



RAMROD

A monthly publication, distributed approximately seven days before each shoot.

AUGUST ~ SEPTEMBER 2010



SSAA-Victorian Muzzle Loading Club

ABN 86 186 186 714

Approved Handgun Target Shooting Club 562-290-00T)

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Executive Committee

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Committee	Phil Groves	via 03 9401 1955 (BH)

* **Do not disclose these 'phone numbers to any third party.**

Disclaimer

The sometimes unusual views expressed in The Ramrod are not necessarily those of anyone, especially the Editor, and should not be taken seriously, except for the serious bits.

Warning

Due care is exercised regarding data and articles published, however no responsibility is accepted or implied for errors or omissions or damage or injury resulting there from.

Contributions

Contributions to The Ramrod are welcomed and encouraged. If you have any article that you think will be of interest to the members do not hesitate to submit the article for consideration.

Trading Post

Members! Got something to sell? Why not place an advert in The Ramrod, as well as the VMLC Web Site?

Change of Member Details

Advise the President of any change in member details.

Consumables for Sale

Quality Merchandise is available for sale to VMLC Members, such as Black Powder, Percussion Caps and Pill Bottles. See David Tooth at the next shoot for more information.

Executive Committee Meetings - 2010:

These will be held at Hawkeye's residence on Wednesdays at 7:30pm on the following dates:

July 14, August 18, September 15, October 13, November 17.

VMLC Buddy System

The VMLC Executive Committee realises that loading and shooting a muzzle loading style of firearm for the first time can be a daunting experience especially when you don't have anyone to help you. On occasions, a new muzzle loading shooter can be put off for life if early success / accuracy is not obtained with their muzzle loading firearm. To minimise this, and to help assimilate new members, the Executive Committee has adopted a Buddy System for new members, in particular, those who are new to muzzle loading.

Members who feel that they would benefit from a VMLC Buddy are requested to contact any member of the Executive Committee to make suitable arrangements.

***** Additional Support *****

If any member requires any assistance or coaching with their black powder shooting, please talk to me about your concerns, and I will personally make the time to assist you as best as I can.

Hawkeye.

The Ramrod

CURRENT CLUB NEWS

incorporating

Other Bits of Information

which will surely educate and amaze!

CLUB NEWS

Member for Life:

Phil Baker was recently made a VMLC Member for Life. This award is well overdue, as Phil has, and is, a hard-working volunteer and supporter of the Club for more than 15 years. On behalf of the VMLC, and myself, well done, and congratulations Phil.

VMLC - Fortieth Anniversary:

Notice the new VMLC logo on the front of the Ramrod? December 2010 marks the 40th anniversary of the VMLC and as part of the celebrations, we will be having a free luncheon at our December shoot. Members who would like to participate in this celebration are requested to advise Hawkeye so preparations can be made for catering.

SSAA Awards Night 2010:

This was held on the 4th of September at the Malvern Town Hall. Once again the VMLC was represented with most of the Committee attending as well as Shannon Smith, the current Encouragement Award holder. During the presentations, Bob Cooper was kind enough to present Phil Baker with the VMLC Member for Life award.

Changes to VMLC Member Book:

As advised in the previous edition of the Ramrod, the Rules for Breech Loading Rifles, and Handguns have been changed. In addition, minor revisions have also been made to the Shotgun Rules. At this time a revised Member Book will not be issued to members, however the updated Rules will be distributed separately so each member can insert it into their Member Book.

New Members and Club Membership:

Club membership is steady at 65.

Competition Programme 18th of September:

Flintlock Muzzle Loading Rifle Championship.
Handgun: Cowboy Single Action (9:00am start).
Handgun Class 3 (Open): 25m Precision, 25m Timed.
Flintlock Rifle Championship events: 35m Rabbit, 50m Offhand, 75m Moses Stick, 100m Cross Sticks.
Open Muzzle Loading Rifle events: 35m Rabbit*, 50m Snap*, 75m Offhand*, 100m Cross Sticks*, Gong.

*** Muzzle Loading Rifle monthly aggregate events.**

VMLC October Shoot 2010 - Note Change of Date:

The October 2010 shoot will be held on the **fourth** Saturday ie 23/10/2010.

VMLC Sponsors:

The VMLC Executive Committee recommends to Members that when you are looking to purchase a new firearm or accessory, your first and wisest choice of supplier should be one of the VMLC Sponsors: **Forbes Wholesale Pty Ltd; Green River Rifle Works; Stock Lock Antique Arms.**

VMLC Sponsor - Forbes Wholesale Pty Ltd:

Licensed Gun Dealer 407-000-00F

Forbes Wholesale has been supplying the muzzle loading shooter since 1988, we import sell & the Pedersoli range of Black Powder Firearms, "Blackpowder No. 1"

Pedersoli offer the most comprehensive range of black powder firearms and accessories on the market today backed by a 12 month warranty on all product.

We also keep Euroarms military muskets in various configurations, 2 & 3 Band Enfield, Musketoon's, Volunteer & Whitworth rifles plus a range of American Civil War muskets.

We stock a wide range of accessories for sighting, cleaning and loading including moulds and reloading gear for black powder cartridge shooters. Moulds and loading dies for popular BP calibres in stock, we also keep some swaged projectiles from Taipan in stock for selected calibres.

Black Powder and percussion caps are usually available in various grades and sizes.

Mail order available for most items other than guns, powder or caps which generally must be collected in person.

We can deliver firearms interstate but they must be shipped to a dealer or armourer.

We also usually have a limited range of second hand guns available.

Check out our website www.forbesws.com.au where you will find pricing information and links to the Pedersoli & Euroarms websites where you can see images of the products.

VMLC Sponsor - Stock Lock Antique Arms:

LFD 599 259 00F

* Western Action Supplies and consumables.

* Complete range of Black Powder supplies and consumables.

* Ammo boxes, gun bags, loading equipment, cleaning equipment, projectiles, ammo cases etc etc. Our range is forever growing!

* Mail order available on most items, we also have regular deliveries to Melbourne.

* Huge range of pre-owned black powder longarms and handguns available for sale, as well as Sporting, antique and collectible firearms.

* Special requests are catered for on all items.

Contact Roger C Mowbray, c/o Post Office, Katandra West, VIC 3634. Phone 03 5865 5583, Fax 03 5865 5565, or email: austoil@mcmmedia.com.au

VMLC Sponsor - Green River Rifle Works:

LGD 626 98Z

Green River Rifle Works has been under its current ownership since 1985 and is the largest Muzzle Loading shop in Australia. We are the only shop to offer a complete service to Black Powder Shooters and our Green River Custom Firearms which are built to customer specifications on the premises are famous.

We also sell factory assembled firearms and kits, accessories - many specially designed and manufactured by us, spare parts, books and magazines, do repairs and restorations to reproduction and antique firearms, in fact anything to do with Muzzle Loading and Buckskinning.

A large part of the business is Mail and Telephone Order and since our beginnings, we have enjoyed an increase in business each year. As a result of that in 1988, we moved from our humble beginnings in a back shed to our large shop come workshop where customers can visit, browse, chat and watch the Custom Guns being created al in the one large area.

We are proud to say that we can offer a complete service to Black Powder Shooters and all your requirements can be found in the one place. If we have not got what you want, we will do our best to get it if it is available.

Orders can be done by e:mail, mail or telephone and charged to your Credit Card for convenience. It is not quite the same as being here with us but we do our best to supply what you need. Phone and mail orders usually sent out the same day. 08 8293 3686.

picknowl.com.au/homepages/vaisham/

For Sale:

WW Greener GP Takedown 12g Shotgun suitable for black powder shotgun competitions, very good condition \$500.00. Serial Number 17758.

W. Cashmore Double Barrel 12g Shotgun with Damascus Barrels suitable for black powder shotgun competitions (not Nitro proofed). Very good condition \$500.00. Serial Number 10369.

Contact Barry on 03 8790 1089. Licence No 409-941-20B.

Items for Sale from the Estate of the late Jim Horner:

Bag, gun, leather 35" \$15.00.

Mould, Lyman, double cavity .30cal. \$40.00.

Mould, Dixie, .715 cal. Ball. \$20.00.

Miscellaneous items (punches, staplers etc) \$ Make an offer.

But hurry as these items are priced to sell!

Member Assistance Required:

Every month at our shoots, there is quite often much setting-up work to be done, for example, gongs to be taken on to the range, clay thrower & clays to be moved from shed & set-up then returned to the shed, throwing clays, scoring clay & other competitions, target scoring &c &c. Unfortunately these things do not happen by magic, and more often than not they are left to the same few members month after month, year after year. All members are requested to offer a little help with these items; they will only take a few minutes and will make our shooting days more enjoyable for everyone. Please seek out Phil Baker to see where you can lend a hand. To those Members who are already helping out, your assistance is appreciated.

The August 2010 Shoot:

Eighteen members attended the range on the 21st. This isn't too bad for this time of the year, especially as the weather report was for less than ideal conditions. It was dry most of the time, except when the rain started to fall. But the couple of occasions on which the rain began, it stopped almost straight away. So that makes it okay. On the day there were enough bods present at 9am or soon after to run the by now traditional Single Action comp at its usual starting time of about 0915. One more turned up later and joined in, making a total of eight competitors. Bruce Aylen was the best on the day with a score of 165 which was a bit short of the bronze proficiency requirement of 170.

The day had by then warmed up by about one degree making the conditions slightly more agreeable. It was then time for the breech loading rifles to do their thing, commencing with 100 metres Moses stick and following with 200 metres bench rest. Bucket was the best in the Moses stick event, and Noel Howland put in the best result in the bench rest comp. He was also the aggregate winner of the two events.

While the breech loaders were banging away at 200 metres, the black powder pistols were shooting 25 metres precision, and five of them made an appearance. While this comp is called 25 metres "precision", it is not unknown for a competitor to refer to the comp as 25 metres "lack of precision". Say no more! Bruce was also the best in this one. He must have had something agreeable for breakfast or whatever.

To finish off the morning we had one of those rare smoothbore comps, and this time the three only competitors lined up with two actual muskets (flintlock) and a chokeless percussion shotgun firing a ball. As it turned out the shotty won the event, which seems a bit unfair. However the rules allow this sort of uneven situation.

After lunch we had the once-a-year 25 clay muzzle loading shotgun championship. Twelve clays with the thrower set fairly low, followed by thirteen with it set at maximum elevation. Alex Kinder, who has been steadily improving, was the winner with twenty hits. Well done! He was closely followed by nineteen and eighteen hits from the second and third place-getters. Thanks to Fishie and David for scoring, and to Shannon for clay chucking.

It was gone 2 o'clock by now and we still had three scheduled events to go, all for open muzzle loading rifle. The first of these was Reverse target, but this time set at a distance chosen by our illustrious Presidente with a throw of the dice. So he's the one everybody blamed for having to shoot offhand at 100 metres. Malcolm McMillan turned in the best target with a 56. Not bad when you're looking at a blank sheet of card at that distance.

Next up it was 100 metres bench rest, with the targets the right way around this time. Craig Kinder shot the best in this one with a 75, and was followed by one of those annoying ties for the next two places. The Scorer reckons he can handle one such occurrence in a day as we then had, but two or more are stretching the friendship a bit. During the preparation for this event, a new packet of targets was opened and, surprise surprise, they are now printed on both sides. This is alright for someone who likes a choice between red and black circles, but it's going to be difficult for future Reverse Target events. That's one for the Committee to ponder.

Lastly it was 100 metres prone or cross sticks. This event has faltered a couple of times in the recent past due to a lack of interested parties. Not so in 2010 as three bods decided to have a go, despite the relative lateness of the hour. Craig again showed how it's done with a 67, and he was subsequently crowned muzzle loading aggregate winner on the day, having won two of the events and went well enough in the other.

Next month the championship is for Flinchlocks, with the usual four events. There will be similar comps for open muzzle loading rifle, and all preceded by Single Action, and comps for black powder pistol. What a great way to celebrate the arrival of Spring!

Piecrust.

Targets Beyond 100 metres at Eagle Park:

The SSAA requires any person taking or retrieving a target et cetera beyond 100 metres at Eagle Park to wear a High Visibility Jacket. See Grant Steel to borrow one if proceeding beyond 100 metres.

Total Fire Bans for the Central Area:

Black Powder shooting is not permitted at Eagle Park on a day of Total Fire Ban for the Central Area. For information regarding Total Fire Bans contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

Handguns During a Cease Fire:

The SSAA (Vic) policy at Eagle Park is for the Handgun owner to holster/bag his/her unloaded handgun at a cease fire and take the handgun onto the Range (or wherever) but definitely not to leave it on a bench.

SSAA (Vic).

VMLC Competition Days and Fees:

The VMLC shoots at the SSAA Eagle Park range near Little River on the third Saturday of every month except for May which is the fourth Saturday.

Apart from Range Entry fees, Competitors will pay a base competition fee of \$6.00 on the day. In addition, shotgun competitors will pay an additional \$2.00 when these competitions are held, and pistol shooters will pay an additional \$1.00 when their competitions are held. (A different fee structure is applicable to the State Championships.)

Handgun Competitors:

Members who require the VMLC to record their handgun participation are required to advise Grant Steel or Jim Morraitis on the day.

Victorian Shooter:

If you would like to receive this magazine FREE, contact the SSAA (Vic) on 03 8892 2777.



Flintlocks - How to Shoot Them:

Sadly, there is such a lack of information about how to shoot traditional muzzleloading guns, both flintlocks and percussion guns, that the consumer is left with whatever is the newest fad, and whatever the clerk at the local Wal-Mart doesn't know about guns. Cap and ball guns are close enough to cartridge guns, and even to the in-line actions, that clerks can't steer you too far wrong if you choose to buy a modern rifle or double-barreled percussion shotgun.

But, put a flintlock on the shelf and no one knows how to make it go bang, beyond that you have to put this rock in the cock (hammer), and hope it sparks, and hope the sparks hit the powder in the priming pan, and then hope the main charge in the barrel is ignited. It all sounds like so much hard work that consumers just don't want the guns anymore.

With the new in-line actions, you use #209 shotgun primers, the same as used to reload modern shotgun shells. You use black powder substitutes like Triple Se7en and Pyrodex, and sometimes this comes in pre-measured pellets, so you don't have to measure any powder! Then we have plastic wads instead of cloth, and jacketed pistol bullets instead of round lead balls.

Because everything goes down the muzzle, we (properly) call them muzzleloaders, and pretend we are doing things the way Daniel Boone and Davie Crockett, or the men on the Lewis & Clark Expedition did it 200 years ago. Add to that bad legislation passed by Congress to give us a little more false security, which restricts how black powder is sold transported and stored, and even finding a store that carries black powder is a chore. Finding Flints? Where do you start to look? If you live on the West coast, you are a long way from Friendship, and even Arizona, where the NMLRA holds it winter matches and all the products you need are available, just like at mountain rendezvous in the 1820's.

A myth has been spread by lazy, uneducated gun store clerks, and accepted by the public, that flintlocks are hard to get to fire, are slow to fire, and just can't be as accurate as a modern rifle shooting jacketed bullets in front of smokeless powder. You will even hear that flintlocks are slower firing than side action percussion guns.

Another problem that has become all too common is kind of a reverse snobbery among some flintlock shooters, who disdain anyone who doesn't shoot a rocklock, and don't want to teach people how its done. Some fear the competition they will have at the rifle matches, and don't want to give away any secrets to protect their edge--as if they are winning thousands of dollars in prize money at any rifle match held today! They pretend to be great shooters, who know all there is to know about flintlocks, when they usually are just mimicking something they saw their fathers or grandfathers do, and haven't a clue as to why it is done. The literature on shooting a flintlock is also lacking, so it is no wonder that young shooters have trouble finding information.

MYTHS DISPELLED

Flintlocks are actually faster to fire than a percussion gun, all things being equal. By that I mean, if you have two side lock actions, one flint and other percussion, and the flintlock is tuned properly (has the flint mounted properly in the cock, has a good frizzen that sparks, the angle of the cock will throw the sparks into the middle of the priming pan, and the main charge has been poked with a vent pick to allow more than one granule of powder to be ignited by the priming

charge at one time), the main charge in a flintlock will be burning before the hammer on the percussion gun strikes the percussion cap. The priming powder ignites and in turn ignites the main charge in the barrel before the cock finishes its stroke and comes to a rest. The percussion gun, by design, has to strike the cap between the hammer and the nipple to cause ignition, so the flintlock has to fire sooner. Flintlocks fire quicker, lock time being equal.

SECRETS

The secret of shooting flintlocks are few, but important. With the current celebration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition 200 years ago, west coast shooters are likely to see a lot of flintlocks being fired at ceremonies. So will people all along the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers from Wood River Illinois, where the expedition began, to Astoria Oregon, where it wintered over 1805-6 before returning. When you watch the flintlock shooters, check to see if they do the following:

1. In a flintlock, you don't pack the powder by ramming the ball down hard on the powder charge. A flintlock has to burn the powder one granule at a time, while a percussion cap sends a flame burning or pushing its way through the powder charge, igniting lots of powder all at once. A percussion cap actually detonates the powder, much like the primer in a cartridge does today.

The flintlock was designed to start a fire that quickly ignites all the powder to create the gases needed to expel the projectile. Load the ball using a marked ramrod, so that you load to a mark you have made on the ramrod that represents where the ball just begins to touch the powder under it. (You can feel and sometime hear a grinding action when the ball touches the powder). Leave extra air between powder granules, to speed the burning process in a flintlock. Actually, there is enough oxygen in the powder itself to provide all the O2 it needs for combustion. But extra oxygen helps it burn faster. (That is the secret!)

2. A flintlock works best if your priming pan is wide and shallow, holding the powder over a wider surface so that regardless of how you set the flint in the jaws of the cock the sparks will hit priming powder and ignite it. This may require use of a Dremel tool to grind the sides of the current locks to widen them, but the effort will pay off with more positive and faster ignition. There is nothing more conducive to a flinch than a misfire, or a "flash in the pan."

Polish the surface of the priming pan to a mirror finish so that it attracts less moisture from the air to foul your prime. A smooth finish also makes it easier to wipe out residue after the prime has burned, so that the residue does not attract water.

In humid areas or conditions, use the same powder used in the main charge to prime your gun. Leave the 4F priming powder for sunny days at the range. The coarser powder will burn just a tad slower, but that time is measured in millionths of a second, and you won't hear the difference or react differently in the interval between the two powders.

I also find that in some guns it helps to bank the powder in the pan away from the touchhole, so that there is air under and around the touchhole for the flame to go towards. This helps direct the flame from the prime into the touchhole and to the main powder charge. Make sure the touchhole is above the priming pan, and never cover the touchhole with powder.

cont...

Flintlocks - How to Shoot Them - continued:

There are compounds sold that you can mix with your prime to decrease its affinity for water, but no one with much experience relies on these compounds in lieu of common sense. When I hunt in the rain, I leave my priming pan dry, with a feather or toothpick in the touchhole to keep moisture out of the main charge. I wrap the muzzle with plastic. If you are trying to be period correct, a leather collar that has been water proofed using tallow, or some other grease, can be tied over the muzzle.

Animals such as deer and elk move slowly when its raining, if they move at all, because they are robbed of their sense of hearing by the sound of all the raindrops hitting branches and leaves around them. That gives a hunter time to take the feather out of the touchhole, remove the muzzle cover, prime the pan, cock the hammer, and take an aimed shot while the quarry is still in sight.

Wipe the underside of the flint with a swipe of your index finger as you cock the hammer. This removes moisture that may have condensed on the underside, where you can't see it, and your gun should fire as expected.

It works for me. I killed a wild boar in Eastern Tennessee one Labor Day weekend when it was about 85 degrees and raining, with my .50 caliber flintlock rifle. I wore a poncho to keep both my rifle and me dry, my gun tucked under my arm so that my body could keep moisture out of the lock. My leather hat with the broad brim kept water out of the priming pan when I loaded it.

3. Use a vent pick to poke a channel in the main powder charge in the barrel. This allows room for the flame from the prime to enter the barrel through the touchhole, and burn several granules of powder simultaneously. This speeds ignition so much that I have had club members come up to me while reloading to ask if I am shooting a flintlock or a percussion gun! When I show them the flint action, they all want to know how I do that. Now you know.

4. Wrap your flints with lead, not leather. Leather tends to act as a shock absorber, and the flint will rebound or bounce off the face of the frizzen just at the time it is cutting into the steel and starting to shear off bits of steel at the high temperature required to ignite the priming powder below. Instead, when the flint rebounds, it tears bits of steel off that are then caught on the edge of the flint. The second repeat hit will produce a few sparks that may ignite the prime.

Within a few shots there will be usually so much steel clogging the edge of the flint that it will not throw a spark from the frizzen into the pan. Misfire! Then you will see the shooter take out his knife, or a hammer, or some other device, and begin pounding on the front edge of the flint. He has to knock off enough of the edge to make a new one, free of the bits of steel that are clogging the edge. That takes at least 20 shots out of a flint, takes time, leads to flinching, and a general distrust and dislike of flintlocks in general. Finally the shooter buys another muzzleloader that uses percussion caps or shotgun primers for ignition! And all because he wrapped the flint in a leather shock absorber instead of lead.

Lead does not give, or bounce, and it doesn't let a flint bounce when it hits the frizzen. Lead holds the flint firmly in the jaws of the cock, and provides weight to drive the flint into the frizzen and down in a scraping action to cut and throw very hot steel bits into the priming pan.

If the lock is tuned properly, the angle of the cock to the frizzen will be correct and the flint will not only scrape steel from the frizzen in one continuous stroke, but will be self-knapping. That is, it will make a new edge every time the gun is fired. There will be no need to knap the flint, as it will not clog its edge with steel.

It takes a few shots for a flint to "set up" in lead, unlike a leather wrap, so you have to initially check the tension on your cock screw about every 5 shots, but it will hold the flint firmly once the lead forms to the smooth surfaces of the flint. About every 30 shots you will need to check the flint to see where it is throwing the sparks. You may have to move it forward in the cock, and use a piece of twig behind the lead wrap to keep the flint wedged in the forward position. Aren't you glad that Mother Nature provides us with twigs virtually everywhere?

5. Springs. Most modern locks have springs that are out of balance and are too strong. The result is that they crush expensive flints, and damage the frizzen unnecessarily, and jar the gun, making it difficult to achieve consistently tight groups. The frizzen spring should provide such tension that it takes no more than 3 pounds of weight to open the frizzen.

Use a trigger pull gauge to measure it. Just hook the trigger pull gauge over the top of the frizzen, and slowly pull in a straight line forward until the frizzen opens. Another test is take the frizzen spring off, and put some priming powder in the pan. If the cock is angled correctly and the flint set properly in the jaws, the flint should cut steel and fire the prime without the frizzen spring providing resistance.

The mainspring only needs to be about 10 pounds to ensure proper ignition. Today's locks often require more than 40 pounds of tension to cock them. Put your rifle or shotgun butt down on your bathroom scale, make a note of the weight of the rifle on the scale, and then slowly cock the hammer back to full cock while watching the dial of the scale. Subtract the original weight of the rifle, and you have the amount of spring tension measured in pounds.

If your gun is a large musket with a large lock, the spring may be even heavier than 40 lbs. Those big locks require very expensive flints, and I have seen men with locks that literally shattered the stone in one blow. Even in the days of the Brown Bess, paper cartridges came boxed 20 to a package, and with a new flint for the gun. They did not expect the flints to shoot more than 20 times before being replaced!

Think you are better off with the new in-lines? I doubt it. Modern arms makers want to protect themselves from product liability lawsuits, so they sell us guns that are intentionally over-engineered. That means heavy springs. Can't shoot consistent groups because of the hammer jolt that shakes the gun when you fire? You will need to do something about those springs. A competent gunsmith can reduce the tension on the V-springs found on modern replica flintlock actions. He can remove the rattle and tickle that destroys accuracy, while still allowing your gun to shoot each time you pull the trigger and save your flints.

The large rifle flints I use in my American 20 gauge fowler can get 60-80 shots per flint. MY .50 caliber rifle gets about 80-100 shots per flint using medium sized rifle flints. The large flint I use in my fowler run about a dollar each at retail, and the smaller rifle flints run between 60 and 75 cents each.

continued next edition

The following is the conclusion of this article from last months Ramrod, due to a Stop-Press inclusion of an article pertaining to the federal election. Thanks to Bill Davey from The Bulletin for permission to reprint that article, and any future one, from The Bulletin.

Muzzleloader Shotguns - continued from last month:

I always store my shotgun barrel down after cleaning to keep residual cleaning fluids out of the ignition chambers and I always discharge a cap in the morning before loading to vent the channels. If you follow these practices a percussion muzzle-loader will reliably fire in the wettest of weather 98% of the time. I have not experienced a misfire with fresh loads using any muzzle-loading shotgun. On one occasion I was caught in a fifteen minute soaking downpour using the White. An hour later it fired with no hesitation.

If you are of a more primitive persuasion, a flintlock trade fusil can be an effective turkey getter. Standard 20 gauge cushion fiber wads fit nicely. I loaded 70 grains of FFg and 1 1/8 ounces of #6 shot. I shot some nice 30 yard patterns with it. I didn't get a turkey with it that season, but that wasn't the gun's fault. The weather was beautiful and the gun shot its loads with solid consistency. It was just one of those seasons when I couldn't connect with a tom when I was using it.

All other strategies are the same as any other turkey hunter would use. I use the same calls. I wear camouflage because I believe the practice is effective. I use decoys if the conditions are right for a planned set. If I am hunting for an opportunistic spur of the moment situation, I don't mess with them. Decoys are also useful as range indicators. I usually set them twenty to twenty-five yards out to help me estimate a tom's range, although many other hunters prefer to place the decoy off and away from them to distract the turkey's attention. Any good turkey strategy that works for other shotguns will work for a muzzleloader.

You don't need a lot of support equipment for turkey hunting with a muzzleloader. I seldom carry more than the powder, shot and extra wads needed for three shots because turkey hunting is pretty much a one-shot deal. You either get your shot or you don't. I carry my capper on a thong hung around my neck and stuffed into my shirt pocket.

On one occasion I was hunting with a Thompson/Center New Englander and my first cap didn't set the charge off. Amazingly, the tom held his position. I kept my head, wishing I had a double barrel, moved slowly and set another cap on the shotgun. I took him with the second attempt. Yes, I was using the previous day's charge. I have never taken that chance again. The turkey gods were kind that day; they normally aren't so forgiving.

For upland game hunting nothing can beat a good field bag equipped with a shot snake and shot measure/charger. I carry my powder measure, nipple pick, and capper tied together by leather thongs to a single heavy ring of leather. The whole works is carried in the bag with my cushion fiber wads. When reloading the double, I hold the leather ring in my teeth so I don't have to constantly fish for components. Between that strategy and the shot measure/shot snake, I can reload a double barrel muzzleloader very quickly if I need to.



I've field tested a number of muzzleloaders over the years. The first shotgun I took into the field was a Thompson/Center New Englander and the first muzzleloader specifically intended for turkey hunting was a Thompson/Center Tree Hawk. The overall design of both was the same except that the Tree Hawk had a Real Tree camouflage finish and interchangeable chokes. As I recall, the New Englander was bored full choke.

The updated version is the Thompson/Center Black Mountain Magnum, which has interchangeable chokes and is available in either a camouflage finish or the original walnut stock and blue steel. The basic Thompson/Center shotgun design is a side hammer percussion with a straight hand stock with a 13 1/2" length of pull. It is sized very well, weighs around six pounds, and is easy to carry. The lock is rugged and the trigger is good.

The only problem that I had with the New Englander was that it did not have enough power to knock down pheasants flying straight away at thirty yards or beyond and, of course, there was no second shot. I had some critical misfires in the turkey woods with the Tree Hawk, but that was before I learned that a turkey hunter never goes into the woods with a day old load. The problem was more the result of my ignorance than the Tree Hawk's performance. I am sure that a New Englander would be all the shotgun you'd ever need for woods and small game hunting.

I took my first book royalties to Cabela's in Sidney, Nebraska, purchased the 12 gauge double barrel with interchangeable chokes and sold my Thompson/Centers. I have enjoyed many satisfying seasons carrying the Cabela's double. I've successfully taken geese, ducks, turkeys, rabbits, upland game and even coyotes with it. Other than its slower loading traits, it is capable of matching the performance of a modern shotgun and it has much more flexibility than a single barrel muzzleloader. The balance and stock design are wonderful.

Three seasons ago, I had the locks rebuilt because of safety concerns but in spite of hundreds of hours in the field and many hundreds of rounds fired it still looks like new. If properly maintained and cared for a muzzleloader shotgun will last a lifetime. A double is much more effective for upland game. A 10 gauge double is also offered for those who might want more knockdown power. Several marketers offer the basic Pedersoli double.

My next muzzleloader shotgun was the White Tominator. I failed by a Merriam's of getting a turkey grand slam that first season. Out of a dozen toms taken with the Tominator, four were shot at right around the 50 yard mark. Few shotguns can match and none can beat it for long-range turkey shooting. I believe its stock design, reminiscent of the Browning Auto 5, is the best in the in-line muzzleloader industry. It is a credible single shot upland game and waterfowl design. A less expensive and thoroughly adequate version of it is now marketed as the White Thunder.

I field tested a Knight TK-2000 for a season. It is a robust but heavy design that performs very well for turkey hunting. I also had a Traditions Buckhunter in-line for a few seasons and found it to be thoroughly dependable and effective for turkey hunting. Both stock designs are far better rifle than shotgun shooting platforms. A very nice little shotgun was the Navy in-line with an old-fashioned poly-choke. It was a great quail and pheasant gun but I did not try it for turkeys.

MUZZLE LOADING SHOTGUN CHAMPIONSHIP 2010

	CSA	25 Prec	100 Moses	200 BR	Agg	50 SB	25 Clays	100 Rev	100 BR	100 P/CS	Agg
	HG	HG	BL	BL	BL	ML	ML	ML	ML	ML	ML
Ah Hang, Trevor	140										
Aylen, Bruce	165	85									
Baker, Phil						70	18				
Hill, Doug	132					34	19		67		67
Howland, Noel			73	83	156		13		63		63
Kinder, Alex							20				
Kinder, Craig	144							48	75	67	190
Kitchen, Barry											
Liptak, George		10							38		38
McMillan, Malcolm	127							56	46		102
Morraitis, Jim	143		75	67	142	66	18	52	57	64	173
Mowbray, Roger	162	79									
Rush, Gordon		74									
Smith, Shannon								33	67	29	129
Steel, Grant	123			75	75			21	49		70
Tooth, David								37	60		97

Legend

B = Bronze Proficiency E = Equalled Record G = Gold Proficiency N = New Record S = Silver Proficiency V = Visitor



Evelyn Wood's bodyguard of mounted infantrymen of the 90th Light Infantry. They are wearing corduroy breeches with scarlet serge frocks and are armed with Swinburne-Henry carbines.

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