Camera Trapping Resources

Reviews, Tests and Buying Guides:

The best source I know of is Trailcampro's website: www.Trailcampro.com

Chris Wemmer's Blog on Trail Cameras: Camera trap Codger http://cameratrapcodger.blogspot.com/

Chris Wemmer's Sierra Nevada Remote Camera Workshop (through SF State University extension)   http://www.sfsu.edu/~sierra/Course_Camera_Traps.html

Camera Trapping Notes (from Trailcampro)

Pre-trip checklist

1. Trail camera manuals: There have been countless times I've been in the field and have forgotten how to program some function of a camera.

2. Extra Batteries: Make sure to test each battery before heading to your hunting land. Replace any cell that reads below 1.45 volts.

3. Extra Empty memory cards: Make sure to erase/format each card at home. Certain file formats from some trail cameras are not compatible with other trail cameras. Also check to make sure every brand of card you own is compatible with every scouting camera you own. Many off-brand cards will not work in some trail cameras. In addition, some trail cameras will not support media cards larger than 512mb.

4. Extra Bungee cords: I keep a variety pack of bungee cords in my scouting camera toolbox. I find myself using one for some purpose almost every trip.

5. Extra belt straps: Numerous times I have checked cameras only to find squirrels have eaten clean   through the strap securing a camera.

6. Digital multi-meter: My multi-meter has become the most valuable piece of equipment I own. Don't settle for just a battery tester, buy a quality multi-meter.

7. Something to view pictures: Whether it's a laptop, a digital camera or one of the viewers made specifically for trail cameras, bring something with you to check the functionality of your scouting cameras. I'm not suggesting you should view all your pictures in the field, but you need to verify your trail camera is working properly before you swap cards and leave it for another scouting session.

8. Folding saw/pruner: You'll need the ability to remove any growth from the sensing area of your scouting camera.

9. Cover scent: It's a good idea to minimize the impact of checking your cameras. Too much human scent in an area can deter animals from visiting, especially wary old bucks.

10. Keys for camera locks: Pretty self-explanatory

11. Lens wipes: Trail cameras get dirty out in the field. I've had many a curious deer, and even a bear sniff one of my scouting cameras with their muddy noses. Every picture after that was blurred. Also dirt on the detection lens will decrease the sensing ability of your trail camera. Clean your cameras every trip.

12. Zorb-it packs: Changes in humidity can result in condensation building up on the inside of the lens cover. This condensation produces blurred images and can last for days. Moisture absorbing packs like zorb-it control the humidity inside your scouting camera case and prevent condensation.

When setting up a camera for the first time:

1. Position your scouting camera facing north.   If at all possible, position your camera South of the intended photo area **facing north**. If you position your camera aiming east or west you risk inadvertent triggers due to the rising or setting sun. In addition, aiming your camera east, south, west or anything in between can result in a photo aimed directly at the sun depending on the time of day.

2. When covering a trail, position your scouting camera at a 45-degree angle to the trail.   **Never position** your scouting camera perpendicular to the trail. Most cameras are not quick enough to capture a picture of animals moving perpendicularly. Positioning your camera this way will produce a picture of only the back half of an animal or nothing at all. Also, avoid aiming your scouting camera directly down a trail. Many trail cameras are not capable of detecting motion traveling directly toward them. Your best placement is at a 45-degree angle towards approaching or retreating animals.

3. Position your scouting camera approximately 15'-20' from the intended photo area.   Most trail cameras can detect motion out to at least 30'. Unfortunately, some flashes don't reach out past 20'. Also, positioning a camera too close can result in an animal entering an area and leaving before the camera takes a picture. In addition, night pictures taken at 10' or closer can experience "White Out". Under most circumstances your best photo opportunities will be at 15'-20'

4. Strap the camera to a Stout tree or camera stand positioned 24"-36" off the ground . If your going to strap your scouting camera to a tree make sure it's large enough to not blow in the wind. Also, attach your camera no lower than 24" or you'll likely get pictures of squirrels and other small undesirable creatures. If you attach your camera higher than 36" you risk false triggers from the tree swaying in the wind.

5. Clear all vegetation from the sensing area of the camera. Avoid false triggers from weeds blowing in the wind.

6. Aim camera parallel to ground, use laser if available.   Aiming your trail camera parallel to the ground will allow you to cover the largest area possible. Turn the laser on and make sure it shines at a height of 24"-36" throughout the detection area.

7. Insert a set of tested batteries: Test the voltage of each battery with a multi meter. Do not use any individual cell that measures less than 1.45 volts. If possible check the aggregate voltage of the batteries while positioned in the camera

8. Affix zorb-it pack inside camera case

9. Turn camera on and confirm all settings, especially date & time.

10. Use test mode to check and verify motion detector's range

11. Double check attachment and secure all locking mechanisms if appropriate.   Most animals are curious and will sniff or bump your camera. Make sure your scouting camera will not be knocked out of alignment if this happens.

12. Place camera in live mode, wait for time out period to expire and trigger camera. Make note of the time.
    Triggering your camera before you leave accomplishes two things. First, you are able to verify that it is working. Secondly, you now have a picture to reference if the date or time was not set correctly.

When retrieving pictures from a previously set up camera

1. Upon arriving walk in front of the camera and trigger the motion sensor.   This picture will verify the camera is working and also serve as a reference if the date or time is incorrect

2. Turn off camera, pull media card and review pictures for functionality of camera - Adjust accordingly
    Don't spend any more time than necessary, but at least examine a couple of pictures to verify the camera is working properly. If not, make appropriate adjustments.

3. Replace media card or transfer pictures, then insert a fresh, blank media card.

4. Test batteries with multi-meter, and replace all cells less than 1.45 volts. If possible test aggregate battery voltage while in camera.

5. Confirm all settings are programmed properly - especially date and time.

6. Check area in front of camera for newly established growth. Remove where needed.

7. Re-check camera for parallel alignment to the ground.

8. Clean lens and motion sensor with lens wipes

9. If equipped, run camera in test mode.

10. Place camera in live mode. Secure and lock.

12. Trigger camera for future reference.