WOODLAND FIELD SKILLS

Set a Single-Catch Cage for Grey Squirrels

Adapted from Forestry Commission field guidance for woodland in the UK

1. Find a feeding site you can revisit.

Walk the bases of large trees, fallen trunks and stumps. Look for fresh feeding remains or watch a squirrel use the spot. Choose level ground in shade, with a clear approach and enough room for the cage to sit flat.

2. Steady the cage and check the door.

Peg the cage down. Clear twigs from the entrance and from the path of the door. On a treadle model, operate the empty trap and watch the door close completely. Return the door to the open position and wire it open before adding bait.

3. Let squirrels feed in the open cage.

Put whole yellow corn inside the cage and a small amount at the entrance. Leave the door secured open. After 2 or 3 days, look closely at the grain. Squirrels often eat the germ and discard the rest. Mice can do that too. Shallow cache holes and direct sightings give you another clue.

4. Set the cage after you see use.

Refresh the bait inside, remove the wire that held the door open, and arm the trap. Clear loose corn from the moving parts. Cover the top and sides for shade and shelter while keeping the entrance and mechanism clear.

5. Plan the checks before you leave.

The Forestry Commission calls for morning and evening visits, with checks at least every 4 hours in red squirrel breeding areas during their breeding season. Skip a set you cannot attend. Close or remove the cage when you finish.

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