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“Y” Pole for Handling Fractious Dogs and Wild Canids

The Y pole is an essential tool for animal shelter personnel who must handle the occasional intractable dog in a kennel. It is also a valuable device for wildlife professionals working with fractious canids such as wolves and coyotes. The Y pole is mainly effective for restraining animals which are already cornered or captured, but not yet safe enough to handle. It also replaces most uses of the snare pole so widely used in animal control.



Intended as a humane tool to quietly control an animal, the Y pole allows practitioners to perform simple hands-on procedures such as:

- 1) Injecting vaccinations, antibiotics, or anesthesia.
- 2) Partial physical examinations and minor treatment of wounds.
- 3) Additional physical restraint if the animal must be moved or handled in a more extensive manner.

The Y pole utilizes fundamental principles of canid behavior to restrain animals, deriving about 75 percent of its effectiveness through psychological restraint, supported by 25 percent physical restraint. You cannot force an animal to submit to a Y pole, but since canids are a pack animal, most will indeed submit. It is the nature of canids to submit to this gentle restraint device when properly used. If you use your knowledge and sense of the animal's behavior, and combine dominance with kindness and calm movements (so the animal feels a willingness to submit), success will follow. If a dog or wild canid absolutely refuses to submit, the Y pole can be used as a distracter for follow-up such as a syringe pole.

How to Use the Y Pole

Do not enter into any situation with the Y pole unless you know it is safe. Slowly approach the animal towards its shoulder, holding the Y pole with two hands. The “Y” end should be pointing to the neck with tines positioned vertically, ready to slide into place. Have good posture and convey kind dominance. Slowly move closer. If the animal is very worried, let it smell the Y pole. If it feels right, gently pet the animal with the Y pole so it feels less threatened. Watch for signs the animal has surrendered, such as the “trance” state often apparent when animals shift into submission. Then gently and slowly put the Y in place across the animal's neck, moving calmly and slowly to maintain the animal's submission.

Once the Y pole is in place across the neck and the animal is firmly pinned in a reasonable position, the animal may be calmed further by covering the head and eyes with a towel, but apply the towel safely and slowly. If needed, a second Y pole can be applied by a second person to the flank just in front of the hip (see lower picture). When the animal has fully submitted and is controlled, the person with the Y pole must remain in place, focusing on the animal and standing perfectly still. Other people can then perform procedures such as those described above, but they must be aware if the safety of the situation changes. *Be sure to use this tool quietly. The more excited the animal is, the calmer the handler should be.*



A Y pole designed by wildlife veterinarian Dr. Mark Johnson of Global Wildlife Resources, Inc. and manufactured to exacting standards by Freeman Design is available through **Heart of the Earth Animal Equipment**. Call 800-526-1644 or visit www.animal-traps.com.

A training video for humane and effective use of the Y pole with dogs and wolves will be available by Summer 2008 through the Global Wildlife Resources, Inc. web site (www.wildliferesources.org) or at **Animal of the Earth Animal Equipment**. Call 800-526-1644 or visit www.animal-traps.com.