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HUMANE TRAP FOR VERMIN

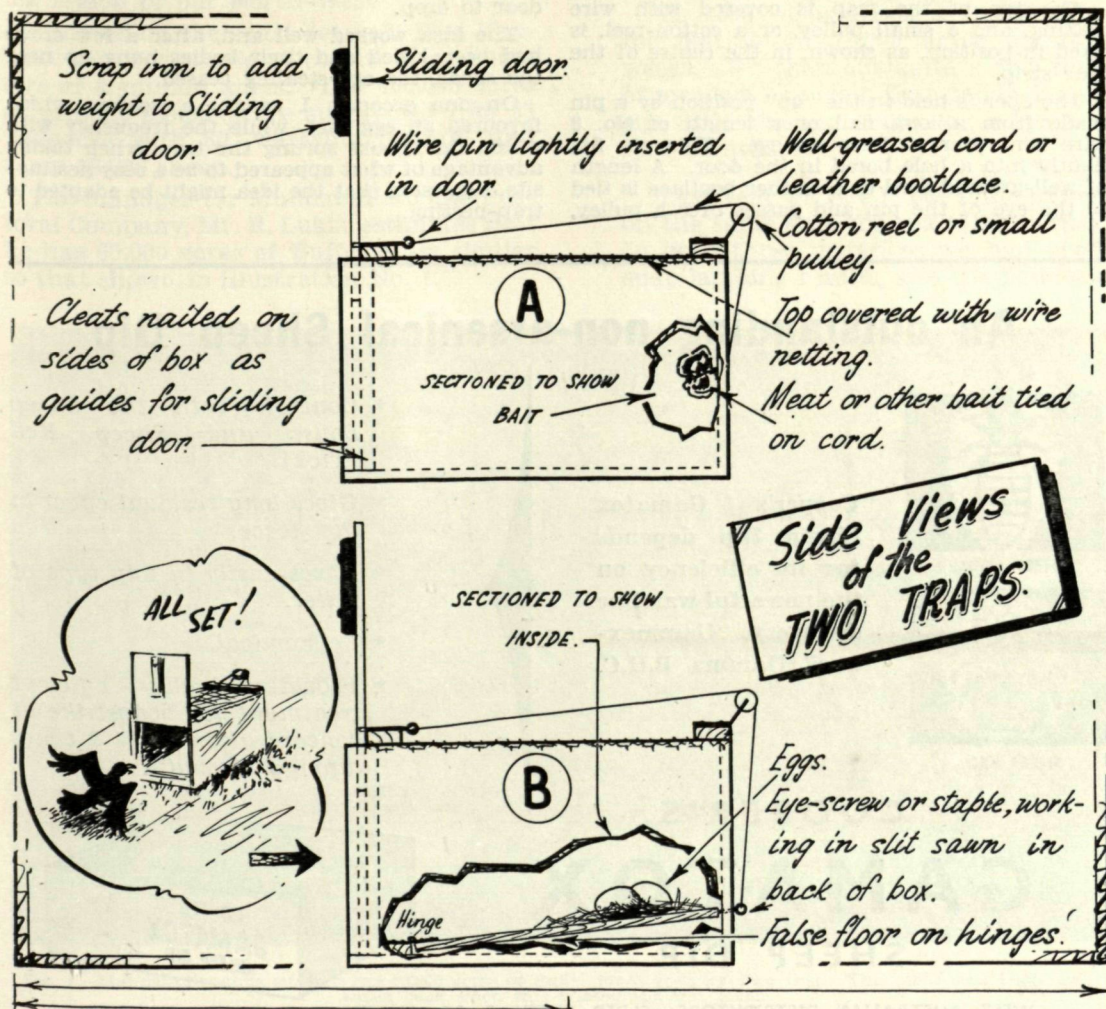
Dealing with the Wild Cat Menace

By J. A. MALLETT

SEVERAL requests for advice on trapping wild cats have been received this season mainly from poultry-farmers, who report heavy losses of chicks. The killers are usually the descendants of domesticated cats which have "gone bush" although occasionally the spotted "native cat" or chuditch will raid poultry houses.

Probably the best method of dealing with these pests is the box trap (A). Setting rabbit traps to catch cats is a barbarous practice and such traps are dangerous to domestic pets, poultry and harmless birds. Poison baits are equally unselective in their action.

The box trap is easy to make, is most effective in operation and does not injure the animals it catches. Any harmless captures may be released unhurt, while the real culprits can be painlessly dispatched by a bullet before being removed from the trap.



Incidentally if you catch any of our rarer native animals, do not kill them, but send them to the Zoological Gardens.

CONSTRUCTION

Any well-made wooden box will serve as the body of the trap—a kerosene-case is ideal.

Carefully remove the lid and one end of the box, and nail two strips of wood across the top as shown in Diagram A—one at the back to carry the pulley, and the other about 1½ in. from the open end.

Cut portion of the lid into half-inch strips and screw two cleats on the inside of each of the box sides, far enough apart to allow the door to slide freely between them.

The end of the case will serve as a sliding door, but it is advisable to screw a piece of scrap metal to the front to give the extra weight needed for a quick drop. Plane the edges smooth and smear a little grease along the channel in which the door slides.

The top of the trap is covered with wire netting, and a small pulley, or a cotton-reel, is fixed in position, as shown, in the centre of the rear strip.

The door is held in the "up" position by a pin made from a long nail or a length of No. 8 wire bent over to form an eye. This pin fits lightly into a hole bored in the door. A length of well-greased cord or a leather bootlace is tied to the eye of the pin and passes over a pulley,

then down through a hole in the back of the trap. A piece of meat or other suitable bait is attached to the end of the cord.

The trap is set so that the slightest pull on the bait withdraws the pin and allows the door to drop.

CATCHING CROWS

At one time, while farming in the wheatbelt, I found that crows were stealing most of the eggs laid by my fowls, so I modified the box trap design to catch those wily birds. (See Diagram B.)

When stealing eggs they tended to ignore the meat baits, so I put a false floor in the trap, and hinged it to a strip of wood nailed across the front. An eye-screw or staple was fixed in the end of the false floor and a slot was cut in the rear end of the trap to allow the eye-screw to move freely up and down.

A nest containing one or two eggs was placed on the false floor and the trap was then lightly adjusted so that any extra weight on the floor caused the pin to be withdrawn and allowed the door to drop.

The idea worked well and, after a few crows had been killed and their bodies hung up near the sheds, the egg-stealing ceased.

On one occasion I caught a goanna which favoured an egg diet, while the frequency with which the chooks sprung the trap, when taking advantage of what appeared to be a cosy nesting-site, suggested that the idea might be adapted to trap-nesting.

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