

**Prizes for improved vermin traps : First, £50, second, £25 / John Colam.**

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## PRIZES FOR IMPROVED VERMIN TRAPS.

*First, £50. Second, £25.*

THE Committee of the R.S.P.C.A. have much pleasure in renewing their premiums for improved vermin traps, designed to supersede the present cruel steel trap used in preserves. The improved traps must be portable, inexpensive, weather-proof, easy of adaptation to the various requirements of trapping, simple in manipulation, effectual, and humane—killing instantly, or capturing without pain. The Committee reserve to themselves the right to refuse to award either or both of the above premiums, in the event of the aforesaid conditions being insufficiently complied with in the opinion of the judges. Specimens must be sent, carriage paid, on or before the 30th day of September next, addressed to the undersigned, and stamped with a private mark. A similar mark to be sent in a sealed envelope, with a letter giving full name and address of the competitor. Drawings will not be accepted.

The Committee are anxious to succeed in providing a contrivance for the prevention of the terrible cruelty now perpetrated in thousands of preserves in this country by the employment of steel traps, and therefore they respectfully suggest to mechanical competitors the desirability of making themselves acquainted with the habits of vermin, and to trappers the desirability of studying mechanism, experience in previous competitions having shown that a knowledge both of animals and mechanism is essential to success.

The first endeavour of an inventor, on reading the above conditions, should be to get accurate information respecting the steel trap at present in use (which it will be his object to supersede), and the purposes for which it is used. A steel trap may be purchased at almost any ironmonger's shop. It is used for catching hares, rabbits, wild cats, weasels, stoats, pole-cats, and other quadrupeds; as well as magpies, crows, jays, owls, etc. It is of no avail to contend that some of those animals ought not to be killed—gamekeepers and game preservers will continue to kill them, using the most effectual instrument for that purpose. The object of the competition is, therefore, to supply a substitute which shall be acceptable to them, and at the same time free from objections relating to cruelty. The inventor should be something more than a mechanist or an engineer. It is possible to construct a trap of the most effectual kind for holding or killing a captured animal which, nevertheless, would be utterly valueless to the gamekeeper. No trap, however simple or ingenious its details may be, will be of any service unless vermin enter it. Many animals cannot be allured into traps by baits, and are caught only when traps are placed on their runs.

In former competitions "dead-falls" were offered, which were neither portable nor free from other objections. Vermin are suspicious, and seem to possess the power of scenting a place where the blood of another animal has been spilled; heavy "dead-falls," which smash animals, are therefore objectionable; nor can they be used for taking rabbits. "Pit-falls" are not portable, and in other respects cannot be made to supersede the steel trap.

In previous competitions a large number of traps, adapted only for catching in-door vermin, were sent up, and were eliminated by the judges in their first examination of the models, because they were not suitable for capturing animals in game preserves.

Inventors should bear in mind that the trap must be adapted for taking rabbits, and that it is illegal to place traps above ground for such purpose; consequently, rabbit traps when used must be put into rabbit holes.

It should also be kept in mind by inventors that game preservers are generally fox preservers also, who have a great objection to the capture of foxes in vermin traps.

Undoubtedly, the best trap for humane purposes is that which kills instantly, provided no trace is left behind of its previous operations, that an animal can detect.

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