



Minnesota Trapper Education Program

Instructor Lesson Plan Outline

First of all I'd like to personally thank you for making the decision to host a Minnesota Trapper Education Course. Many members of your community young and old alike may have never had the chance to learn much positive about trapping and the opportunity you are making available to them today is something that can have a significant impact on the way our sport is perceived by the community at large for years to come.

This outline is not *written in stone* so to speak for the most part and the individual instructor has a great deal of flexibility in what order and to what depth he/she would like to introduce the students to the subject matter.

It makes a great deal of sense to combine lessons and treat similar subjects at the same time in the interest of a limited time frame available. A good example would be the section on *Basic Trap Sets and Systems* combined with *Skinning and Fur Handling* which many like to incorporate into their field day activities. Same goes for *Cable Devices and Snaring* which was recently added to the Manual but unfortunately appears in the final lesson in this instructor plan in order to accurately reflect the order of the Manual.

Because of multiple edits to the Manual that have been necessary over the years, material is referenced by subject matter as opposed to page numbers as was done previously. Please be certain to have the most updated manuals for your classroom by consulting the MTA Education Coordinator when in doubt.

And last of all; be certain to have fun instructing your classes. Granted, much of trapping is serious business and stressing ethical conduct in the field is nothing to be taken lightly but let's not forget that *enjoying the experience* of trapping is what attracted most of us to the sport in the first place.

Students should come away from these classes anticipating sharing these positive experiences as well.

Keep your skinning knives sharp,

Shawn Johnson
Trapper Education Coordinator
Minnesota Trappers Association

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Instructor Lesson Plan Outline

The following lesson plans outline suggestions on how to conduct a Minnesota Trapper Education Course. The lessons correspond to the *Minnesota Trapper Education Manual* and are divided into short (one hour or less) classroom sessions. These lessons can be taught individually or combined for longer classes. *The Minnesota Trapper Education Instructor's Procedures Manual* will provide additional suggestions, effective teaching styles and methods to insure students get the most out of the course experience.

Instructors are encouraged to refer back to it frequently for encouragement and clarification.

Six hours of classroom instruction plus four hours of field activity is the standard minimum time frame for a traditional "sit down class." Students learn the principles of safe and responsible trapping techniques, trapper responsibility, personal preparedness, basic wildlife management, wildlife identification and basic outdoor survival. Successful completion of a Minnesota Trapper Education Course is required before license purchase for those who have not been issued a trapping license in a previous license year or those born after December 31, 1989. Students must be 10 or older to take the Minnesota Trapper Education course. Classes are generally offered early fall and early spring. A Minnesota Trapper Education certification is recognized by most states that require trapper education certification.

Instructors can check with local sportsmen's clubs, schools, churches, 4H (and similar groups), Community Education, nature centers, DNR offices etc to locate suitable facilities for hosting a class. Local schools and libraries can be contacted to provide televisions, VCR/DVD equipment etc. for use in the classroom. A furbuyer if available may agree to a tour of his facilities and will often demonstrate proper pelt handling, gland removal and preparation etc. Conservation officers should be invited when available to discuss laws, regulations and answer questions from the group. A Wildlife Manager can be asked to discuss wildlife management principles, how license fees are used etc. Arrangements can also be made to conduct field demonstrations on wildlife management areas, state or national forests, federal waterfowl production areas etc.

Advertising you class offerings is covered in more depth in the *Minnesota Trapper Education Instructor Procedures Manual* but in brief, classes can be advertised in local newspapers, radio, flyers, trapping magazines as well as electronic media. Class size should be capped to allow instructor an easily manageable group of students. Instructors are encouraged to team teach with other trappers for mutual encouragement, and to generously share their experiences with the students in order to clarify points of instruction.

Before each lesson, instructors should check the lesson plan they are following to make certain that they have adequate facilities, equipment and student materials for the session. Any scheduled guest speakers should be contacted well in advance to confirm their commitment to insure the "flow" of your classes is not unnecessarily disrupted.

At the first class meeting, instructors should introduce themselves and give a brief background and then give an overview of course content and objectives as well as a class schedule. Handing out the Student Registration and Parental Release Forms should be the first order of business. Adult students can simply sign off on the document but juveniles must have parental consent to continue with the class.

Most of the terms used in the student manual are defined in the glossary toward the end of the manual. Students should constantly be encouraged to look up any unfamiliar words.

Lesson 1 Introduction/History

Approximate Time: 30 Minutes

Purpose: To introduce the subject; to acquaint students with course objectives; to provide background on trapping in history and heritage.

Instructor Outline:

I Introduction

- A. Introduction of instructors and any guest speakers.
- B. Purpose of course
 - 1. Improve knowledge of Minnesota furbearers and their management
 - 2. Provide basic information needed to trap in a responsible manner.
- C. Justification for course
 - 1. Many common trapping abuses are the result of lack of knowledge or lack of experience.
 - 2. Young or inexperienced trappers often don't have direct sources of practical trapping information available to them.
 - 3. Getting young trappers started on the right foot will help insure our sport continues indefinitely. Ethical conduct in the field and respectful treatment of the animals we pursue will help to insure the proud history of trapping continues.
- D. Objectives of the course (Read aloud objectives from student manual)
- E. What is expected of student?
 - 1. Read assigned material from Manual several times before lessons. Write down questions you may have.
 - 2. Willness to learn from those with more experience.
- F. What does the student receive after successfully "graduating" class?
 - 1. Certification card
 - 2. Trapper Education Program shoulder patch
 - 3. NTA Trapping Handbook
 - 4. Other Graduate Materials Available

II. History of Trapping and the Fur Trade

- A. Review history of the fur trade era (1600's to early 1800's)
- B. Discuss factors that led to the demise of the early fur trade
 - 1. Overexploitation Caused by;
 - a.) Lack of Regulation (no limits seasons etc.)
 - b.) Competition
 - c.) Lack of Conservation Ethic
 - 2. Habitat Destruction
 - a.) Land clearing and unregulated logging
 - b.) Wetlands drainage
 - c.) Agriculture (excessive plowing)
 - 3. Changes in the fur marketplace
 - a.) Beaver supply declined
 - b.) Silk replaces beaver felt
- C. Discuss factors that led to a comeback of the fur trade.

1. Regulations
 - a.) Minnesota legislature established first closed seasons in 1867 which prohibited the taking of mink, muskrat or river otter between May 1 and November 15th.
 - b.) Legislature first provided for salaried game wardens in 1891
 - c.) First resident trapping license established in 1919 for \$1.00
- D. Department of Conservation organized in 1931. (Today MN Department of Natural Resources)
 - a.) First modern beaver trapping season held in 1939, otter in 1945, fisher in 1977, marten in 1985
 - b.) Protection provided in spring and summer for raccoon 1975, lynx 1976, red fox, grey fox and bobcat- 1977, badger 1979 and opossum in 1985.
2. Habitat Protection and Management
 - a.) Wetland protection
 - b.) Private land programs
 - c.) Habitat acquisition programs
 - d.) Forestry/Wildlife coordination
 - e.)
- E. State and National Trappers Organizations
 - a.) American Trappers Association
(Folded in 1935 first attempt at organizing trappers at a national level)
 - b.) National Trappers Association 1959
 - c.) Minnesota Trappers Association -1959
 - d.) Fur Takers of America- 1968
- F. Questions from students and open discussion

Reading assignment for next class?

Lesson 2 Motivations/Ethics

Approximate Time: 60 minutes

Purpose: To explain the reasons for trapping; to discuss ethical trapper behavior; to explain responsibilities to self, others and animals.

Instructor Outline:

- I Motivations
 - A.)Economics
 - B.)Challenge and Recreation
 - C.)Aesthetics and Heritage
 - D.)Damage Control, Ethics and Responsibilities
 - E.)Responsibilities (to self, others and animals)
 - F.)Code of Responsible Trapping (discuss items 1-17)
 - G.)Avoiding Common Mistakes
 - 1.) Discuss common mistakes from Manual
 - 2.) Discuss common mistakes as instructor deems appropriate
- I. Legal Requirements

Review game laws and reasons for them (MN Hunting and Trapping Regulations Handbook)

- A.) Go through current regulations handbook page by page pertaining to trapping- explain common understanding and application. (A Conservation Officer is extremely valuable to have in attendance during this portion.)
- B.) Special Regulations- At the time of this revision there were special regulations in place for northeastern Minnesota referred to as the “lynx zone.” Any special regulations pertaining to individual animals should be thoroughly reviewed even if these animals do not reside in your immediate trapping area.

III Ethics on Private Land

- C.) Avoid setting footholds, snares, body grippers near buildings without permission (dog proof traps may be acceptable.)
- D.) Avoid any possible domestic animal catch accidents.
- E.) Don’t drive on wet fields.
- F.) Respect gates and fences.
- G.) How to obtain permission to trap
 - 1.) Be courteous
 - 2.) Give name address and contact information to landowner in writing.

Lesson 3 Furbearer Management/ Resources

Approximate Time: 60 minutes

Purpose: To acquaint students with general wildlife management principles; to describe the various components of furbearer management in Minnesota; to explain the reasons for trapping laws; to familiarize students with furbearing animals in Minnesota.

Instructor Outline:

- I. Furbearer Management Principles
 - A.) Habitat (food, water, shelter, space)
 - B.) Carrying Capacity (maximum number of animals habitat can support comfortably)
 - C.) Limiting Factors- What is keeping the land/habitat from supporting more?
 - D.) Harvestable Surplus- How many can be safely removed without reducing the breeding stock and when should they be taken?
 - E.) Annual Turnover Rate- Indicates how fast members of a given animal population reproduce and die.
 - F.) Recruitment-How many young will survive in any given year to reproduce?
- II. Minnesota’s Furbearer Resources
 - A.) Minnesota has many significant furbearer species. (Have students list as many as they can think of)
 - B.) Briefly discuss the characteristics, habits and range of each species and how to locate and identify sign from each.
 - C.) Discuss trapping tactics for each species where applicable and time permits.
- IV Questions and Open Discussion

Reading Assignment for next class?

Lesson 4 Tools of the Trade: Equipment and its Care

Approximate Time: 60 minutes

Purpose: To acquaint students with traps and trapping equipment to explain what trapping equipment is appropriate for what species in what applications and to demonstrate how to safely and properly set and place these traps for furbearers.

Instructor Outline:

I Types of Traps

There are three basic categories of traps. (Have students identify them)

A.) Foothold Traps

- 1.) Hold animal by foot or leg
- 2.) Can be used on land or in water
- 3.) Can be a live holding (land) or used in dispatch (drowning sets in water)
- 4.) Types
 - a.) Longspring (single or double)
 - b.) Coilspring
 - c.) Jump (underspring- no longer in production)
 - d.) Foot snare (Belisle)
 - e.) Specialized Traps-(Coon Dagger, Duke Dog Proof, Grizz, Egg Trap, Duffer's etc.)
- 5.) Name the parts of a typical foothold
- 6.) Approximate Sizes
- 7.) Advantages and Disadvantages

B) Body Gripping Traps

- 1.) Hold the animal by the body and dispatch animal by a combination of striking and clamping forces on the neck and chest.
- 2.) Used primarily in the water and for small to medium species on land
- 3.) Not generally effective for wary animals like fox and coyote.
- 4.) Some larger sizes prohibited on land as they may pose a threat to domestic pets.
- 5.) Identify parts of body gripping traps and explain trigger placement and tension
- 6.) Appropriate and legal sizes for various furbearers (Consult Regulations Handbook)
- 7.) Advantages and Disadvantages
- 8.) Snares
 - a.) a simplified type of body gripping device
 - b.) May either dispatch animal or hold alive depending on type and application can be used in drowning sets and under ice applications as well.
 - c.) Strictly regulated by law
 - d.) Advantages and Disadvantages of Snares

C.) Box or Cage Traps

- 1.) Enclose animal in a wire cage or box of wood or other material (plastic)
- 2.) Valuable for unwary animals and in areas frequented by people and their pets.
- 3.) Difficult to conceal and prone to theft or damage.
- 4.) Generally ineffective for wary animals such as foxes and coyotes.
- 5.) Appropriate sizes
- 6.) Other Advantages and Disadvantages

II Trapping Equipment

Display and discuss the need for and use of each of the following if available.

Basic Equipment

- 1.) Packbasket, packsack, bucket etc
- 2.) Trap tags
- 3.) Wire chain swivels
- 4.) Pliers, wire/cable cutters
- 5.) Axe, hatchet or saw
- 6.) Digging tools
- 7.) Clean clothing boots

A.) Land Trapping Equipment

1. Sifter
2. Kneeling cloth/pad
3. Gloves
4. Pan covers/Trappers Cap etc
5. Stakes, Drags, Anchoring Systems
6. Release pole etc

B.) Water Trapping Equipment

1. Rubber gloves and boots
2. Drowning systems
3. Wading staff/ Shovel
4. Anchoring systems
5. Ice chisel

C.) Lures, Scents and Baits

1. Discuss difference between lures, scents and baits.
2. Very attractive when made from natural sources like urine, glands and musk.
3. Food based lures and baits are more likely to attract domestic pets and non-target animals and should be used with caution in mind.
4. Commercial lures are best for inexperienced. They are far cheaper and more effective than many homemade creations.

III Other Tools

A.) Fur Handling Tools

1. Skinning/Pelting Knives
2. Sharpening stones, steels
3. Gambrel or Hanging System for Pelting
4. Fleshing Beam
5. Fleshing Knives
6. Stretchers, boards and drying frames

IV Trap Setting

Demonstrate how to set each type of trap and allow students to handle and set appropriate sized traps.

V Equipment Preparation

A. Inspection and proper adjustment, file sharp edges, check for weak or bent parts.

B. Preparation- Clean, free of odor (new traps should be washed to remove factory oils).

C. Dyeing – Optional aids in concealment.

Types of Dyes

- 1.) *Hot Dyes – Requires heat source and bringing water to a boil.
- 2.) Cold Dips- Either water or petroleum based
- 3.) *Waxing- Optional prevents rust, conceals odors, increase trap sensitivity not as prone to freezing down.

** Inexperienced trappers should seek a qualified adult to assist when dyeing or waxing traps. These processes should always be done outdoor to insure safety.*

- 4.) Storage- Keep traps away from strong foreign odors in relatively open air whenever possible.

Reading Assignment for next class?

Lesson 5 Basic Trap Sets and Systems

Approximate Time: Four hours field time (much less if simulated in classroom)

Purpose: Teach students how to identify sign and appropriate set locations; How to correctly make basic and effective sets for common furbearers.

Instructor Outline:

I. Identifying sign and choosing appropriate set locations

- A.) Examples of sign- Droppings, tracks, hair, evidence of feeding (gnawing, clipping, predation) digging or scratching, disturbed ground or vegetation.
- B.) Discuss appropriate and inappropriate set locations for each group of species and give reasons for your determinations.
- C.) * Have students take photos, make casts, or sketches of tracks they find during the week. A field guide with a track key is also useful to help students positively identify a variety of animal sign.

** Optional assignment*

II Trap anchoring Options?

- A. Discuss proper methods of anchoring traps for each species.
 - 1.) Use of stakes
 - 2.) Grapples/ Drags
 - 3.) Swivels and attachment hardware
 - 4.) Drowning systems

III Standard Sets

Demonstrate how to make as many representative types as possible using foothold and body grippers

A. Water Sets

- 1.) Feedbed
- 2.) Float
- 3.) Channel
- 4.) Hole
- 5.) Trail/Runway
- 6.) Spring Run
- 7.) Under Ice Bait
- 8.) Obstruction
- 9.) Spillway
- 10.) Scent/Castor
- 11.) Toilet
- 12.) Blind

B. Land Sets

- 1.) Cubbies
- 2.) Boxes/ Container
- 3.) Cages
- 4.) Dirt Hole
- 5.) Scent/ Urine Post
- 6.) Pole sets
- 7.) Spring Hole (Water set)
- 8.) Flat

C. Trap Tending

Emphasize legal and ethical responsibility to tend traps as required by law.

- 1.) Check traps frequently as required by law preferably in morning. Nearly all furbearers are most active between dusk and dawn so the animal would be in the trap the shortest amount of time. This helps to eliminate loss and potential injury to an animal alive in a trap.
- 2.) Proper methods to dispatch a live animal
- 3.) Proper/ Safe release techniques for non-target or out of season catches.
- 4.) Discuss precautions to avoid being bitten or scratched by wild animal in a trap. Simply wearing heavy boots and gloves is not adequate protection.

Reading Assignment for next class?

Lesson 6 Skinning and Fur Handling

Approximate Time: Demo only 60 minutes, Student participation- Allow at least two hours

Purpose: To acquaint students with skinning/pelting and fur handling equipment in order to demonstrate how to correctly pelt and cure common furbearer pelts.

If demonstrations must be performed in a public facility securing permission to pelts should be cleared beforehand. Please be certain to keep things clean and keep odors to a minimum to insure future use of facility.

- I Review fur handling equipment with class
- II Skinning and Fur Handling
 - A. Emphasize good hygiene when and after handling wild animals
 - B. Cased Furs
 - 1.) Skinning
 - 2.) Freezing
 - 3.) Fleshing
 - 4.) Drying
 - 5.) Special Handling? (windows, pleats, feet on/off?)
 - C. Open Furs
 - 1.) Beaver (rough skin and flesh)
 - 2.) Beaver clean skin
 - 3.) Boarding/ Hooping Beaver
 - 4.) Special markets? (Badger?)
- III Carcass Utilization
 - A. Meat
 - B. Glands
 - C. Skulls and skeletons
 - D. Claws and Teeth
 - E. Bait stations
 - F. Proper Disposal
- IV Tanning
 - A. Legal Requirements
 - B. Tanning for Resale
 - C. Commercial Tanning/Dressing

V Open Discussion encourage question and answer format.
Reading Assignment for next class?

Lesson 7 Fur Quality/ Fur Marketing/ Safety and Survival

Approximate Time: 90 Minutes

Instructor Outline:

I Fur and Grading

A. Primeness

- 1.) Degree of development of winter coat on furbearer.
- 2.) Prime is triggered by shortening of daylight hours (photoperiod) not the drop in temperature.
- 3.) How to determine degree of primeness?
 - a. Color and texture of leather
 - b. Fur length and thickness
 - c. Color of fur in some cases (weasels)

B. Size

1. Small
2. Medium
3. Large
4. Extra Large
5. Blanket (beaver over 65 inches)

C. Color

Color especially important in

- 1.) Foxes
- 2.) Raccoon
- 3.) Otter
- 4.) Beaver
- 5.) Martens
- 6.) Fisher
- 7.) Other pelts according to market demand and manufacturing styles popular at the time.

II Safety and Survival

Stress the “buddy system” and informing someone (parent in case of young trapper) where you are going and when you plan on returning.

- A. Hypothermia
- B. Frostbite
- C. Thin Ice
- D. Cuts /Lacerations
- E. Becoming Lost
- F. Trapping Yourself (getting caught in a trap)
- G. Wildlife Diseases
 1. Tetanus
 2. Rabies
 3. Tularemia
 4. Lyme
 5. Parasites
 6. Mange
 7. West Nile Virus
 8. Trichinosis

III Fur Marketing- Selling your Catch!

- A. Local Furbuyer
- B. Traveling Furbuyer
- C. Outstate Buyer through mail
- D. Auction Services
- E. How to store, ship furs – legal requirements
- F. Taxidermists
 - 1.) Non-protected animals need no special licensure may sell to anyone. (Coyotes, weasels, flying squirrels etc.)
 - 2.) *Protected animals can only be sold to a licensed furbuyer.
**Those with an open and closed season such as foxes, raccoons, fisher, bobcat etc*

IV Taxes and the Trapper

- A. Legally all income must be reported to both State and Federal government.
- B. Keeping accurate records of expenses important
- C. For most hobbyists, expenses exceed income so tax liability is close to zero.

V The Future of Trapping

- A. Each trapper has a role and responsibility to the future of the sport.
- B. Trappers must be willing to share their knowledge and adapt to changing conditions
- C. Open Discussion Question and answer

Lesson 8 Cable Devices (Snaring)

Approximate Time: 60 minutes

Purpose: To acquaint students with cable devices and their proper use and necessary precautions.

Instructor Outline:

- I Introduction
- II Identify cable devices and their components
 - A. Cable Devices
 - B. Non Powered Cable Devices
 - C. Powered Cable Devices
 - D. Relaxing lock
 - E. Non- Relaxing lock
 - F. Breakaway Devices
 - G. Stops
 - H. Swivels
 - I. Cable ends ferrule
 - J. Anchoring Systems
 - K. Stabilizing Systems
 - L. Cable cutters
- III Explain procedures for treating cable devices
 - A. Boiling
 - B. Vinegar
 - C. Washing
 - D. No- Treatment
- IV Explain procedure for making selective snare sets using cable devices
 - A. Aquatic Furbearers
 - B. Land Furbearers

V Snare hanging demonstrations in classroom or field

After the Class...

All student registration forms must be sent to Education Coordinator in order to provide the DNR with the graduate's "vital statistics" which will allow license purchase. Please be certain that students fill out all information accurately. No middle initials or nicknames (Ray if is legal name is Raymond etc.) This is incredibly important to insure a smooth trapping license purchase.

Thanks again for hosting!

Shawn