Guidelines for Modifying and Installing Sentinel Possum Kill Traps
Easy to Set and User Friendly
revised

Dave Edwards

This info sheet will cover guidelines to what parts are required to allow the standard Sentinel Trap to be permanently Tree mounted, making them a safer more user friendly Possum Trap. Also allows the use of a Setting Tool.

I'm working on the basis that you have some practical skills and experience with Traps. I take NO responsibility for your actions.

To convert a standard Sentinel to be permanently tree mounted using good quality hot dip Galvanised components will cost about $3 per trap.

Link to Trap setting video, this version has different OKT covers but you will get the idea https://youtu.be/h4VanCz8feQ

Parts required

To convert a standard Sentinel you will need

1/ A galvanised steel saddle Clamp (pipe saddle) to suit 20 mm OD pipe
note: I find giving the saddle a slight squeeze in a vice to elongate the opening helps allow enough free play in the bottom of trap.

2/ A Nylon Cable Tie 4mm x150 mm

3/ 1 Galv Tek screw 75 mm 14 g (12 g is ok) only need one socket if using 12g
4/ 2 Galv Tek screws 25 mm 12 gauge

note: use type T17 Tek screws as they have a sharp point on the end

5/ 2 mm tie wire, or a nylon Cable tie, basically anything to stop the trap falling off the alkathene pipe.

Note: Do not mix galvanised with stainless, keep everything the same.

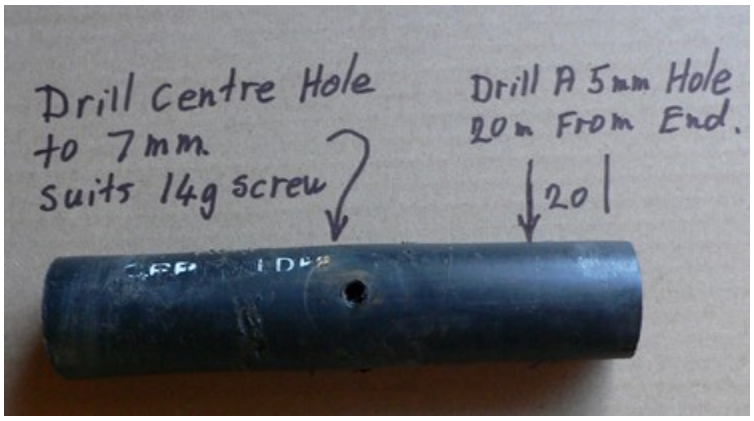
Make two small holes in the Cover near the bottom and Install the Cable Tie.

This will fix the cover in place and stop it blowing away.

Saddle Clamp Installed

With the clamp installed the bottom of the trap must be free to move in and out about 5 to 10 mm.
If you have a problem getting enough movement give the Saddle a small squeeze in a vice to elongate them, or use a larger saddle clamp.

Check that the Galvanised bait Plate can still move freely.



To suit a 14 g Tek Screw drill the centre hole in Alkathene pipe out to 7mm diameter. If using 12G screws then 6mm is better

(NO washer is required)

Drill a 5mm hole 20mm from one end.

Use a piece of 1.5mm Tie Wire as per photo to secure the trap to the Alkathene pipe

Alternative idea is to use A Nylon Cable Tie in place of the Tie Wire

Make sure the wire does not interfere with the lower Kill Bar Arm.

The Trap must be slightly loose on the pipe. Sentinels hate to be bound tight anywhere as it affects Trigger sensitivity.

If you have a problem with the Trap twisting sideways when setting it, then as per photo just hammer a 75mm nail through the pipe and into the tree. Leave the Nail sticking out about 8mm. Also make sure the Trap is vertical before you hammer the nail into the Tree.

Installing the Trap

In Bush situations you can look for the normal animal runs, possum sign, ridges etc to install the traps. At home fruit trees or anywhere a possum goes to get a feed. Look for tracks in the grass where they might be travelling.

Possums like most animals tend to be neophobic yet are naturally curious and attracted to novel items like the white trap covers. They also like to investigate the traps and lure before committing to sticking their head in a trap, so providing a spot where they can do so in comfort by using a running board or similar platform is an advantage.

Running Boards give a higher possum catch rate than straight Trees.

Where there are Kiwi or Weka Traps must be a minimum 700 mm off the ground. Where used running boards should be installed at a minimum 50 deg angle, a good guide for getting the board at the minimum angle of 50 deg is. Boards 1.2 metres long are ideal so if you measure vertically up the tree 900mm and have flat ground that will be 50 deg. Boards should be 90 – 100 mm wide and 20mm thick.

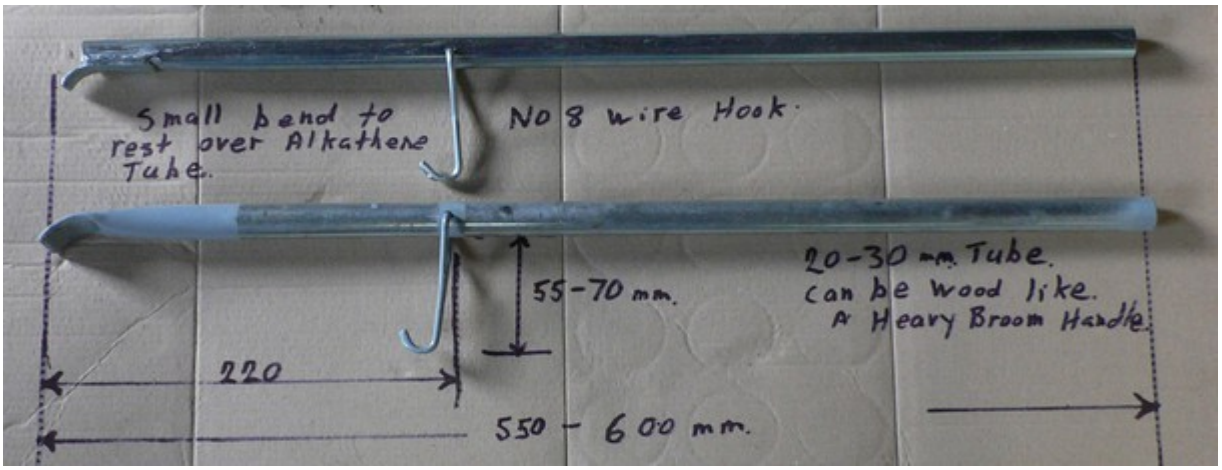
Straight Trees with trunks around 140 - 280 mm in diameter make for good installations, trees that have suitable bark where possums can easily grip the trunk are ideal and for those situations larger diameter trunks are ok.
Where there are only larger diameter trees with smooth hard bark like Tawa you are probably best to use a running board.
If using Boards then 200 - 240 mm from the top of board to the bottom of trap is about right.

If the trap is mounted in a tree fork or above a sitting branch then about 300 mm from branch to bottom of trap is about right.

Hold the Trap against the tree in the desired position to make sure it is going to sit ok and that you don't have protrusions etc that might interfere.
Slide a 75 mm Tek screw through the Alkathene pipe and Coreflute Cover, hold it on the tree and give the head of the Tek screw a couple of whacks with a hammer to get it started. Wind it in the rest of the way with a socket and ratchet, you don't need to tightly wind in the screw, a small bit of play is good as it allows room for the tree to grow. (unwind the screw as tree grows)

Now fit the bottom Saddle Clamp using two 25 mm 12 gauge Tek screws,
Check that the lower part of the trap can freely move out about 5-10 mm, also check that the galvanised Bait Plate moves freely. If the plate does not move freely this can affect trigger sensitivity.

Install a 60 mm nail in the Tree so that you can latch the cover up out of the way while setting the trap.



With the Sentinel permanently mounted on a tree allows the use of a setting Tool.

If you use a Setting Tool or not will be a personal preference, some people will have enough arm strength and co ordination to set the trap without a tool and some won't. Me I use one because I find it makes the job easy.

Make your own Setting Tool as per photo, or I will sell you a hand crafted super light one for $25.

Correct use of the Setting Tool.

Using a Running Board on a Larger Tree. Board at 50 deg. 200 – 240mm from the Top of the board to the Bottom of the Trap.

Sentinel Trap mounted on a Tree approx 180mm diameter.

If you need to adjust curve in trigger drill a 4.5 mm hole 20 mm deep in the end of a piece of steel.
Don't use pliers they mark the wire

Trap Instillation using a fork in Tree Possum can sit and checkout the Trap and lure.

A common problem on the sentinels is that it is easy for people to set the trigger in the wrong position. Using a setting Tool helps as you have more control.
When set incorrectly the trap will not go off, this results in other problems like people bending the curve in trigger wire to try and get the trap to go off.

Wrong

Short Curved end of the Trigger Wire has been located under the lifting handle

Trap Can't be set off in this Position

Correct

Short Curved end of the Trigger Wire has been located under the Inverted U on the Kill Bar

Having the Trigger wire protrude through the metal plate by about 4 – 5 mm is ideal. In Pen trial 20 out of 20 possums pulled on baits to 1kg force so there is no advantage to setting the trigger super fine, in fact it can be a problem as these triggers tend to creep when set, so you can get trap gone off NO catch.

The Traps in photos have been Zinc plated which costs about $3 per trap
They work better and have a longer life than the painted ones as they come from new, which unfortunately start to rust fairly quickly.
If your traps are going rusty it can be worthwhile to put a small smear of Lure on the inside of trigger wire where it goes through the metal plate to help it slide easily, just check that it doesn't upset trigger protrusion through plate.

Happy Trapping