

TRACKING DOGS

QDMA members David (pictured) and Cindy Helmy trained their dog Savoy to recover deer on their Georgia hunting lease.



The inability to locate a wounded game animal is devastating to a hunter. Irrespective of skill level, most hunters will at some point in their hunting career be unable to find an animal they have wounded. Rain, terrain and several other factors can play a role in these unfortunate situations. Regardless of cause, hunters and policy makers have a moral and ethical responsibility to do everything in their power to make sure every wounded animal is recovered.

We surveyed state and provincial wildlife agencies to learn where tracking dogs are allowed to locate wounded game, and, if they are permitted, whether they had to be on a leash. Their use ranges from about half of the states in the West to all states in the Southeast. In total, 35 of 48 states (73 percent) allow tracking dogs, and 25 of those states (74 percent) require the dog to be on a leash in at least some situations. A few notes include South Carolina requires a leash in some areas but not others, tracking dogs are allowed in all of Texas except 10 counties, and Maine requires a permit to use a tracking dog.

QDMA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Trained dogs can be extremely effective at locating wounded or dead game and thus can help reduce the rate that wounded animals are not recovered. Tracking dogs locate specific animals by following blood and scent of the wounded individual rather than haphazardly searching for other animals, and their use has received overwhelming support in many states. This common-sense measure has also helped improve hunting's public image by providing ethical hunters with another tool to demonstrate their dedication to and appreciation of the wildlife resource. QDMA supports their use and encourages all states and provinces to provide this opportunity to sportsmen and women.

