

WHY YOU NEED A REALISTIC TARGET TO TEST CAMERA TRAPS FOR WILDLIFE RESEARCH

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Is it really necessary to use a real animal target to test camera traps, can't a human just walk up and down in front of the camera and save the trouble of using a dog as a surrogate study animal ?

This sequence of images was taken with a Reconyx Hyperfire PC800 mounted level and upright with its sensor 1.2 m above the ground. There are six tracks marked with rope running across the field of view (FOV) at 2.5, 5, 7.5, 10, 12.5 and 15 m from the camera. I leave the dog at one end of a track, walk along it, then recall the dog. Then I leave him again, walk back along the track and recall him again. The tracks are walked in order from closest to nearest. I am a positive control, if the camera detects the dog there will be at least one dog image following the human images in each direction on each track.

These are images in the order they were taken, I have used a screen grab of the directory to show that no file images are missing;



IMG_0043



IMG_0044



IMG_0045



IMG_0046



IMG_0047



IMG_0048



IMG_0049



IMG_0050



IMG_0051



IMG_0052



IMG_0053



IMG_0054



IMG_0055



IMG_0056



IMG_0057



IMG_0058



IMG_0059



IMG_0060



IMG_0061



IMG_0062



IMG_0063



IMG_0064



IMG_0065



IMG_0066



IMG_0067



IMG_0068

The camera detects the human target on every track between 2.5 and 15 m but it detects the real animal target only on the 5 m track. The dog is about 78 cm tall at the shoulder, similar to an African wild dog, leopard, small wolf or big coyote, mountain lion and snow leopard, and larger than a dingo. If the camera had been tested only with a human target it would be expected to capture animals of this size and larger at all distances from 2.5 to 15m. In reality, they could walk right across the field of view at most distances and remain undetected and unrecorded.

Yes, it really is necessary to use a real animal target, not a human, to test camera traps.