

Why and How we video our own deer while Hunting

Let me first cover why we enjoy taking a video camera to the woods. We have been taking a video camera with us to the woods since 1994. In 1993 my brother in law Ron and I decided that since we were no longer shooting young Bucks we might as well take a video camera so that we could at least video the Bucks that we decided not to shoot. This was one of the best decisions we ever made. We had no idea how much we were going to learn through the years by watching the video of our own deer that we were hunting. Let me point out that our objective wasn't to video ourselves shooting deer but to simply video the Bucks that we were letting walk. Back in 1994 the smaller video cameras were still about 12" long so it was a little difficult carrying around but we came up with our own methods of carrying our cameras. There was certainly a learning curve of a couple of years because I hadn't used a video camera at all prior to this. We didn't see a lot of Bucks back then but we still managed to video a couple each season. Shortly after Ron bought his current property in Georgia, knowing that we would definitely be letting some Bucks walk we both got a new video camera. I went with a smaller model for portability and Ron got a bigger model that had more functionality like a 30X optical zoom. These cameras still didn't have the functionality of the cameras today but they served their purpose. As a result of using our management software we knew that we needed to let some Bucks walk and at the same time shoot quite a few Does to tighten up the Doe to Buck ratio. As a result of this we got quite a bit of video of different Bucks on the property. It was really cool coming back to the house and then watching each other's video. We were no longer just telling somebody about the nice Buck that we let walk, we were showing them! I know that most of you can relate to the following situation. You definitely see a nice Buck that you decide to let walk and then you come back to camp and tell the story but you just know that everyone doesn't exactly believe what you are saying. (They think that maybe you're exaggerating a little). If you can video the deer then you can show them exactly what you saw. And I'll be honest with you, there have been a few times when Ron and I have come back to camp and we had thought that we had seen and videoed a big Buck. After watching the video we realized the Buck wasn't near as big as we thought. This was quite humbling. Having the video we can watch it over and over which gives us the opportunity to study the body characteristics as many times as needed and then study the antlers as many times as needed. So just envision what you could learn about your deer if you were able to watch video of your deer on your property. This was invaluable to us and today we enjoy videoing the Bucks that we don't want to shoot as much as shooting the Bucks that meet our harvest criteria. Having the multiple years of video has also allowed us to learn how to age our Bucks on the hoof. I have put some of our video on this website including the video where I try to show you how to age a Buck on the hoof. We show our videos to everyone that hunts on our property and they have all gotten a good feel for how to age a Buck on the hoof. Early in the season Ron and I will often get video of a Buck that we want to protect so it is great to be able to show this video to our other hunters to help them recognize the Buck.

Now let me cover how we video our own deer. Like I said in the About Us article on our website, we are not professional videographers and I don't claim to know everything there is to know about a video camera. As a matter of fact I pretty much just know how to press the record button and put the deer in the viewfinder. Fortunately the consumer models are easy to use and are self focusing so if we can do it I'm sure you can do it. The consumer model cameras run anywhere from \$200 to \$2000+. The less expensive models will be standard definition and the more expensive models will be high definition. Now they're even coming out with 3D models. The only thing I want to point out is that I prefer a video camera that has a viewfinder. This is my personal preference because it is easier for me to follow the deer in the viewfinder and I am steadier with the viewfinder versus the pop out LCD screen. Unfortunately today most models do not have a viewfinder. My nephew uses a

model without a viewfinder and he takes some pretty good video. You just need to make your own choice. In 2009 I upgraded to an HD model and I am absolutely thrilled with the video that it takes. The biggest concern we have is taking care of our cameras. If you damage your camera it can hurt you in the wallet. You will need to check the manufacturer's specifications to see the recommended operating environment. There may be restrictions on high altitudes and operating temperatures. The camera may become damaged if the temperature is less than 30 degrees or more than 110 degrees. The cold temperatures may prohibit some of you from being able to take a camera with you. You can always contact the camera manufacturer and discuss your concerns and questions with them. I keep my camera outside in a Ziploc freezer bag so it is acclimated to the air temperature. It only took me one time to realize that taking the camera from inside the warm house to the outside cold temperature may make the lens fog up. I have been able to use my camera in temperatures from the mid 20's to over 100 degrees. I know a lot of you carry a lot of accessories with you to the woods so now we're talking about taking one more item. With the cameras being small they easily fit into a fanny pack or backpack. My camera is about the size of my hand and it easily fits in my fanny pack along with all of my other stuff. If there is rain in the forecast then we don't even bother taking our cameras since we don't want to take a chance on getting it wet. On the other hand if I have my camera with me and a storm pops up I have the gallon freezer bag which I use to put the camera in and it's then safe from the elements.

Let me now cover the difficult part of all of this. We're going out in the woods to hunt and not video, right? Keep in mind that I have my gun with me and I also have my video camera with me. A few years ago because most of the Bucks that I saw did not meet our harvest requirements I had a tendency to grab my camera first instead of my gun and as a result I had a couple of situations where I videoed a Buck that I could have and should have shot. After a couple of seasons of doing this I forced myself to change my mind set. I now decided that I would always have my gun ready first to shoot the Buck and then if I determined that he was not a shooter I would try to grab the camera and get some video if he stayed around long enough. This has worked out well for me. Because of the type of tree stand that I use I am able to set my camera down in front of me or to my side. I can literally set my gun down and pick up my camera in about 3 seconds. Even with this new philosophy I am still able to video most of the Bucks that I see. You will notice in some of my video that the video starts just as the Buck is next to me or already past me. This is because I was analyzing the Buck to determine if I wanted to shoot him or not. You will need to create a situation that is safe and comfortable for you. Maybe you can hang your camera on the tree you are in or keep it on a strap around your neck. There may be situations where you just can't have a camera with you so it's not even an option.

In summary, if you are letting some Bucks walk then you should consider taking a video camera with you if your situation allows. If you can learn half of what we have learned from watching our own video of Bucks from our own property then it will be invaluable to you. If you are able to show this video that you have taken to some of your other hunters then just maybe it will influence them to not shoot that Buck if they see him. After all you just showed them how you made the commitment to let the Buck walk so he gets another year of antler growth. Please make sure that you watch all of our videos that we have put on our website. These videos represent just a small percentage of all the video that we have taken since 1996. I look forward to taking some more video in the upcoming seasons and hopefully I can share some of it through this website!