

# TRAIL CAMERAS



Due to advancements, many wildlife viewers, hunters and security personnel have added a trail camera to their arsenal of equipment. More and more hunters are using trail cameras to find out the quality and quantity of deer near a stand location or food plot. Since most hunters are too busy to scout, the trail camera helps determine game activity. The pictures are also exciting to wildlife watchers.

The first trail cameras were 35mm, but those cameras got rather expensive because of purchasing film and then having it processed. With the digital introduction, 35mm cameras are low on the useful list.

Before buying a trail camera, determine its intended use. Is the goal to find out what is passing by the deer stand or to pattern game activity? Serious hunters who want to pattern game will definitely want a camera with time and date. Moon phase, temperature settings, and barometric pressure indicators are also available. These options will help monitor game activities. The information gathered gives hunters knowledge that would otherwise come from several weeks of scouting.

Selecting a location for the camera is extremely important. Try to locate the camera 10 feet off of the trail where deer walk toward it or away. At this distance, the camera will capture more deer because some trigger speeds are too slow if the deer walk past the camera. Because these cameras are motion sensitive, clear branches, large weeds, and leaves from around the camera; wind moving these objects will trigger the camera. Use cover scent or gloves when handling the camera if big bucks are the target.

Label the outside and inside of the camera with your name and phone number. A permanent marker will make it impossible to change. Also, record the model serial number and keep it for your records. If the camera is stolen, you will have a reference to help law enforcement in the recovery.



If photo quality is high priority, then a 4-megapixel camera is the lowest choice. Lower quality cameras are fine to determine what animals are around, but they will not have the clarity for quality photos. Trail cameras can also be used for still shots and serve a dual purpose if photography is on your list as a reason to purchase.

Flash coverage distance can be very frustrating for trail camera users. Do you want a clear photo in the dead of night? They range in distance from 25 to 90 feet, and there will be some nights that nothing seems to work. Many cameras offer a video feature, but the resolution of the camera is reduced when it is on video mode. A camera with multi-picture settings will reward you with some great shots of animal life.

Some users stay with day shots and turn off the flash, complaining that the flash scares away game. If there is a good food source and low pressure, the flash should not be a concern. Some hunters are moving toward infrared cameras so the flash is not visible, but these cameras can be costly.

Here are some tips for setting up and using your trail camera:

- Start by placing cameras approximately 36 to 40 feet off the ground for most wildlife. Check the tilt on the camera—it should be slightly downward.
- Check the date and time after each battery change.
- Re-aim the camera after pulling the photo card or changing the battery—is it pointing toward the sky or toward the trail?
- View cards then store or delete pictures.
- Keep full cards from empty ones—nothing is more frustrating than being in the woods and you have the wrong card.
- Keep new batteries separate from the old ones—keep connection protectors on larger batteries covered. Sometimes they can ground out and explode.
- Make sure the camera comes back up and is ready before you leave. A setting switch may need to be moved or a battery may be put in wrong.
- After reset, lock the camera.
- Design your own locking style—some manufacturers do not have one.

The batteries that power most trail cameras can get expensive as the cameras are used year-round. Some will last only a couple of weeks while others will go much longer. Over time, rechargeable batteries or solar packs are one way to save some of the cost of operation. A battery level indicator on the camera is great for measuring battery life.

Since higher resolution cameras require more storage, the memory card capacity should be larger. Purchase an extra card and then insert an empty card into the camera to allow time for review. With a simple card reader on your computer you can evaluate your photos.

Trail cameras can be used for security purposes as well. In this instance, consider an infrared camera.

Trail cameras offer many options. So whether hunting, wildlife viewing, or as a security guard, there is a camera for you. Start now to capture those pictures that will entertain and excite both you and your friends.

