



# New Jersey Furbearer Management Newsletter

## Fall 2015

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
Upland Wildlife and Furbearer Project



### Important Upcoming Dates:

- Sept/Oct weekends - Trapper Education courses are scheduled. Call 877-2-HUNT NJ for schedule and additional information.
- October 1-31 – Application period for beaver and otter permits.
- Sunday October 4 – New Jersey Trappers Association annual convention at Space Farms.
- Sunday November 1 – New Jersey Fur Harvesters annual convention at Atsion State Park.

### Remember:

- To trap with or use cable restraints, a person must have first passed a Fish and Wildlife-approved trapper education course which included use of cable restraints and carry their course completion card while trapping.
- Any person must be at least 12 years of age in order to obtain a trapping license.
- TAKE A KID TRAPPING!



Errors in the 2015-16 New Jersey Hunting and Trapping Digest regarding furbearers and corrected information

### Coyotes Errors:

Page 60 - **Note: All successful coyote hunters must report their coyote harvest via the Automated Harvest Report System no later than 8 PM Eastern Time on the day of harvest...**

Page 63 - \* **All harvested coyotes must be reported via the Automated Harvest Reporting system no later than 8 p.m. on the day of harvest.**

Page 66 – **Any person (including a farmer) who traps a coyote must report their harvest via the Automated Harvest Reporting System no later than 8 PM on the day of harvest.**

**Correction** - Since the Automated Harvest Reporting system for coyotes will not yet be online this season the following applies: *All successful coyote hunters must report any coyote harvested to a Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement Office within 24 hours. Callers must identify themselves by name, CID# and daytime phone number.*

### Trap Tag Error:

Page 66 - **All traps set must bear a legible tag of durable material with the Conservation Identification Number (CID#) of the person setting, using and maintaining the traps.**

**Correction** - *All traps set or used must bear a legible tag of durable material with the name and address of the person setting, using and maintaining the traps. Trap tags with Fish and*

*Wildlife-issued trap identification number or the trapper's Conservation Identification Number (CID#) may be used in lieu of name and address to mark each trap.*

### **Weasel Error:**

Page 67, first column – The heading reads, “**Live-capture cable restraints set for coyote, fox, opossum, raccoon, skunk and weasel shall be subject to the following regulations:**”

Correction – The heading should read, “*Live-capture cable restraints set for coyote, fox, opossum, raccoon and skunk shall be subject to the following regulations:*” Weasel regulations are now the same as those for mink, muskrat and nutria (i.e., relaxing locks and deer stops are not required; maximum loop size is 4 inches and maximum height above the ground is 7 inches).

### **New Regulations Effective 2015-16 (See Digest, page 66-67)**

- Licensed trappers may carry and use an air gun (.177 to .22 caliber) to dispatch legally captured animals other than muskrat. A NJ Rifle Permit is **not required** when using an air gun.
- Trappers are now **required to report any incidental bobcat** captures to NJDFW within 24 hours of discovery by calling 1-877-WarnDEP (1-877-927-6336). *If the bobcat is alive, please call as soon as possible so that a NJDFW wildlife technician can respond and assist in releasing the animal.*
- Enclosed foothold traps (such as the Duffer, Egg or Lil Grizz) have been approved for use in New Jersey provided they are activated by a pulling force only.
- All live capture cable restraints **must** now include a “relaxing-type” lock (i.e., a lock that releases constriction pressure when the animal stops pulling). This requirement **does not apply** to cable restraints which are completely submerged underwater at all times (as for beaver or otter), or which are set for mink, muskrat, nutria or weasel. *All cable restraints purchased from any trapper's supply company or other source (or constructed by you) for use in New Jersey must conform to the new relaxing lock requirement.* For lock examples, please click on [snare locks](#) (New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife does not endorse or promote one trapper supply or source over another).
- Weasels were added to live capture cable restraint regulations applying to mink, muskrat and nutria.

### **Furbearer Facts:**

#### **The Nutria (*Myocastor coypus*)**

In the 1980s, two nutria (*Myocastor coypus*) were trapped in New Jersey's salt marshes along the Delaware River in Burlington County. At that time, and because of the incident, the nutria was listed as a furbearer so the species could be trapped during the state's trapping season. This was done in the hope that the species would be eliminated from the state. Each year, the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife includes nutria on its list of species that can be trapped, but no harvest has ever been reported by respondents to the annual Trapper Harvest, Recreational and Economic Survey in over 30 years

Nutria are native to South America but were intentionally introduced into North America because of their potential fur value. The first nutrias were imported in 1899 to Elizabeth Lake, California for fur farming but were not successful in reproducing, and so very little information is available regarding their fate. Over the next 40 years, fur ranches were established in California, Washington, Oregon, Michigan, New Mexico, Louisiana, Ohio, Utah and elsewhere although the 1930s were the boom years for establishing nutria ranches in the United States.



After the boom years, World War II came and nutria farming took a nosedive. This collapse can be attributed to poor reproduction, low fur prices and competition with beaver pelts, which also were bringing low prices. A number of the nutria ranchers released their nutria or did nothing to recapture those that escaped due

to poor holding facilities, storms or floods. Individuals and state and federal agencies moved nutria into at least thirty states in the United States and populations have established themselves and remain, at least in some degree, in about eighteen of those states, mainly throughout the south. This is because nutrias can tolerate winters in temperate areas only. In the late 1940s, a hurricane aided the scattering of nutria over wide areas of coastal southwest Louisiana and southeast Texas. Currently, there is virtually no commercial fur market and only a very small meat market for nutria, so there is very little harvest. This situation combined with the animal's reproductive success has led to a population boom throughout much of their introduced range.

As an invasive species, nutria have negative impacts on most other North American wildlife species. Because the species is colonial in nature, nutria will overeat the edible plants within their home range, destroying the productivity of the desirable plant species resulting in the production of less favored foods for themselves and other wildlife species. Large populations of nutria have a negative impact on the ability of the habitat to support both muskrats and waterfowl because of this habitat destruction.

The adult nutria is about 14 inches long from the nose to the base of the tail, while its tail is 12 to 17 inches long, round, and hairless. Nutria average 16 to 18 pounds in weight and may occasionally weigh 25 pounds or more. Nutria are brownish, and both sexes are similar in appearance, size and weight. Nutria are unique in that the species has 3 sets or lengths of fur. These 3 fur sets consist of primary guard hairs about 3 inches in length, then secondary guard hairs beneath this layer which are more numerous and give the species its overall coloration, then the underfur which is shorter and less dense than either muskrat or beaver underfur (which explains the lower fur value for nutria).

Whiskers on nutria are very obvious. These whiskers are about 4 inches in length, light colored and are numerous. Unique placement of teeth allows the nutria to cut off underwater plants without getting water into its mouth. The mouth also has glands located near the corners that produce oils that the nutria uses to comb and waterproof its fur. Front feet have five toes, including a small toe corresponding to our thumb. Hind feet are much larger and are unique as all toes are connected by a web of skin except for the toe that corresponds to the little toe on humans.

In North America, nutrias breed in any month of the year. One male normally has 2 or 3 mates that share the same burrow. Female nutria are sexually mature at about 5 1/2 months of age, and female nutria usually have two litters per year. Females can breed again within two days after giving birth to a litter. Litter sizes vary according to a cycle. The first litter is small, usually with 2 to 4 being born. The second litter is larger with 4 to 6 offspring. The third litter is smaller than the second, and the fourth again increases in size. For one reason or another, each litter is either larger or smaller than the litter previous preceding it, and according to a pattern. If litter sizes were averaged, five would probably be the average size. Normally, females are capable of producing only 6 litters in their lifetime; females who produce seven litters in their lifetime are rare. A 4-year old nutria is considered old.



Photographs recently submitted with a nutria sighting report are actually those of a mud-covered river otter. While the photo on the left might at first glance appear to be a nutria, the photo on the right clearly shows a long-bodied animal with an extended neck.

NJDFW receives a number of "nutria" sightings annually from the general public, none of which have been confirmed.

## Canine Sarcoptic Mange (*Sarcoptes scabiei canis*)



Canine sarcoptic mange is probably the biggest killer of red foxes and coyotes in New Jersey. It is a highly contagious disease, can be easily spread, and affects many species including wildlife and domestic animals. It is caused by an infestation of *Sarcoptes scabiei canis*, a burrowing mite, causing intense itching from an allergic reaction to the mite and resulting in hair loss. Mites are not insects; they are more closely related to spiders. They are microscopic and cannot be seen with the naked eye. The canine sarcoptic mite has also been known to infest cats, pigs, horses, sheep, and various other species.

Adult *S. s. canis* mites live 3 to 4 weeks in the host's skin. After mating, the female burrows into the skin, depositing 3 to 4 eggs in the tunnel behind her. The eggs hatch in 3 to 10 days, larvae that in turn move about on the skin surface, eventually molt to a nymphal stage and then into an adult. The adults move on the surface of the skin where they mate and the cycle begins again with the female burrowing and laying eggs.

The season of the year and weather conditions influence how readily afflicted animals may succumb to the disease. In extremely cold conditions wildlife severely infected with mange will nearly always die of exposure, and from exhaustion, dehydration, and secondary infections. In late spring or summer the infected animals can survive the infection, and some might even improve if their immune system is not too compromised. All red foxes and coyotes may have a few of the mange mites on their body, but the weak and stressed animals (young, old, injured, etc.) are the most susceptible. The mites are spread through direct contact with sites (dens, etc.) where the mites are present or through contact with infected animals (other coyotes or foxes). In that sense, it's a "social" disease. Although a healthy animal, well fed and non-stressed, may have the mites present on its body, its immune system fights off and overcomes any problems.

Canine sarcoptic mange in wildlife and domestic animals usually causes itchiness, hair loss, crusty scabs (often seen first on the head), and thick, wrinkly skin. The skin changes can cause blindness, impaired hearing, and difficulty in eating. In advanced cases, the animal may be weak and emaciated and smell foul, which is caused by secondary infections due to the intense scratching. Gray foxes don't have a problem with mange. Domestic dogs can get mange by contact with an infected animal but are of course easily treated with ivermectin. Treatment of wild animals is difficult and not advised.



In humans, an infestation of canine sarcoptic mange generally causes a rash that usually looks like pimples, but may look like blisters or an inflammation; it usually appears on the forearms, thighs, and abdomen. The mites don't do well on humans so generally they die off. Although doctors don't often attempt to kill the mites with drugs, they may offer patients medication to control the itchiness so the patient doesn't scratch constantly, which could invite other infections.

It should be noted that when people in general - including some veterinarians - refer to "sarcoptic mange" in domestic cats, they are usually referring to Feline Mange, *Notoedres cati*, a mite closely related to *S. s. canis*, although as noted above, felines *can* contract Canine Sarcoptic Mange. But, in most feline cases it would be more correct to refer to Notoedric Mange, though the treatment for both mites is the same. Notoedric mange in cats generally produces facial itching and scabbing. As with Canine Mange mites, Notoedres mites are spread by contact with an infected animal and can infect humans, dogs, or rabbits. They do not live off their host for more than a few days at best.



***Please Remember to Report Your Coyotes!***

*Coyotes harvested by any method must be reported to a New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife Regional Law Enforcement office within 24 hours.*

**Regional NJ Fish and Wildlife Law Enforcement Office phone numbers:**

Northern Region Office 908-735-8240  
Central Region Office 609-259-2120  
Southern Region Office 856-629-0555

Furbearer Trivia

**Obligate vs. Facultative carnivores and Omnivores**

Any organism that gains its energy/nourishment from a diet consisting almost exclusively of animal tissue (meat) whether through predation or scavenging is a carnivore (*carne* meaning flesh and *vorare* meaning to devour). Carnivores that depend *exclusively* on bird, fish or animal flesh for their nutrition are considered **obligate** carnivores because their digestive system is geared to the consumption of meat. Carnivores that can subsist on non-animal food are considered **facultative** carnivores. Facultative in this case means optional or discretionary. Then there are **omnivores**, which derive their energy and nutrients from a variety of food sources that may include plants, animals, algae, fungi and bacteria.

As you probably already know, the features of eyes in front of the skull, canine teeth and/or carnassial teeth (the molar cheek teeth used for shearing meat) don't necessarily make an animal a predator or a carnivore, although most predators and carnivores have those attributes. In truth, these assumptions may be misleading, as some carnivores don't hunt per se and are scavengers - although most hunting carnivores will scavenge when the opportunity presents itself and they do share characteristics associated with hunting carnivores. Many of the animals that have these attributes are either facultative carnivores or omnivores.

The best way to determine whether a carnivore is obligate or facultative is through an examination of its digestive system. Obligate carnivores (such as bobcat) have a comparatively short digestive system, whereas facultative carnivores (such as coyote) have longer guts to break down tough cellulose found in plants. Omnivores (such as opossum) also have a longer gut, but lack true carnivore or herbivore specializations for acquiring / processing food, but which nevertheless consume both animals (by scavenging) and plants.

If a list of New Jersey's furbearers and game animals was compiled to categorize obligate or facultative carnivores and omnivores it would probably look something like is found on the following page:



### Obligate Carnivores

Bobcat – *Felis rufus* (Felidae)

River Otter – *Lontra canadensis* (Mustelidae)

Fisher - *Martes pennanti* (Mustelidae)

Mink – *Mustela vison* (Mustelidae)

Long-tailed Weasel – *Mustela frenata* (Mustelidae)

Short-tailed Weasel – *Mustela erminea* (Mustelidae)

### Facultative carnivores

Coyote – *Canis latrans* (Canidae)

Red Fox – *Vulpes vulpes* (Canidae)

Gray Fox – *Urocyon cinereoargenteus* (Canidae)

Striped Skunk – *Mephitis mephitis* (Mephitidae)

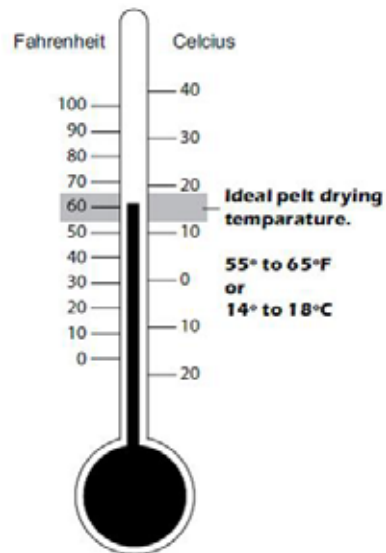
### Omnivores

Black Bear – *Ursus americana* (Ursidae)

Virginia Opossum- *Didelphis virginiana* (Didelphidae)

Raccoon – *Procyon lotor* (Procyonidae)

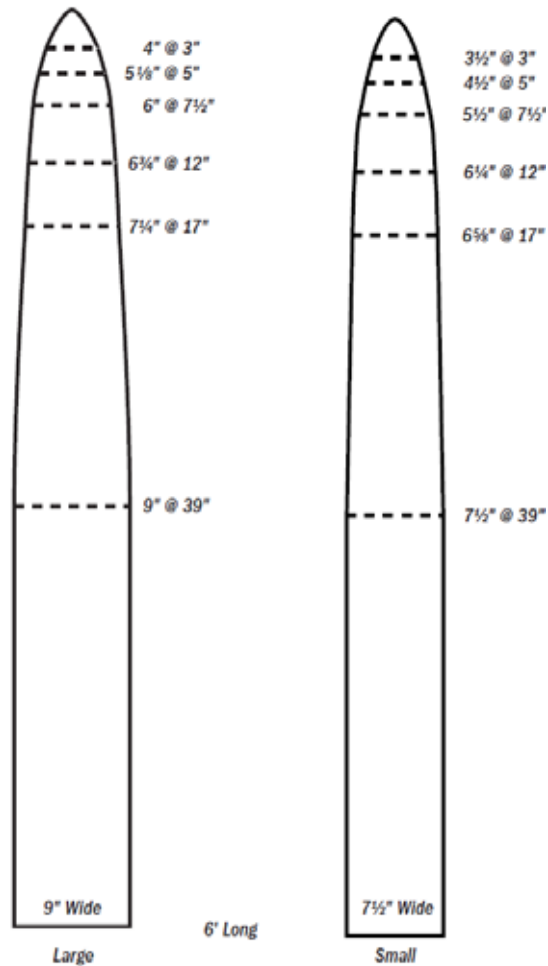
### The Ideal Pelt Drying Temperature



## Something to do during the early fall months!

Below are the dimensions for constructing your own wooden stretching boards. Wooden stretching boards are typically made from a soft wood like pine or basswood and are ½ inch in thickness. For those who might trap in other states, dimensions of boards for other furbearers are also included below.

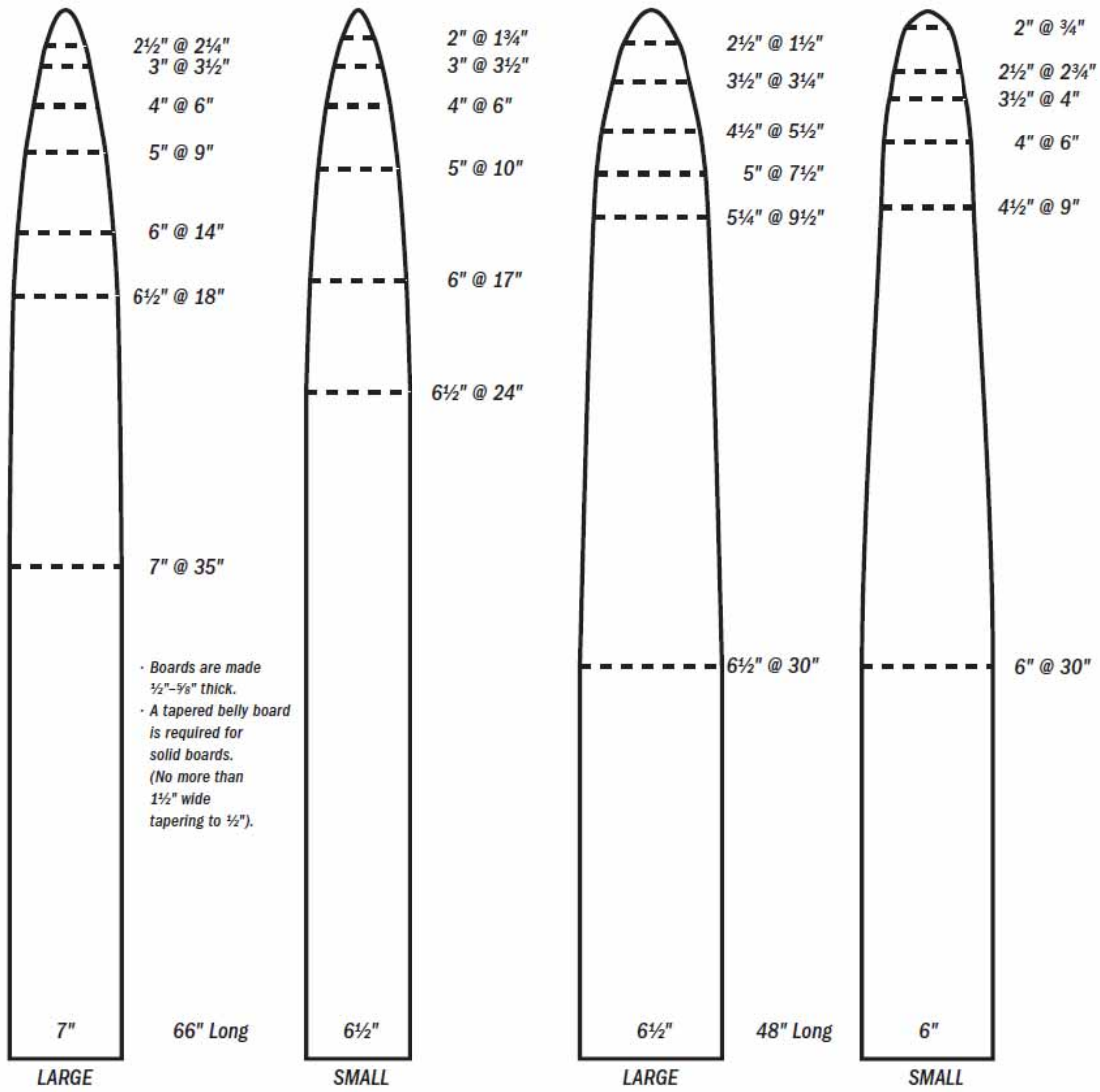
### COYOTE, LYNX, LYNX CAT & WOLVERINE BOARDS



Coyote, Lynx, Lynx Cat and Wolverine boards are made ½" or ⅝" thick.  
A tapered belly board is required for solid boards  
(no more than 1½" wide, tapering to ½", about 42" long).

# FOX BOARDS

# FISHER BOARDS



Two sizes of Fox boards will fit most red or coloured Foxes.

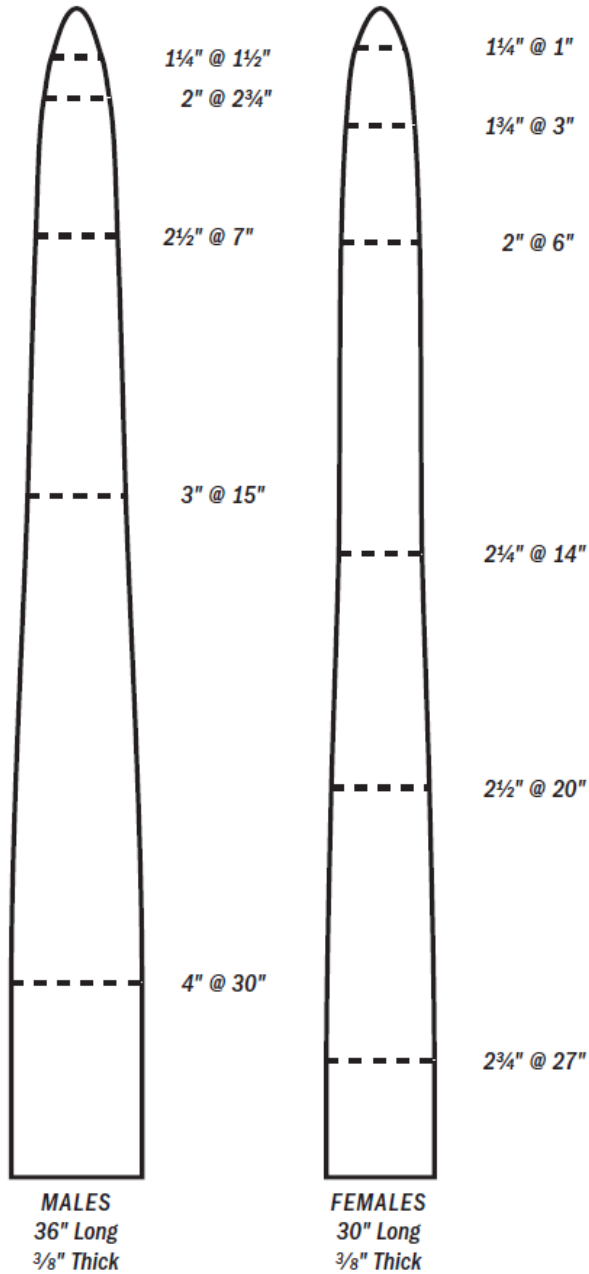
Fox boards are narrow at the nose and neck to accommodate the pointed nose of the Fox. If boards are made too wide at the head and neck, Fox will be too short and wide.

Small and Medium Fisher are both boarded on the small boards.

A tapered belly board is required for solid boards (no more than ¾" wide tapering to ¼").



# WILD MINK BOARDS

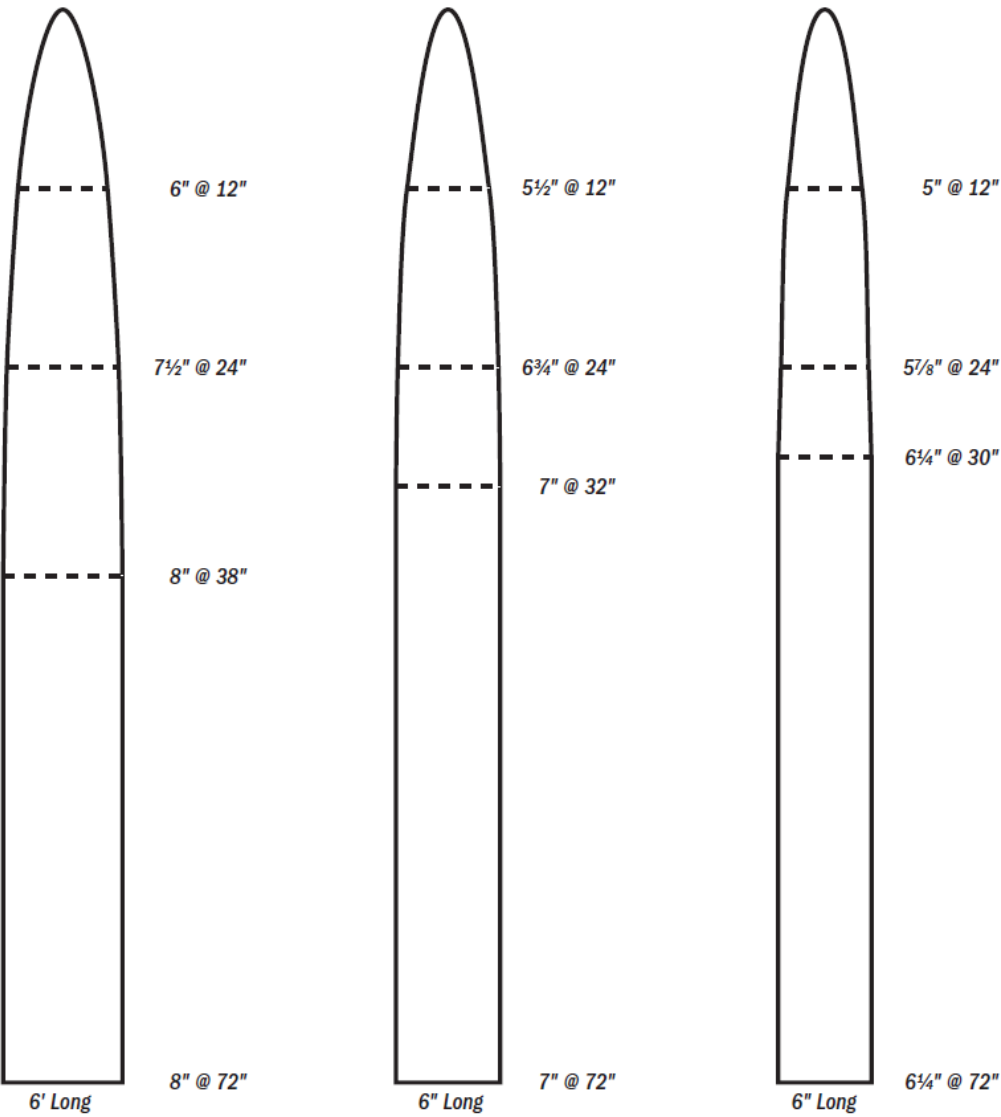


*If there is fat under the saddle, remove the fat or remove the saddle completely without making nicks/cuts in the leather.*

*Board the Mink correctly—Male Mink on male board, Female on Female board.*

*Place the hind feet on the same side as the tail and do not overstretch the hind feet or the tail.*

# OTTER BOARDS



*Boards are made 1/2"-3/8" thick.*

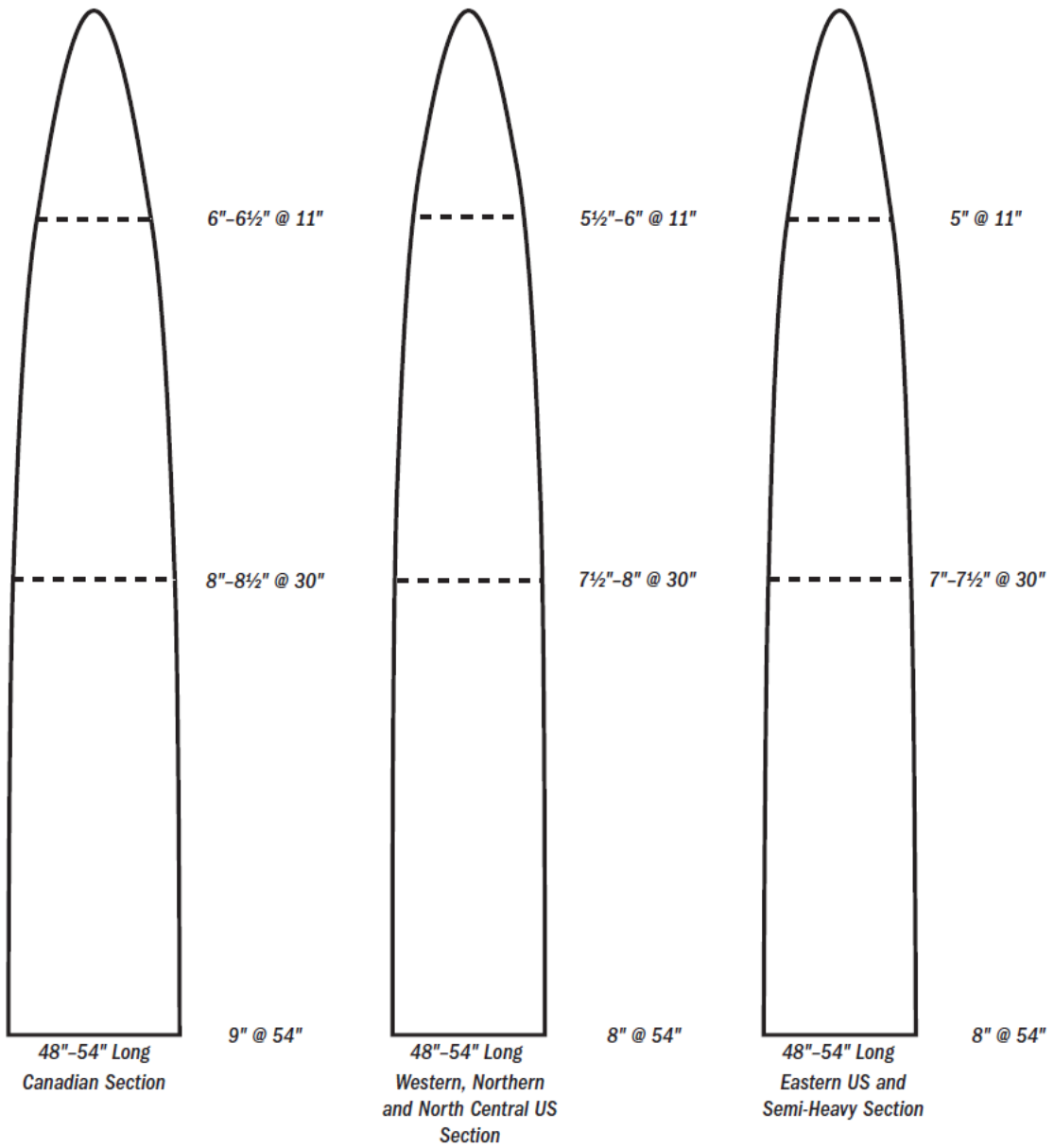
*A tapered board is required for solid boards. (No more than 1 1/2" wide tapering to 1/2")*

*This Board is for the larger Western Otter*

*This board (L-M size) will fit most Eastern Otter*

*This board (M-S) is narrowed, to fit smaller Otter*

# RACCOON BOARDS

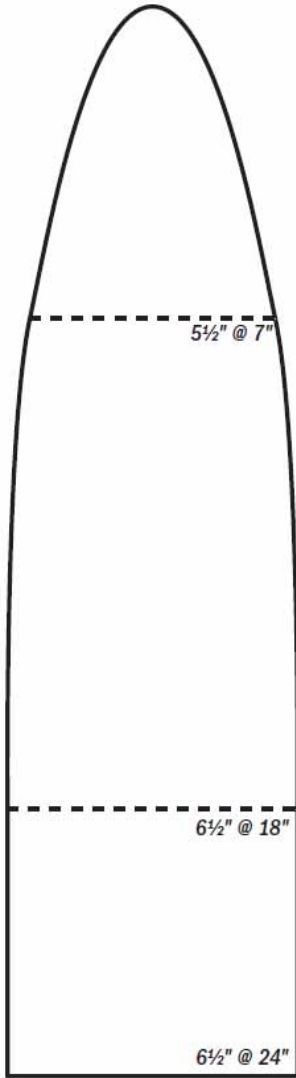


More than two boards may be used varying in size as indicated.

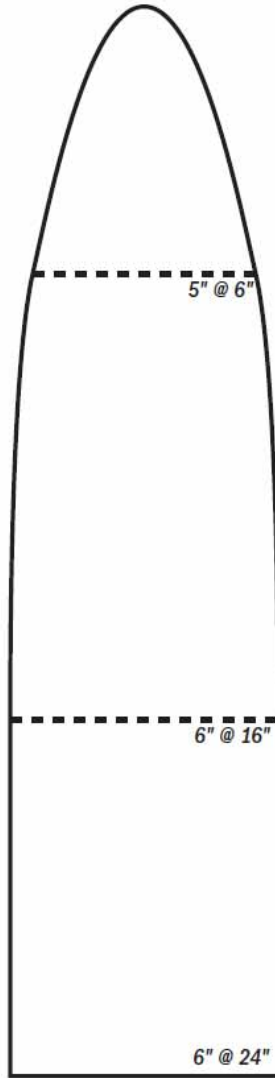
A belly board is required on solid boards (no more than 1" wide tapering to ½". Boards are ½"-5/8" thick.

Central and Southern US Section boards should be no narrower than 5" @ 11" and 6½" @ 30".

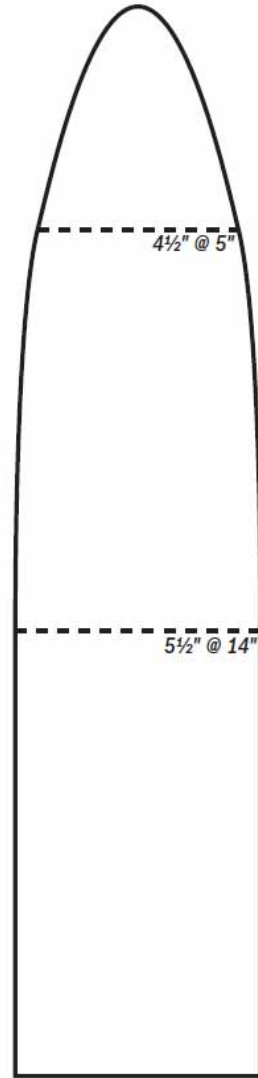
# MUSKRAT BOARDS



24" Long, 3/8" Thick  
Extra Large



24" Long, 3/8" Thick  
Medium & Large



24" Long, 3/8" Thick  
Small

*One piece board—use belly stick, round the edges.*

## New Jersey Bobcats and Fishers



Bobcats are classified as endangered in New Jersey; they are distributed widely across the northern part of the state. Fishers are returning, naturally and through reintroduction efforts in New York and Pennsylvania, to most of their historic range in the northeastern United States. Fishers have been documented in several northern and southern New Jersey counties.

**There is no open trapping season for either bobcat or fisher; possession is not permitted.**

**If you encounter a live bobcat or fisher captured on your trapline, do not disturb the animal or the set, but immediately notify Fish and Wildlife by calling (877) WARNDP (877-927-6337).**

A Fish and Wildlife technician will provide further instructions. Call the same number for a dead bobcat or fisher on your trapline; a Fish and Wildlife technician will arrange to pick up the animal. Biological samples will be taken from all bobcat and fisher carcasses. The data collected will be instrumental to understand the status of the species populations.



The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife is *the* professional, environmental agency overseeing the protection and management of the state's fish and wildlife to maximize their long-term biological, recreational and economic value for all New Jerseyans.



NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF  
**Fish and Wildlife**