

Vertex Photographic

Molar Bean Bag™ - Product Instruction Sheet

Fill Material

For use here in the U.S., there are a lot of different fills that can be used. Beans, bird seed, or shelled corn provide the most weight. This makes the Molar bag more stable and solid feeling, particularly if you leave the bag on the vehicle door or windows when you move from one location to another. Pinto beans typically come in 4lb (1.81Kg) plastic bags at the grocery store. The Molar bag filled with pinto beans, rice, shelled corn, or bird seed will weigh 16-17lbs depending on how full you like it. The downside to the heavier fills is carrying the bag around. Lighter options are black sunflower seeds which will make the bag weigh 8-10 lbs. An even lighter option is buckwheat hulls which will make the bag weigh 4-5 lbs. I have tried Styrofoam beads and they are far too light. Bird seed and black sunflower seeds are easily purchased at places like Wal-Mart and Home Depot and are relatively inexpensive. They can also be used as bait if needed and if accidentally spilled something will eat it. We stock buckwheat hulls and sell them for \$16 plus \$16 shipping. We suggest going with the heaviest fill you are willing to handle. Remember, the heavier the bag, the more stable it tends to be. This becomes even more important when you are using a big lens like a 400mm F2.8, 500mm F4, or a 600mm F4. If you are using a lens like a 70-200mm the lighter fills should be fine but again the heavier the better.

The Molar bag has a lot of volume. It is almost like three small bags constructed into one. Its unique shape is what makes it work well. It is designed to fit specifically on vehicle doors or windows. Your selection of fill material is a decision you will have to make that suits your needs and situation best.

If you are going to use them primarily here in the U.S. and you plan on driving then the heavier fill, like beans will probably be your best choice. If you intend to fly to a location in the U.S. you can opt for the lighter fill, or even go to the grocery store, Wal-Mart or Home Depot and buy beans, bird seeds, shelled corn or rice there.

If you are going to Africa you will probably end up with beans. When you arrive in Africa your tour leader or driver/guide can help you acquire the beans you need. Remember they may ask you how many Kilos, not pounds you need. There are 0.4536 Kilos per pound. 17×0.4536 equals 7.71 kilos. So to play it safe ask for 8 kilos of beans. It is always better to have more fill than you need. The beans will probably come to you in a burlap sack, not the nice little four pound plastic bags you get at the grocery store. Make sure you save the burlap sack so you can empty the beans back into that bag at the end of your trip. You can give them to your African driver/guide, who can always cook them, or give them to someone else who would like them.

It is not a bad idea to test filling the bags at home so you know how much volume you prefer. When in doubt get more than you think you will need. You can always leave some out, or give them away.

Filling the Molar Bag

First of all, be patient. This task can be a frustrating experience if you let it! Your fill can end up spilling and going everywhere. You may want to fill the bag over a bucket or box to catch any you drop. You can cut the corner of the plastic bag the beans came in and slowly pour them into the zippered opening. You can also make a large size funnel by taking some fairly stiff paper and rolling into a funnel shape. Place a piece of tape on it to help maintain the funnel shape. The opening at the bottom has to be fairly large or the beans will block the opening, and not pass through. Don't let go of the funnel until all the beans have passed through it. It can easily tip over and spill beans everywhere. When you get the bag as full as you want make sure you close the zipper completely. The little black pull tab should be under the nylon tape cover. I recently had a customer report to me a device he picked up at Wal-Mart called a Scoop n' Funnel. It is a plastic combination scoop and funnel that has a little closing gate in it that allows you to scoop up your fill and then stick the funnel end into the bag and open the gate allowing the fill to go in the bag. The Scoop n' Funnel costs \$3. It is in the bird feed section of Wal-Mart.

Using the Molar Bag

For use on a vehicle door or window the two vertical portions (which I call ears) hang down over the door or window providing a flat surface on the top. The bag will always be more stable if it is resting directly on the car door frame; however, sometimes you have to roll the window up to get the camera to a comfortable shooting position. You can also lay your lens directly on top of the flat surface or if you are using a big lens like a 500mm or a 600mm then you may want to consider attaching a flat plate to the foot of the lens. There are even plates you can get that have panning capabilities or some that you can attach a ball head to. The two straps on the bottom are for carrying the Molar bag but can also be used to secure the bag to the vehicle. You can simply tie the Molar bag via the straps to the door handle or anything else available. Bungee cords are another means of securing the bag.

The Molar bag can also be used on a flat surface by turning it upside down or on its side. If you turn the bag upside down you may find the ears provide a very nice cradle for the lens. Try it in both directions, i.e. the lens between the ears or across the top of the ears.

Care and Maintenance

Try not to drop or throw the bag around. Even though we have hot cut all the fabric and double stitched all the seams, it still puts unneeded stress on the bag when it is thrown around or dropped a lot. Try not to get the bag wet. The fabric is coated with a water repellent finish, but some moisture can still get in. Some fill materials like rice will absorb water.

We do not recommend leaving the Molar bag exposed to sunlight over an extended period. The materials in the Molar bag are nylon. Nylon is the strongest material available, except for some very expensive exotic materials. However nylon will deteriorate with extended UV exposure.

If you have to wash the Molar bag, do it by hand with gentle agitation and any mild soap. Do not put it in the washing machine. Let it air dry indoors or in the shade, not in the sun.

Warning

I had a customer report to me that he had a mouse eat a hole in his bean bag which was filled with bird seed. He had left the bean bag somewhere in his truck where the mouse could get to it. So if you use bird seed make sure you store the bag away from any mice.

Be careful raising or lowering your vehicle window with the bean bag on the window if you have electric windows. The motor that raises and lowers the window is probably not designed to lift 16-17lbs or even more if the lens and camera are on the bean bag.

Plate Options

If you are using a big lens and want to shoot off the foot you will probably want to add some sort of plate to stabilize the lens on the bag. There are several options. Joe and Mary Ann McDonald use two Wimberley M-1 quick release arms and attach one on each side of the Arca Swiss plate on the foot of the lens. This makes the lens very stable and is not a lot of additional bulky equipment. These arms cost about \$66 each and can be purchased from www.tripodhead.com .

Another option is the Big Foot plate from the Vested Interest. This is an aluminum plate that has a slot with two sliding ¼ 20 screws. It will attach to the bottom of your lens foot. You can purchase them from www.vestedinterest.com and they cost about \$45-50. If you want to make the plate quick release you will have to purchase an Arca Swiss clamp and mount that on top of the plate. I would suggest the clamp with two threaded holes instead of one to stop the clamp from rotating on the plate. You will also have to make sure the tightening knob on the clamp is long enough to clear the side of the plate. If it is not then you will have to put a spacer under the clamp to get enough clearance for the knob or you could cut a notch in the plate for the knob. Clamps can be obtained from www.tripodhead.com, or www.reallyrightstuff.com , or www.kirkphoto.com.

A third option is to purchase one of Walt Anderson panning plates. It is a very well made plate about 4 inches X 8 inches. It has an Arca Swiss clamp on it that swivels. They cost about \$200. At the moment Walt does not have a website but you can call him at (847) 438-3587, or send an e-mail to visualechoes@worldnet.att.net. He lives in Lake Zurich, IL. The last option is to make your own. You can even take a piece of wood and drill two holes and attach it to the foot of your lens or attach a clamp to the wood to make it quick release.

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