

Selecting the right shotgun ammo • Hunting on Australian soil • Guardian Deluxe shotgun bag

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

Michelle Pares

*Living my
best life*

**thanks to
conservation
work**

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Editorial

Gemma Dunn



Laetisha Scanlan delves into a report commissioned by former Federal Sports Minister Bridget McKenzie, now Minister for Agriculture, that highlights the health and wellbeing for those engaged in hunting and shooting. With the thousands of industry jobs and billions of dollars benefitting the economy, we should all be proud of our involvement.

As you may know, the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia protects native habitats and species through our Conservation and Wildlife Management (CWM) programs. Environmental volunteer Michelle Pares provides a wonderful insight into the amalgamation of her firearms passion with program participation. Michelle's love for animals is what drives her commitment and you can visit ssaa.org.au to learn more about CWM in your area.

Selecting the right ammunition is vital for many reasons and I point you in the right direction when it comes to shotgun shells in Part one of an ongoing series. On top of the factors to consider I also take you through the best practice for patterning your shotgun.

While on the topic of shotguns, we review a well-priced Guardian Deluxe bag that ticks all the right boxes in practicality and design to keep everything in good order.

Our incredible prize from Winchester Australia is a stylish Browning clothing pack worth over \$300!

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Wishing you all a happy and safe Christmas from the AWS team.

Gemma

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Letter to the editor

Hi Gemma,

I just received the quarterly edition of *Australian Women's Shooter* and my first read was about Arnya Olsen. What a wonderful story about a young woman going great guns in a really terrific sport and environment.

Best wishes and congratulations!

Chris, QLD

Thank you for your kind words, Chris. Arnya's speedy rise through the ranks certainly highlights one of the many things that can be achieved when you give the shooting sports a go. I always encourage everyone interested to join their local SSAA club, just as Arnya did, to discover the enjoyment first-hand. It doesn't matter what level of success is reached, it's mainly about getting out there, having fun and meeting awesome people. I hope my shooting-range piece in the same edition also emphasised the terrific environment at SSAA ranges and we will continue to showcase the positives for women in the shooting sports.

Gemma

Taking aim with Laetisha Scanlan

As you may have seen, in September The Department of Health released the *Economic and Social Impacts of Recreational Hunting and Shooting* report commissioned by (now) Minister for Agriculture Bridget McKenzie. Successfully lobbied by the SSAA, the study's data was collected through an extensive survey completed by 16,576 hunters and sports shooters across Australia.

The report summarised that as a collective there are approximately 640,000 recreational hunters and shooters within Australia. And in 2018, we contributed an estimate of \$2.4 billion to the Australian economy while employing over 19,500 Australians in these specific industries.

It doesn't surprise me that in addition to this, the report shows shooting and hunting activities provides health and wellbeing benefits to its participants. It highlights that hunters and shooters are happier and more active than the general population along with the psychological gains of spending time outdoors and surrounded by nature.

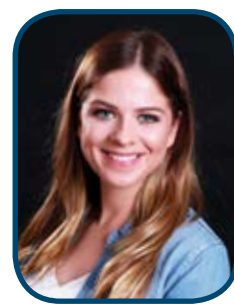
And while I personally can attest to this statement it's great to see I am not alone in this opinion, with other shooters also feeling the advantages for greater wellbeing through shooting and the inadvertent exercise that comes with it.

This report is important to the wider community as it demonstrates the positives associated with hunting and shooting in this country. Although I am not an active hunter myself, it is a great example that as a cohort of law-abiding firearms owners we contribute positively to the economy and there is merit for our activities in today's society.

I myself constantly feel like I have to justify and defend my sport and the use of a firearm to anti-gun individuals. So I can sympathise with hunters that are usually more so attacked by the choice of their recreational firearm activities.

Hopefully this report can be used effectively to portray shooters' voices in the profits of recreational hunting and shooting not only on the economy but also through the positive physical and mental pluses.

And while this report is only the beginning of the insights into hunters and shooters within Australia, it's a positive step in the right direction.



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Living my best life thanks to conservation work

Michelle Pares

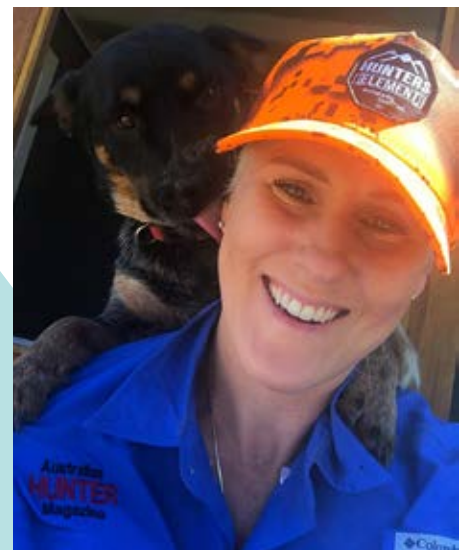
As a 35-year-old woman from Queensland's Sunshine Coast who works in the disability and rehabilitation industry, my big three loves are wildlife, shooting and the outdoors. In my early 20s I spent many hours helping a family friend with a cattle and deer farm, discovering my affinity with the outdoors and working with animals. The convenience of practice shooting on the property and being taught the basic fundamentals of firearms, meant the farm became my second home where I spent most of my free time.

Along with this I was a volunteer at Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital. I was given the opportunity to work closely with our native wildlife, providing clean areas for the koalas to live, fresh food and daily medical treatments. This gave me the true appreciation of how vulnerable our wildlife

really is and why it is so important for Steve Irwin's two main beliefs to be passed on for generations to come: conservation and education.

From there, I completed all requirements to acquire my firearms licence. My initial rifle purchased was a Ruger Scout .308, which was the first rifle I ever shot. The Ruger Scout was my perfect bush rifle that I felt confident shooting. From there many more were added to the collection.

During one of my frequent visits to Caboolture Firearms I was talking to the owner about my passion for exploring the outdoors, our native wildlife and most of all... firearms. The owner suggested that I might want to become a member of SSAA's Conservation & Wildlife Management (CWM) Queensland.



A selfie taken by Michelle with farm dog Sophie.

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Michelle was very proud after taking her biggest pig to date at Moonie.



Michelle fine-tuning her butchery skills.

Being a coordinator for a company that gives direct support for people with acquired brain injuries and disabilities – compassion, empathy and being understanding are my main personal attributes. Unsure of the suggestion to join CWM, I wondered if I was the right person for it. Did I have what it takes to go hunting and shoot an animal? Would I be accepted into a male dominated sport? All these questions were hot topics on loop in my head for the next few days.

I took the leap and joined. Becoming a member of CWM gave me the opportunity to grow, learn and make educated discussions on the humane way for pest control and conservation in Queensland. Since then I have been an active, participating member of CWM for three years.

What I found when I joined was a welcoming group of like-minded people, who have the same visions, values and shooting ethic. I have never felt so accepted and appreciated in a group environment. I love this lifestyle and all that it encompasses – wilderness, fitness, wildlife, conservation, pushing limits and immersing yourself in incredible places, meeting incredible people along the way.

CWM has moulded my life, made me a better human in so many ways, and connected me with nature in a manner which I feel is lost in current society. I love every single moment spent in the outdoors. There is much more to it than just species management and conservation. Before humans were anything else, we were hunters. This is something that is deeply rooted in all of us and I feel extremely lucky to belong to a group who is still in touch with this, despite modern times making life so convenient for us.

I was a member of CWM for two years before I felt confident, trained and prepared enough to participate in my first project. I completed my theory, practical training and training development weekend attendances. It gave me a comprehensive grasp of the damages caused by feral pests and also instilled me with more confidence to know that I was doing the right thing.

A clean, humane kill was of utmost importance to me, being the animal lover that I am. I didn't want any animal to suffer. I am not proud of taking an animal's life, but I am proud of the work I do for preserving Australia's heritage. I hunt with heart and feel a great sense of care and pride towards the animals I hunt, and the environment in which I hunt them.

Every hunter identifies with 'that moment' and is always thankful for a successful and humane end to a hunt. Of all of the ways to utilise and maintain a healthy population of wildlife in a modern world, hunting is by far the most efficient and effective, depending on the circumstances. According to PestSmart, it has been found by the Humaneness Matrix that for all species CWM targets via ground shooting, head shots are the most humane control method.

One of the hardest questions I am asked regularly is: "How can you shoot an animal when you call yourself an animal lover?" For me, the answer is quite simple – I do what I do because I love animals. I respect the fact that this job has to be done, and I can make sure that if I'm a part of it, it will be done with care and respect. I feel being an active member of CWM is the most effective and humane way to reduce feral pest numbers. These animals aren't harassed, tormented, or most of the time even aware we are around. It's a quick and painless way to end a life.

Since taking part in the conservation world, I have been able to connect with other women shooters whose philosophical standpoints on hunting resonate strongly with my own values. English shooter Rachel Carrie describes hunting in a profoundly eloquent way: 'When I go hunting I like to get my hands dirty, I like getting stuck in and learning as much as I can about every aspect of the hunt. I never just turn up and pull the trigger. I do hours of study and research into animals' habits and habitats. It was what our ancestors did

Wanting to improve and develop my own personal skills, I arranged for a friend who is a butcher to spend a day teaching me the full undertaking of field dressing. From picking a lamb up from a family farm, a humane kill, skinning, carving cuts of meat, knife skills and finishing with a freezer full of beautiful, tasty meat.

From that day I had a higher awareness of the procedure that it takes to go from paddock to plate. It is a process I am grateful I took part in and one that makes me wish I could eat all my meat the same way.

What I found when I joined [CWM] was a welcoming group of like-minded people, who have the same visions, values and shooting ethic.

and I think it's important to never allow things in life to become so convenient that we forget these basic activities that make us human.

'Nature is a beautiful resource that we should be careful to utilise, manage and maintain like we have since the dawn of time. The biggest threat to nature and any species is for us to forget our role in nature.'

I am proud of having done the 'dirty' work myself. Understanding the complete route from start to finish regarding exactly what it takes to put food on the table is a whole experience that helps you comprehend your existence.

I realise that hunting is not for everyone. Pushing my opinion on to people is not something I want to do. I more often strive to offer sensible, scientific and fact-based information about hunting, and give details into the destruction and impact that feral pest species have on our native flora and fauna.



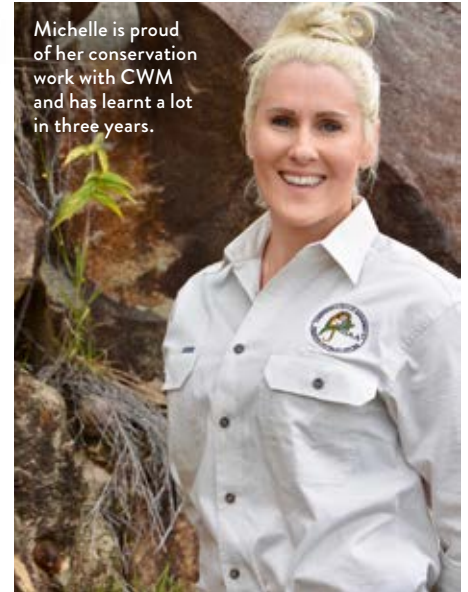
Michelle enjoys hunting on the farm whenever she has the chance.



Let's make sure wildlife still exists and is appreciated, enjoyed and utilised with care in a sustainable manner..



Michelle on the farm with her fur baby Winston.



Michelle is proud of her conservation work with CWM and has learnt a lot in three years.

This allows others to make an educated decision for themselves. I know we won't change the minds of those who are fervently opposed to our conservation efforts. However, we must remember that there are still plenty of people out there who are impressionable either way. We must not think it ignorant of people who have simply never known nor been told any different. A lot of sentimental and emotionally-based opinions are media driven.

As a hunter I can't help but feel a moral obligation to ensure that as much practical and true to life information reaches the mainstream as possible. We should all work together and while we might not fully fathom one another's opinion, let's try and respect that we exist and can co-exist together. Let's share a common goal of making sure wildlife still exists and is appreciated, enjoyed and utilised with care in a sustainable manner for generations to come.

CWM members use their shooting skills to assist in the conservation of native animals and the long-term management

of feral species. Branches are involved with ongoing feral animal campaigns in national parks, corporate conservation charities, traditional owners, nature refuges and private properties for the benefit of native animals and plants. This is either through direct participation or in an advisory role in conservation projects. These activities are carried out in conjunction with government agencies, local governments and like-minded conservation groups.

Organised CWM Queensland culls on feral cats, foxes, dogs, goats, deer, rabbits, hares and pigs have taken place from beyond Cooktown in the far north out to the NT border and down to Stanthorpe on the NSW border.

CWM provide vital services that help maintain the fragile balance of the Australian ecosystem. Members perform a variety of tasks including controlling feral animals, collecting data, assisting landholders in checking fences, dams and stock, adhering to weed seed protocols, assisting with native animal surveys and counts.

Volunteers are SSAA members from all walks of life who want to actively contribute to conservation. You must hold the appropriate firearms licences and be willing to undergo training and accreditation in firearm safety, marksmanship, animal control and welfare, plus field operations concerning safety, navigation and teamwork. Members use their own equipment and support the program by raising funds. They are also covered through SSAA Insurance for up to \$20 million public liability.

CWM is fitting for all who enjoy the great outdoors, want to escape from the everyday 'hamster on a wheel feeling', have an interest in conservation, have good ethics, firearm safety and a passion for shooting. For more information visit ssaa.org.au/cwm

Guardian Big Rack Deluxe *shotgun bag*

Lynn Bain

I like the idea and practicality of being able to reach into the storage compartment and immediately put my hand on my gun bag. This pink and purple offering from Guardian stands out among all the others which we have that are typically green to brown khaki shades or either brown and/or green camo patterns. Guardian refers to its pink/purple camo as 'candyland'. White silhouettes of many different game antler styles adorn the candy camo and set it off superbly.

The Guardian Big Rack Deluxe shotgun bag is 133cm long and it is nicely full-length padded on both sides. It has a reinforced nose. Who wants one of those unreinforced bags that the barrel ends up punching through and dragging along on the concrete at the range? Not me. I like them reinforced.

Also, the handles wrap around the full circumference of the bag. Who wants a gun bag with handles that are sewn in to the top only? Once the stitching gives up and the handles pull out, your entire rifle and scope crash onto the concrete at the rifle range. I like the full-wrap webbing handles.

Importantly for my *modus operandi*, this Guardian Big Rack gun bag has a generously sized side pocket on the outside. I like to have a side pocket on my gun bags. In there I keep a calibre specific bore snake and often one or two bits of other paraphernalia as I see fit for use with the rifle or shotgun that is in the gun bag.

Additionally, the Guardian Deluxe shotgun bag has a full-length double zip for ease of access and a removable shoulder strap for simplicity of carrying in the field or when your hands are full at the range. A full-length zip (or in this case zips) allows you to place your firearm gently into the gun bag rather than pushing and sliding it (rubbing it) muzzle first inside and along the bag.

The Guardian Big Rack series includes pistol and range bags, available in pink/purple camo as well as 'savannah' (green) and 'scorched outback' (orange).

I purchased my Guardian Big Rack Deluxe shotgun bag for \$40 from On Target Sporting Arms in the Brisbane suburb of Keperra. Guardian products are distributed by Aaron Knowles, Performance Outdoor Agencies, 0499 314 258.



Colours: candyland (pink/purple), savannah (green) and scorched outback (orange).

White silhouettes of many different game antler styles adorn the pink and purple camo pattern of the bag.

What's the right ammo for you?

PART ONE – SHOTGUN

Gemma Dunn

Over the next few editions of *Australian Women's Shooter*, I will be discussing how you can determine what the right ammunition for you and your discipline is and the factors that should go towards making your decision. First, we will start with Shotgun then I will cover Rifle and Pistol in later editions.

Many people ask me what the best kind of shotgun is for a lady/junior beginner because of recoil. We all know that shotguns can pack quite a punch at times and some of us even remember the first time on the farm as a young teenager with dad's/pop's old shotgun nearly putting us in the dirt. Armed with this memory, some are scared to let their loved one have the same experience, hence the initial question.

There will be many people out there who will say "get them a .410 or 20-gauge shotgun to start with. It's much softer!" I think this is where a world of (figurative) hurt can begin for some.

These days, shotguns are not designed like pop's old side-by-side and many 12-gauge shotguns, coupled with the right ammunition, can be perfectly suited for a beginner lady or junior and you'll be on to a winning combination that could last a lifetime.

I'll use myself as an example. I was a small-framed 13-year-old when I first started shooting a shotgun. Dad, who is a strong man, and I shared a Miroku for a while and he used standard 12g 28gr 1250fps loads with size 7½ shot (I'll explain all of this a bit later on) for Down the Line (DTL). At the time, I will admit that the gun was a little heavy for me and didn't quite fit right (to know more about correct gun-fit head to *Australian Women's Shooter* edition #2). We made sure I used subsonic shotgun ammunition which meant that there was a lot less kick, but I still got the same shot pattern and amount of pellets as everybody else in the competition. For those who aren't quite sure what the differences are in subsonic ammunition compared to normal loads, I will explain further down.

There are a few key reasons why I wouldn't recommend starting someone off with a .410 or 20-gauge if the goal was to eventually have them shooting a 12-gauge. Firstly, if the goal is to shoot 12-gauge, why buy multiple guns as a means to an end? Why not just buy the one you want first and learn to work with it? Particularly these days there are more and more choices for shotguns that are made for women or juniors, much more choice than I ever had, which means that off the shelf gun-fit isn't too much of an issue and helps with recoil immensely.

Secondly, is that ammunition for a .410 or 20-gauge shotgun is not as common these days therefore nearly everything is imported and is quite expensive as a result. Thirdly, there's a chance you'll be going months without supply while waiting for

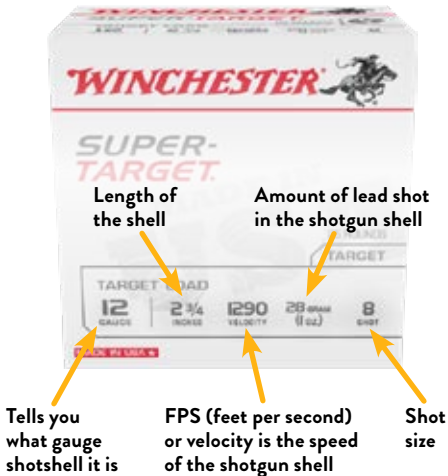
These days side-by-side and 12-gauge shotguns, coupled with the right ammunition, can be perfectly suited for a beginner lady or junior...

shipments to arrive from overseas. And finally, the correct choice of 12-gauge ammunition can drastically decrease the amount of recoil you will experience and there are more options to choose from in the 12-gauge market than any other size.

It is easy to see how much of a difference your choice of ammunition can make to your shooting and that it isn't just about hitting the target, it's about how you enjoy doing so.

So, how do you choose the right ammo for yourself or your beginner? There are many factors that come in to play. However, before we get to that, let's take a look at reading a box of shotgun shells.

Generally, the top of a shotgun shell box will tell you all the information you need to know before you purchase them. It is imperative though that you make sure you purchase the right kind of ammunition for your shotgun. You must make sure if you are shooting a 12-gauge shotgun, that you don't drop a smaller gauge shotshell into your gun. Unless you have a set of sub-gauge tubes that fit into your barrel, ammunition sizes are not interchangeable in shotgun barrels.



Brand

For some, this is a pretty straightforward choice. It can generally come down to what you are using it for and price. So, many choose the standard load for the job, for the cheapest possible amount. Not to say that this is always a poor formula for deciding on what ammunition to buy, but when it comes to wanting to reduce the recoil, it can be.

Also, some people are very brand-loyal because they like what they know and know what they like, which again is not bad, but it might not suit everybody else the same way so keep that in mind.

The main thing when being brand-specific is that different brands use different powders and primers, which in turn can burn differently and result in a different kind of 'kick' when you shoot it. Not only does this vary from brand to brand, but it can also contrast within the one brand's range of ammunition. Generally, a premium shotshell will use different powder and/or primers than that same brand's everyday shotshell.

Shot size and weight

As mentioned, the shot number indicates the number of pellets per shell and what diameter they are. The size of your shot will be decided for you by the shooting you are looking to do. Sizes 9-7½ are best for clay target sports.

Many shooting clubs prohibit shot sizes bigger than 7½ on a clay shooting range. That's why you'll often see boxes of shotgun shells with shot sizes of 7½, 8 and 9 labelled as 'target loads'. Take a look at the size chart below for the full range of shotshells you can use but make sure to check with your range for shot-size rules and regulations before purchasing any size.

Shot pellet size number (lead)	Shot pellet diameter in inches (lead)	Approx. number of shot pellets per ounce (lead)
9	.08	585
8½	.085	485
8	.09	410
7½	.095	350
6	.11	225
5	.12	170
4	.13	135
2	.15	90
BB	.18	50

The weight is where you can work to limit recoil. You can get your hands on shotgun shells that vary from 21 grams up to 50 grams (which I would not recommend unless you have experience or are a sucker for punishment). The most common weight used in clay shooting is 28 grams or 1oz of lead shot.

In the Olympic disciplines of clay target shooting, shooters are limited to using only 24 grams of lead in their ammunition as a way of making the competition even harder, and there are strict rules and protocols surrounding this at equipment control checkpoints. If you are finding the standard 28gr load to be a bit punchy, you can try using 24gr or less. The trade-off is though, that you have fewer pellets to hit the target with so you could be limiting yourself unnecessarily.

Velocity

The rule of thumb when it comes to velocity is: the higher the velocity or feet per second (FPS), the stronger the recoil and the further the shot will travel. Higher velocity shotgun shells contain more powder and burn quicker, creating more forward momentum to push the pellets out of the gun faster, resulting in more recoil at the back of the gun.

Velocity is the largest factor (after proper gun-fit) that affects the amount of recoil felt while shooting. The best way to reduce the amount of recoil felt is to use a shotshell with a lower fps rating. Many people report up to a 50 per cent reduction in kick (or 'felt recoil') when using lower velocity ammunition. These shotshells are generally labelled 'low recoil' or 'subsonic', and most shotgun shell manufacturers will have a line of these available for purchase.

In the past, I have used Fiocchi, Winchester, Bronze Wing and Rio either myself or when I have coached beginners, and they do the job perfectly. There are always new players in the market of 'low recoil' shotgun shells, so make sure you contact your local gunshop to see what else is available in your area.

Shooting a lower velocity shotgun shell can certainly help a lot in recoil reduction, but it is important to remember that this also means your shot will travel slower than the normal load. You might have to allow for this when shooting targets that require a fair amount of leading such as a distant crosser in sporting or skeet. The change will be minimal with closer targets but you might have to adjust your lead a lot on targets that are more than 20m away.

When shooting game, a 'low recoil' load may not be effective in producing an ethical kill and it is best to seek the advice of your local authority, or you can read more here: ssaa.org.au/hunting/what-you-can-hunt

Now that we understand the different aspects of a shotgun shell that can help with recoil, I will discuss a tried and true method on how to work out what is right for you and the gun you are using.

Patterning your gun

The shot pattern from your shotgun can differ significantly through many variables and the main one is the brand or manufacturer of the ammunition you choose to use. Just like with rifles, it is important to see what brand/manufacturer works best with your gun. Some guns perform better with certain brands of ammunition over others. This essentially comes down to how your gun handles things like velocity, chamber pressures, rates of acceleration during ignition and shock-absorbing capacity of the plastic wads.

So, to see how well your gun handles certain types of ammunition, you must pattern your gun. Patterning your shotgun means that you test-fire various shotgun shells at a pattern board. Most SSAA shotgun clubs/ranges have these available for visitors to use. Each club/range has different rules when using the pattern board, so make sure you have someone there from the club or a coach to help you.

There are many different reasons for patterning your shotgun – checking for correct gun-fit, comparing shot patterns

between chokes, point of impact. But for this we just want to look at how each brand of ammunition patterns through your gun. If you would like to know more about patterning your shotgun for different tests, you can read more here: ssaa.org.au/stories/shotguns-essential-shotgun-patterning.html

The process of patterning your gun for the best ammunition for you is as follows:

1. Put the right chokes in your gun

Most sporting shotguns have interchangeable chokes, so you want to pick a fairly tight choke for this process. Preferably a $\frac{3}{4}$ choke as it is one of the most commonly used across the board. If your gun has fixed chokes for trap, like mine, then you use your bottom barrel first as usual for this process.

2. Shoot from the correct distance

Screw your tight choke into the bottom barrel and take three shots from a standing position 20m away from the pattern board. Some recommend shooting from a rest, which can certainly eliminate any shooter error, so do this if it is available to you.

3. View your pattern quality

Once you have fired all three shots, go to the board and have a close peek at how your pattern looks. Some ammunition types will show more of an erratic shot distribution with your gun than others and this is how you determine what works best for your gun and you as a shooter.

Another large factor in differing pattern qualities is the overall quality, hardness and roundness of the lead shot used by the

manufacturer as deformed pellets tend to spread more and very unevenly. Having too many deformed pellets inside one load can significantly erode pattern quality and therefore significantly impact on your performance on the range.

You will be able to tell whether or not your shotshell has produced a high-quality pattern by seeing it evenly spaced in its central point of impact area. Poor quality patterns will show irregular gaps and clusters of pellet concentrations on the pattern board. You will want to steer clear of these loads for your gun, especially if those gaps are larger than the target you are going to be shooting.

4. Select the top three

Once you have repeated this process for several different shotshell types, you should choose the three best that suit your gun, your budget and your comfort level with recoil. It is best to pick at least three that you can be sure you like so you aren't restricted if there is a shortage of your favourite at the local gunshop or if you are travelling to compete.

Once you have considered all the factors I have spoken about in this article, you should have a pretty good idea about what ammunition will work for you when applied correctly to the target you are shooting. If you are still having trouble with the process, feel free to email me at aws@ssaa.org.au or contact your coach or a trusted member at your club to guide you through the procedure.



The difference between Fiocchi 'everyday' (left) and 'high-end' shotgun shells is evident once the shell is opened up.

SHOWCASING HUNTING ADVENTURES ON *Australian soil*

Christie Pisani

'Heart of the Huntress' is a series available online featuring a team of strong-willed, independent women from different continents of varying ages, backgrounds, experiences and culture, unified by a passion. We aspire to be positive role models. Above all we want to share the message of conservation hunting. Purposeful hunting. Hunting that gives back what it takes. Although portrayed in separate experiences as mothers, daughters, sisters, wives and friends, our passion stems from one central place – the heart of the huntress.

South Africa, Germany, the United States and beyond... Each of these countries are proudly represented by the Heart of the Huntress girls as superb hunting destinations for their own respective reasons. Season two sees myself and Donna Partridge showcase our homeland of Australia to the hunting world.

Australia comes with many challenges. The country does not breed the best red deer heads in the Southern Hemisphere. Nor does it boast 45 different species of game animals to hunt. Not even close. A day's hunting does not conclude with a soak in a jacuzzi at a ranch while the hired hands cape out our trophy in the stinking heat. Really, a woolshed and a swag is the closest thing to a ranch and we are the hands (though the 'stinking heat' is about right).



The hunting threesome in northern New South Wales.



A muddied boar from the riverbed.

*There is nothing quite like Australia
for levelling the playing field
with the game animals...*



Donna took this fox in New South Wales.



Margaret, left, introduced to her accommodation along with Christie and photographer Steve Lurie.

There is nothing quite like Australia for levelling the playing field with the game animals, which the Aussie girls demonstrate during filming of our adventures down under. I was joined by Margaret Botha, from South Africa, as we hunted the untamed northern-most tip of the eastern side of the country and later to the south to link up with the heavily pregnant supermum, Donna.

Attaining success on a hunt is difficult enough while alone. Now we have to contend with a crew of two hunters, one walking while attempting to hold a camera steady, and the added pressure of needing to be at the right angle, distance and focus at the time of the stalk and shot.

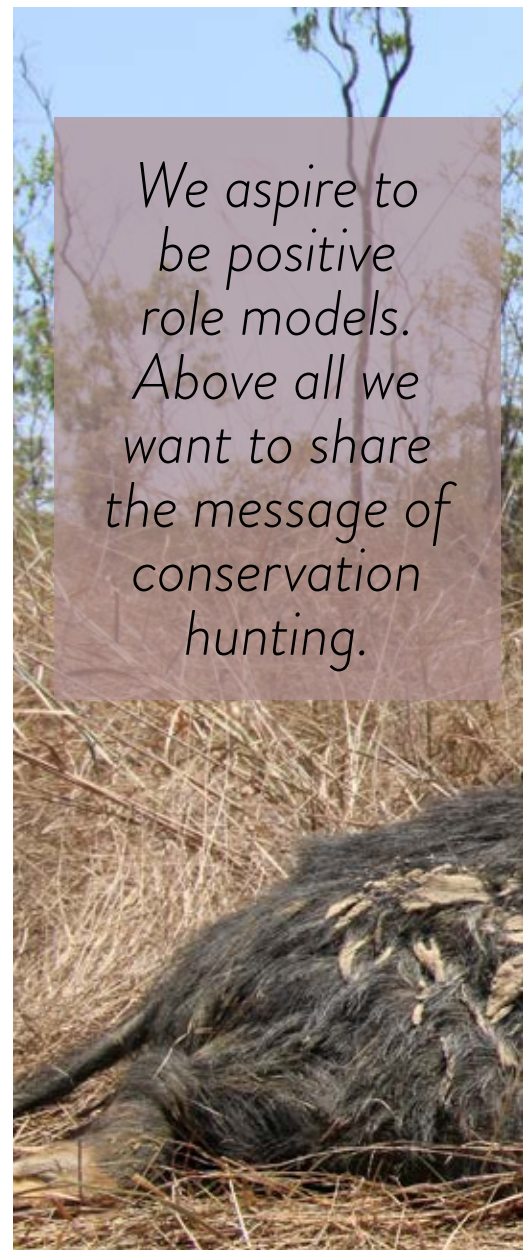
First stop was a meat hunt for red deer, meeting up with our official photographer, talented hunter and all-round great guy, Steve Lurie. Margaret successfully shot a hind just around sunset on the top of a ridge. The crest had no vehicle access, of course. But the hard work paid off after the retrieval when 'Kiwi Steve' created venison sausages with the meat for us to take on our trip south.

Cape York presented its challenges, as always. The heat, the flies and the vast distance to travel were indeed a test for the girls. The land was dry, plagued with

scars from recent grass fires and with the area in the midst of the annual cattle mustering operations, the wild pigs were keeping themselves well hidden. But after many hours of walking and stalking along almost dry creek beds the group had a good collection of boars that eventually 'hit the dust'.

A change was quite welcome as the girls headed south towards the sheep farming country of New South Wales. The weather was significantly cooler and the sepia-coloured landscape was replaced by lush green brought on by recent rains. Donna and Margaret stirred up the local pig and fox populations with their rifles and finished the trip with a number of varmints. Meanwhile I disturbed a few bunnies with my bow, collecting a supply for rabbit stew. The usually plentiful fallow deer were initially elusive for Donna and Margaret. However, towards the end of the trip they both attained success, taking a deer each, which I happily butchered for the freezer.

You can see more about the group's ongoing Heart of the Huntress adventures on YouTube and Facebook.



We aspire to be positive role models. Above all we want to share the message of conservation hunting.



Margaret took this red spiker for meat at Linville in Queensland.



Margaret, left, and Christie talk tactics in front of a termite mound.



Christie's bow-hunted boar.



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