

US body develops new apparatus that captures wildlife safely, effectively and with minimal trauma

Contributed by ASNS Correspondent
Sunday, 27 July 2008
Last Updated Saturday, 26 July 2008

A portable device that allows researchers to humanely trap deer and other wildlife as part of field studies to control ticks and other parasites has been developed by an Agricultural Research Service (ARS) scientist. The apparatus, developed by ARS entomologist Mat Pound in Kerrville, Texas, effectively restrains wildlife with minimal trauma to the animal. It will permit wildlife biologists and other researchers to quickly capture and handle deer, other wild exotic animals and small livestock such as sheep and goats with minimal stress to the animal. Pound works at the ARS Tick Research Unit, part of the agency's Knippling-Bushland U.S. Livestock Insects Research Laboratory in Kerrville. Many diseases are transmitted from animals to humans by ectoparasites such as ticks. Deer and other wildlife can harbor large populations of these ectoparasites. Yet monitoring and treating significant numbers of animals--especially wildlife that are not easily captured--to control these ectoparasites remains difficult. The new device would greatly assist in ectoparasite control efforts. It includes an open front that allows an animal to enter, while the rear end includes a door that opens and closes, effectively containing the animal without injuring it. The animal is immobilized when it enters, and the device is designed to gently lift the animal by its trunk so that its legs are suspended off the ground. While this device is not yet ready for commercial farmers, it is currently being used by personnel with the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program, operated by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, to reestablish and maintain eradication of cattle fever ticks and the potentially fatal Texas cattle fever, also known as bovine babesiosis, from U.S. cattle herds. The device was constructed at the Kerrville lab, with the assistance of students from the Boerne (Texas) High School welding class. ARS is a scientific research agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. For more, visit: www.ars.usda.gov/is/pr