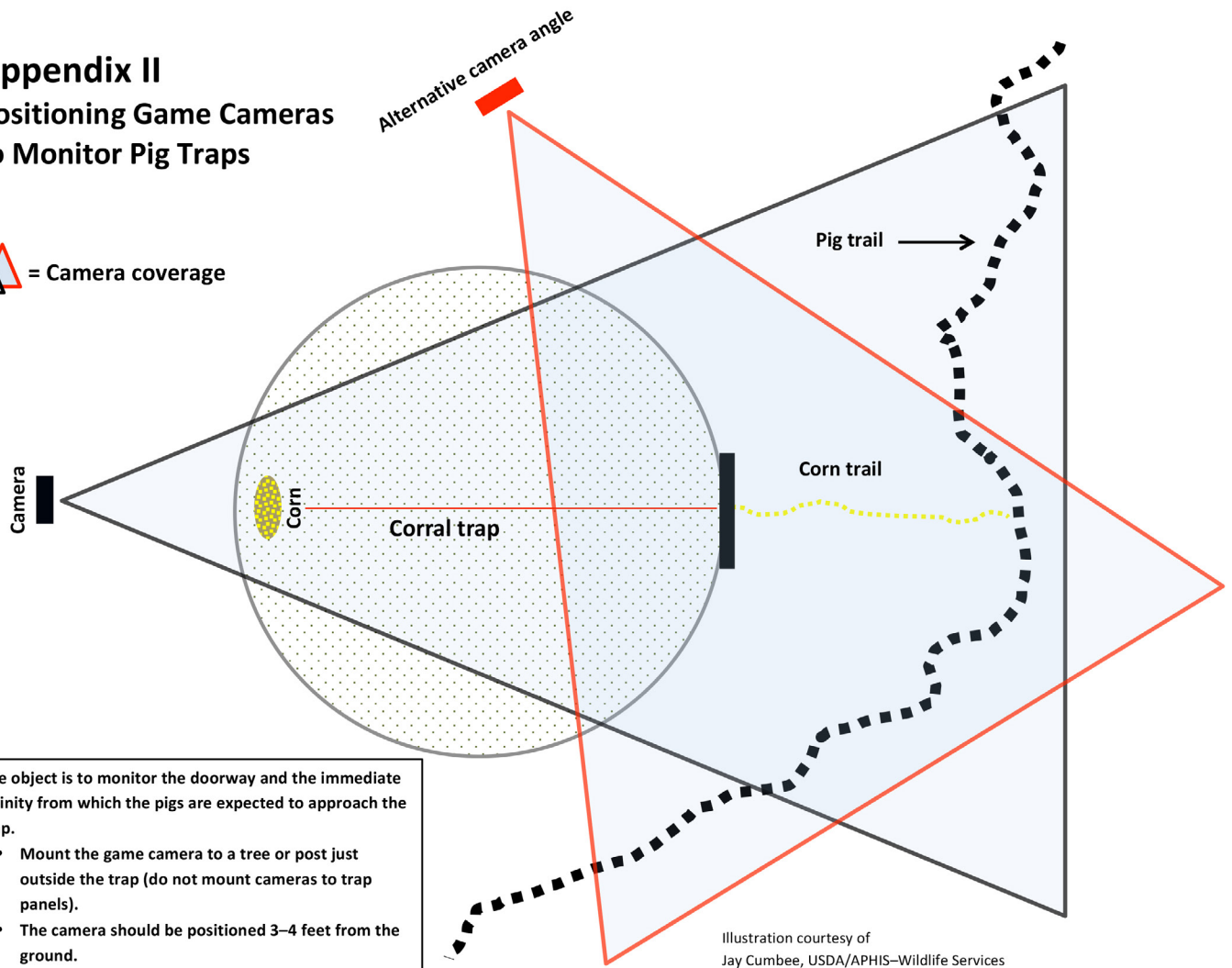


Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service

Appendix II Positioning Game Cameras to Monitor Pig Traps

 = Camera coverage



The object is to monitor the doorway and the immediate vicinity from which the pigs are expected to approach the trap.

- Mount the game camera to a tree or post just outside the trap (do not mount cameras to trap panels).
- The camera should be positioned 3–4 feet from the ground.

Illustration courtesy of
Jay Cumbee, USDA/APHIS–Wildlife Services

Appendix III The Root Stick Trigger

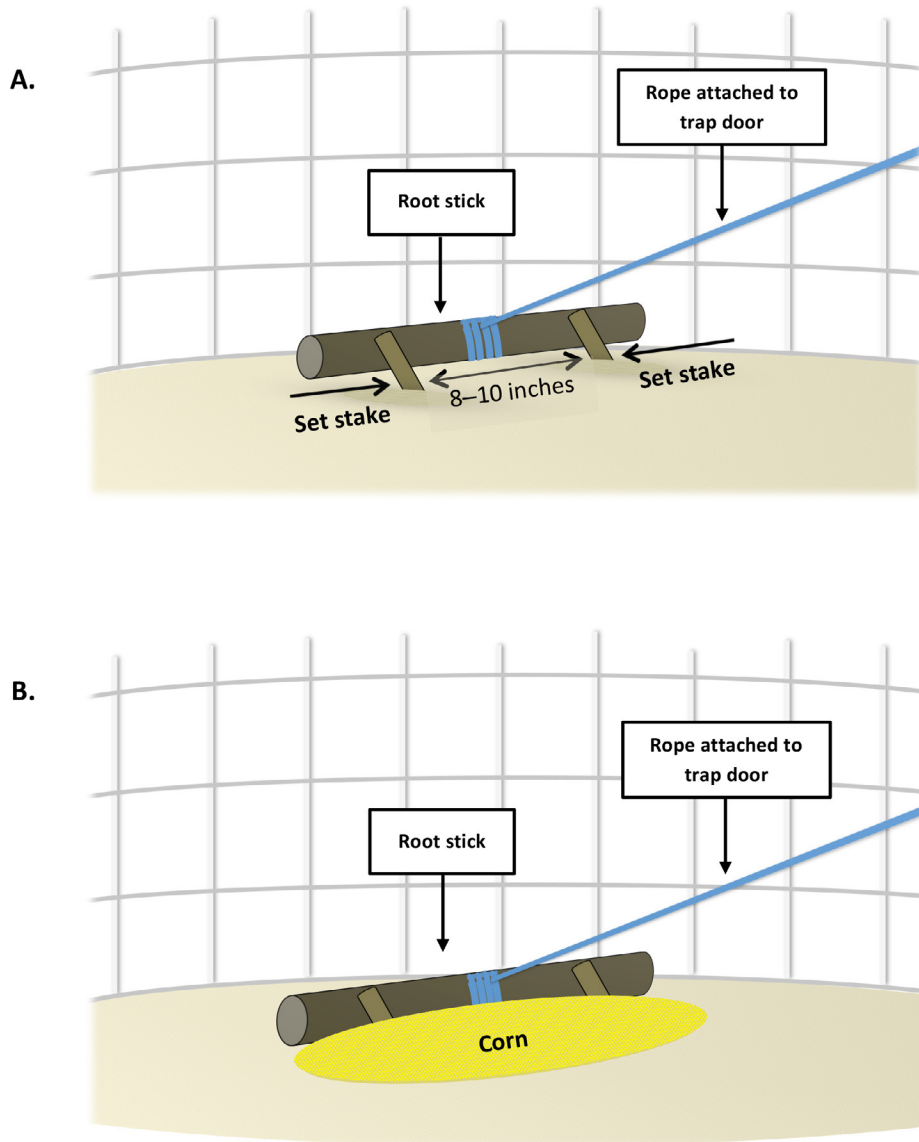


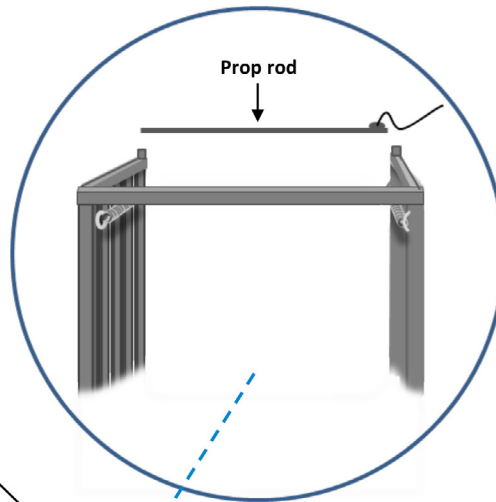
Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service

(A) Placement of set stakes (45- to 60-degree angle) and root stick when the trap is set. (B) Bait placement around the root stick when the trap is set. As pigs feed and root around the trigger mechanism, the root stick is dislodged from behind the set stakes and the trap is sprung.

Note: Trigger sensitivity can be adjusted by positioning the root stick higher or lower behind the set stakes.

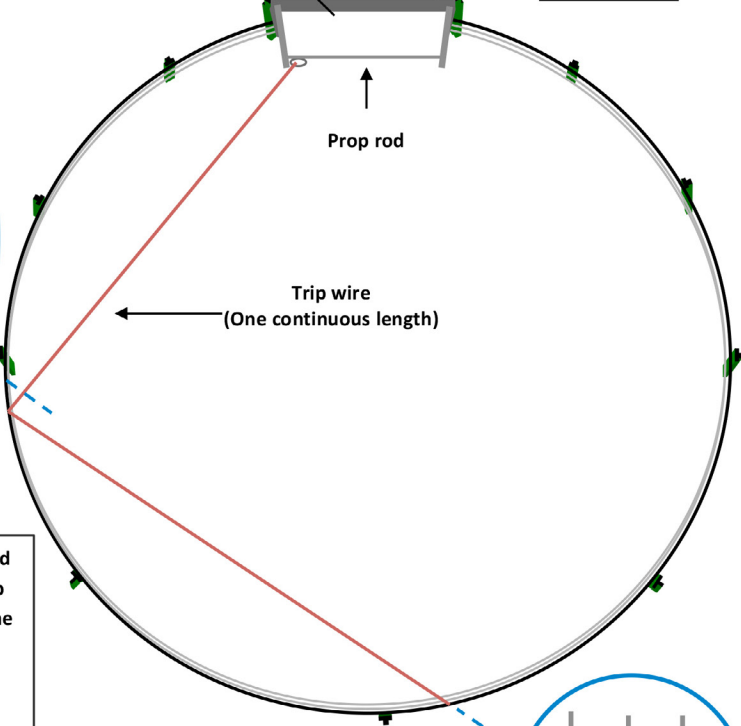
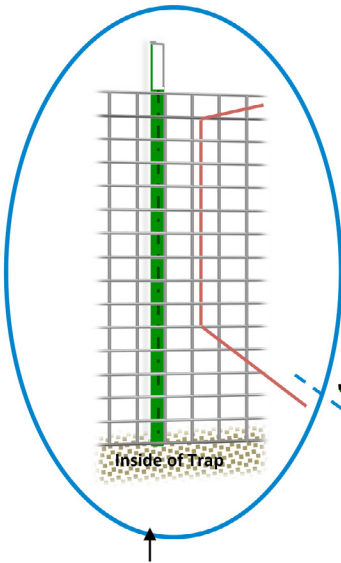
Appendix IV The Trip Wire

Thread the trip wire through an opening just below the top of the trap panel. This will limit side-to-side movement of the wire.



Trap entrance

Trap door



The line or wire connected to the prop rod is strung across one side of the corral trap and threaded through an opening near the top of the trap panel. The line continues down the outside of the trap panel and back through an opening 16–20 inches above the ground. Continue the line 16–20 inches above the ground across a back portion of the trap, and tie it off to a panel at the endpoint.

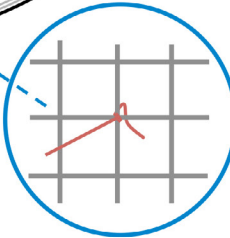


Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service

Appendix V Converting a Root Stick Trigger to a Trip Wire

(Use only with sliding drop doors)

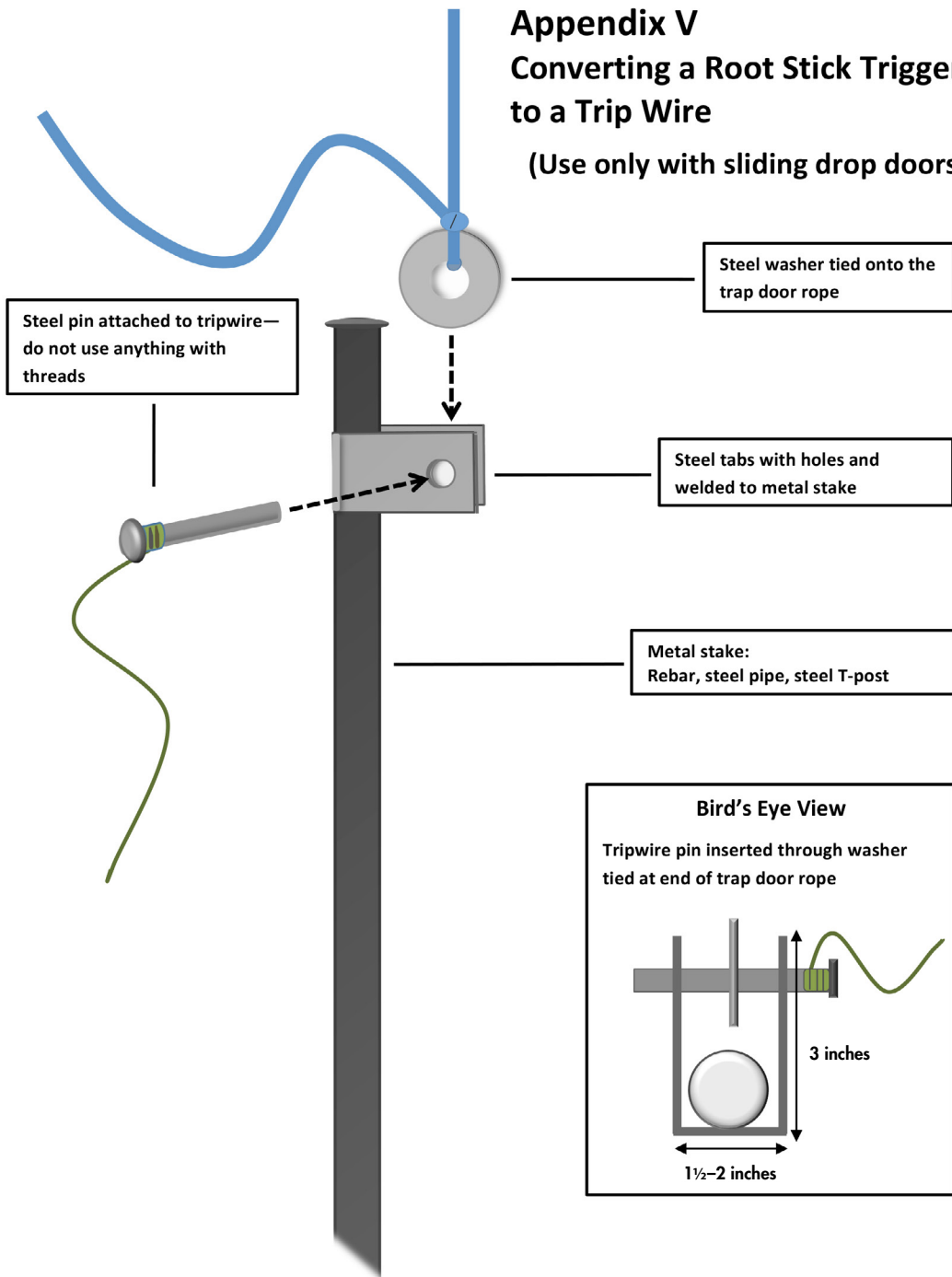


Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service

Converting a Root Stick Trigger to a Trip Wire

(Use only with sliding drop doors)

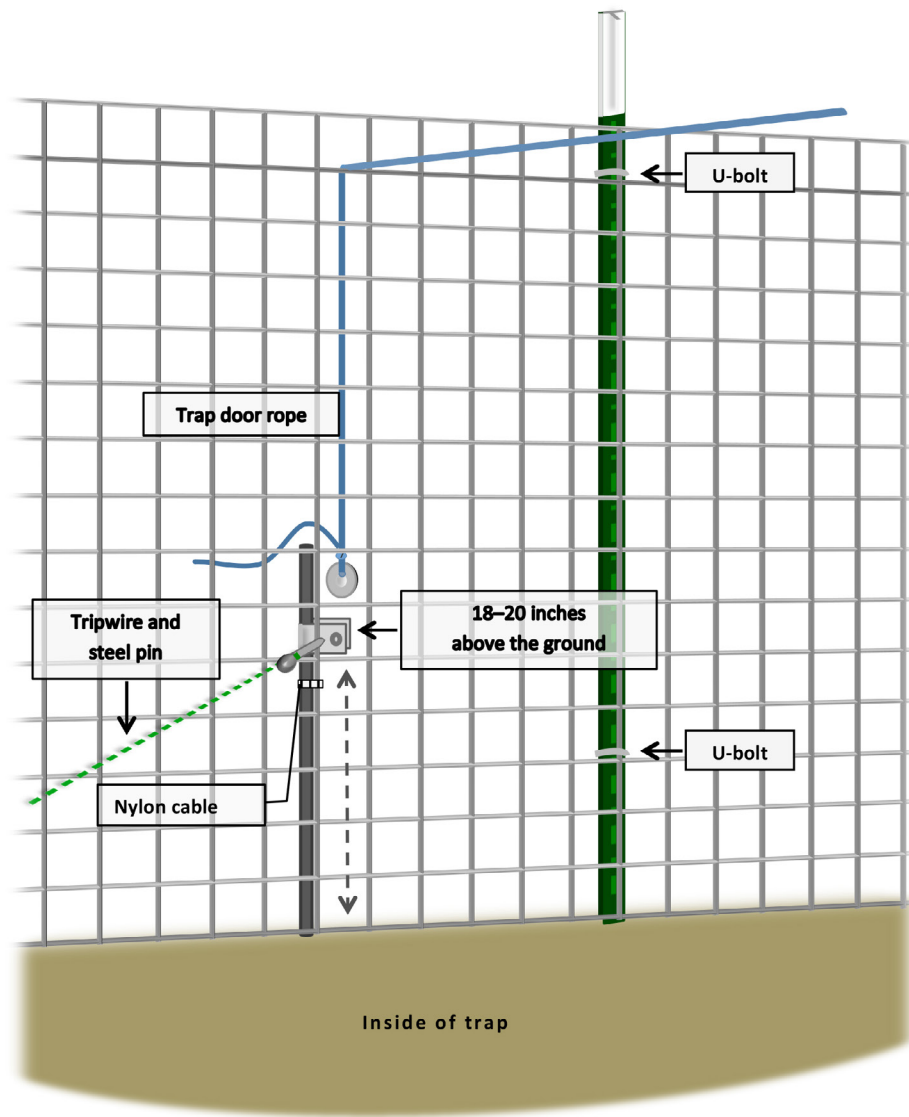
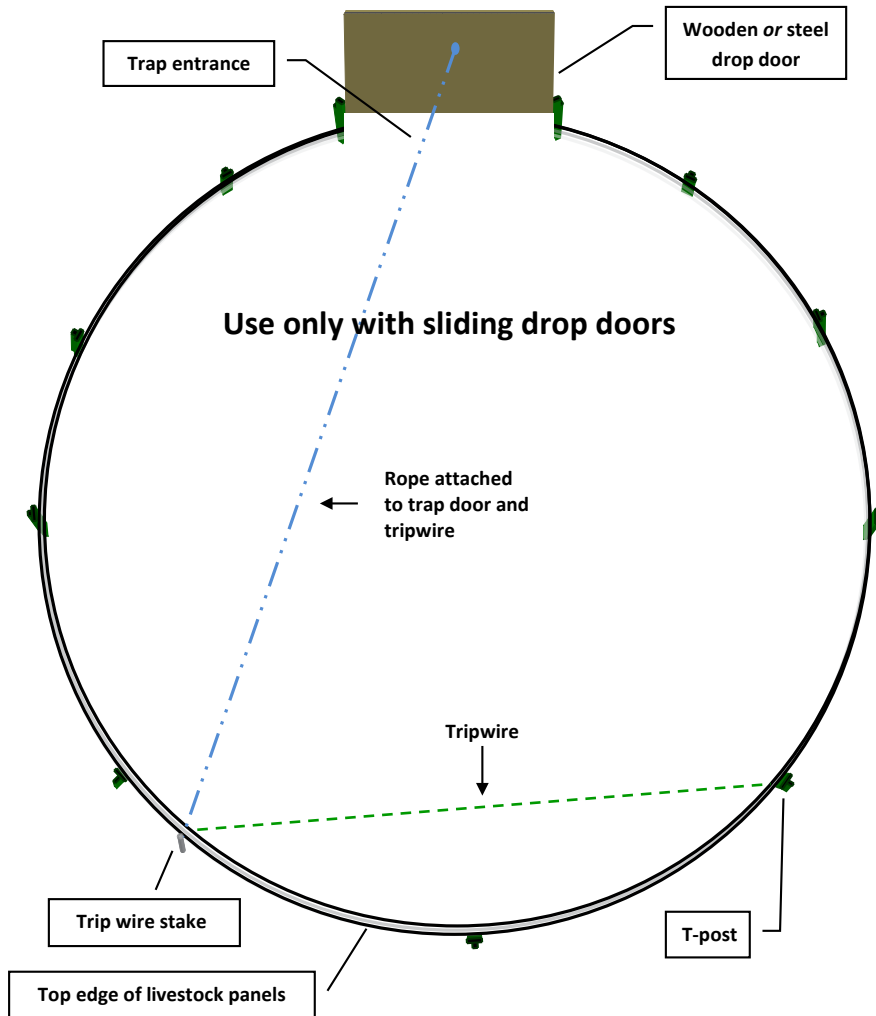


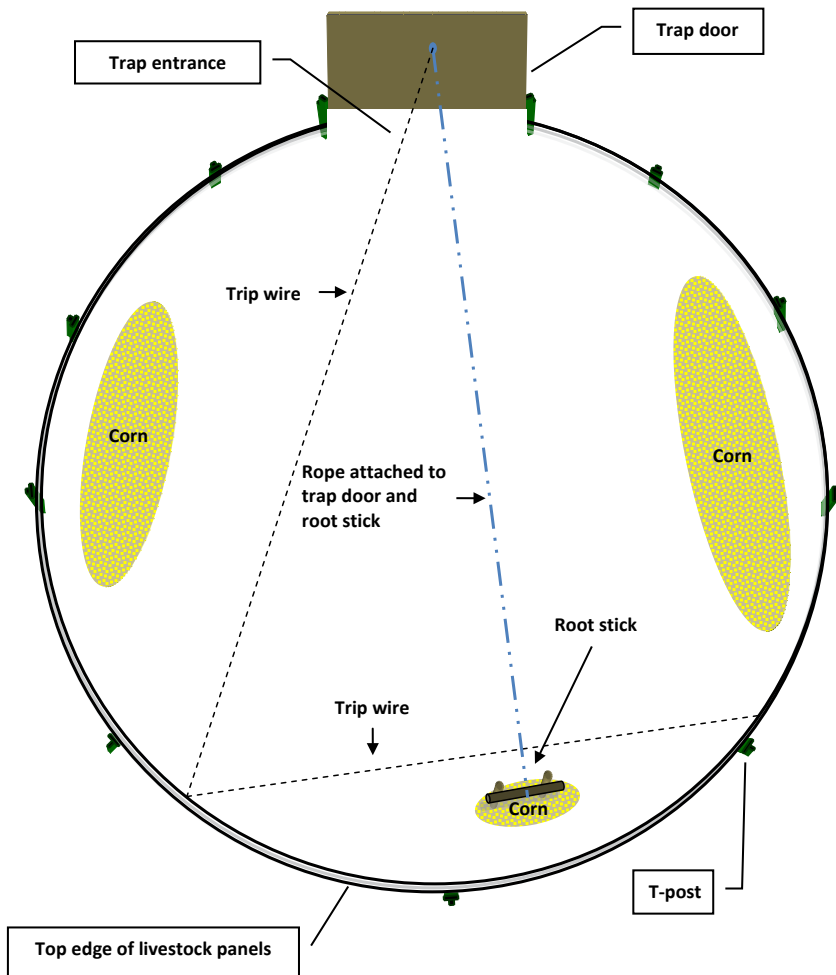
Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service

Converting a Root Stick Trigger to a Trip Wire



Overhead view of a corral trap in which the root stick trigger has been converted to a trip wire. Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Appendix VI Baiting a Wild Pig Trap



Overhead view of a corral trap demonstrating bait placement for trapping wild pigs. Place only $\frac{1}{2}$ –1 gallon of corn around the root stick or behind the trip wire (a 5-gallon bucket of corn is sufficient for baiting a three- to five-panel trap). The rationale behind this strategy is that, upon entering the trap, pigs will begin feeding on the large bait piles. As more pigs enter the trap, juvenile and subordinate pigs will be pushed off the larger bait piles. These pigs then will migrate to the smaller bait pile at the back of the trap and eventually walk into the trip wire or dislodge the root stick and spring the trap. The same strategy applies whether using a root stick trigger or a trip wire. Illustration by Bill Hamrick, Mississippi State University Extension Service.

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