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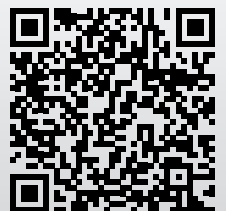


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Aussie hopefuls set their sights on Paris

It's crunch time for Australia's elite shooting athletes as they look down the barrel of qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympics and Paralympics. From late July the shooting sports will be on display in all their glory alongside the rest of the Olympic and Paralympic agenda, a legitimate test of skill and deserving of its place in the world's premier sporting showcase.

This is the first time we'll have seen target shooting up there in lights since Tokyo 2020, rescheduled to 2021 after Covid-19 disruptions. Normally we'd see target shooting at the Commonwealth Games, yet our sport didn't figure at Birmingham in 2022 and, with the 2026 event currently in limbo after Victoria withdrew as hosts, who knows when we'll see it again?

This is a fantastic chance to get behind our sport, spread the good news stories that come with it and push it towards the mainstream attention it deserves. Our preview in this edition gives an update on what to expect, while if you check out Shooting Australia's social media pages you can catch up on latest progress of the Aussie shooters who've dedicated so much time and energy to their dream of reaching Paris 2024.

With what seems to be an ever-growing list of hurdles for grassroots firearm users to continue going to the range, hunting for the table and conducting important conservation activities, this is a golden opportunity to step into the global spotlight and



Australian 3-Position shooter and Olympic hopeful Olivia Cartwright.

promote shooting to the world. Good luck to all the Aussie hopefuls vying for a spot in Paris - the SSAA is right behind you waving the flag for the shooting sports!

• *Olympic Games preview: Page 36.*

AUSTRALIAN Shooter

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PCP rifles vanish into thin air

THE SPORT OF Pre-Charged Pneumatic (PCP) air-gunning is growing rapidly, especially in Europe and the US though not so much in Australia. Perhaps that's our remoteness from the rest of the world . . . or is it? If you're like me you'd start with an internet search of airgun PCP brands then perhaps reviews before selecting one.

But here's where it falls down. Finding your favoured brand in this country may be the limiting factor. I was forced to change my selected model several times as it just wasn't available in Australia. And the knowledge and understanding is lacking in most gun dealers here, even to the point of being sneered at when you mention airguns.

Of the 12 shops I visited in my travels across Queensland and New South Wales, only one displayed in-depth knowledge, while one dealer wouldn't even let me in as he didn't deal in airguns at all. An online search of Australian dealers who advertise PCP airguns showed 16 who were stocking PCPs at the time of my search in December 2023.

There are at least 60 PCP brands manufactured around the world yet I found just

18 across 16 dealers Australia-wide. The most popular one carried was FX (eight dealers) followed by Exanix (five) then Gamo and Diana (three each). Most carried one or two brands in small quantities, driven either by nervousness about the market or ignorance of the segment.

I was unable to survey importers of all brands but the most popular PCP rifles seem to be represented and therefore available to dealers if they made the leap. Yet many popular brands were missing, notably Air Arms, Beeman, Brocock, Daisy, Hatsan, Kral and Umarex, although many of the dealers carried the springer versions.

It's important to note here that while a dealer may stock an airgun brand in a springer, they weren't carrying the PCP version in that brand. Surely any forward-thinking dealer would look at the overseas trends and commit to learning more about PCP rifles and stock one or two models. I can't help feeling dealers are missing the chance to stand out in this growing market segment - and it's done at the expense of airgun enthusiasts.

Ian Thomason, via email

Super by name . . .

THANK YOU FOR printing the letter from Peter Lytwynenko about Super all-plastic 12-gauge shotshells (*Shooter*, October 2023). I too used large quantities of these for hunting and clay target competition and found them to be very good quality. However, they were great in side-by-side guns and under-and-overs but not in self-loaders, as the primer would sometimes blow out and jam the action. If I remember rightly a warning on the packet said not to use them in self-loaders.

We used these shells in a Winchester pump-action and they were great with no extraction problems, so the Bentley may have had either a tight chamber or the extractor was very narrow or a combination of both. The only downside was they kicked quite hard and after a day's shooting usually left you with a sore shoulder and cheek (in those days we used 1¹/₃oz loads). New Zealand released a similar shell in the late 1970s or early '80s and it had a steel washer in the rim of the cartridge. Those seemed to have been made of better quality plastic and were reloadable.

David Devine, via email

Insurance

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Q I run my own business as a retail shopfront but, with online sales making up the bulk of my trading, I'm looking to change things to run solely online and move from using a shopfront to a warehouse for my stock. I'm hoping this can also reduce my insurance needs so what should I consider?

A The change from shopfront to e-commerce removes the public-facing aspect of your business,

though insurance for risk exposure is still very important for your own protection. As you're selling a product to the public, you need to be covered for product failure and other liability risks such as injuries within your business for yourself and anyone who may enter for deliveries or services. As you'll be switching from shopfront to warehouse, you'll be able to change insurance types and there may be savings to be made here if you've less stock on hand in a warehouse situation compared to a shopfront.

This is definitely a case where an outlet such as SSAA General Insurance Brokers (SSAIB) can tailor an insurance package to your needs. SSAIB can arrange all types of personal and business insurance with coverage from Australia's leading companies. Visit ssaib.com.au or call us on 08 8332 0281 and we can talk more about the finer details.

Wild estimations of wild deer populations

Many organisations with ideological views against deer hunting have tried to create a narrative that this country is being overrun by wild deer and hunters are ineffective at managing their numbers. In some cases, deer have been referred to as the next rabbit. This narrative has been used to call for deer in states where they're managed as a game species to be reclassified as a pest. I've previously made comment on how changing the so-called status from game animal to pest species would have limited impact and potentially reduce opportunities for hunters at the same time.

One of these organisations, the Invasive Species Council (ISC), has been quite vocal. On their website they state: "Victoria now hosts an ever-growing population of feral deer, numbering around one million animals and covering nearly 40 per cent of the state. This population explosion is what happens when invasive species are not promptly and effectively controlled and contained while they're small in number." The ISC also commissioned a report, prepared pro bono by Frontier Economics, to help promote their narrative, to imply that not controlling deer in Victoria based on their numbers would cost the community somewhere between \$1.5-2.2 billion over the next 30 years.

Finally we're starting to see the numbers pitched by these organisations to support their narratives unravel, as large-scale research projects begin to provide credible

information on the real size of wild deer populations. The Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research recently released a Technical Report titled *Abundance of deer in Victoria, regional and statewide estimates of deer density and their impact on vegetation*. This report provides the results of a multi-year statewide deer monitoring project aimed at estimating the abundance of the four deer species found in Victoria (sambar, fallow, red and hog).

The project selected 253 sites across that state's public land (74,570 sq/km) which were monitored between September 2021 and May 2023. An additional 64 sites in hog deer habitat were also monitored. Various methods including camera traps, deer pellet and deer sign transect surveys were used to determine the presence of the animals. Using modelling, both camera and transect data was integrated to estimate their density and abundance.

Deer were detected at 148 of the 317 camera traps and some form of sign recorded in 186 of the 317 sites. Total abundance on Victoria's public tenured land was calculated to be 191,153, the breakdown being sambar 123,061, fallow 48,932, red 12,672 and hog 4243. This estimated population is far below the ISC's one million deer covering 40 per cent of the state narrative. While we do need to consider this estimate covers only public land, Victoria's public land does cover roughly one-third (30 per cent) of the state, which means there's

not much private land left (10 per cent) to contain deer to reach the stated 40 per cent coverage.

The discussion section of the report implies hunters take 39.2 per cent of their deer on private land. I would've thought that although these deer were taken on private land, a great percentage of those would be taken on fringe areas next to public lands which harbour and provide shelter to deer which graze on private land. With the harvest in 2022 ranging between 89,900 and 123,376, you could suggest a potential annual harvest rate between 47-65 per cent if you consider private land-taken deer to actually be public land invaders. It has been commonly stated that at least 40 per cent of the population would need to be removed to stop that population expanding.

Based on this, hunters are far from being ineffective when it comes to managing the deer population in Victoria. Improving land access to hunt deer may be the answer to simply stopping the so-called spread. The report also provides some guidance and parameters to help manage the animals in sensitive areas. Such areas are the ones where control activities need to be focused to ensure impacts are minimised and just let hunters operate elsewhere. ●

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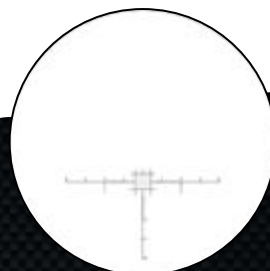


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Happy days when a Winchester lever-action cost 80 bucks!

I recently spent an interesting evening reading an old firearms magazine which had been sitting in my bookshelf for almost 60 years. It was the 1964/65 Smith's Sports Stores 16th Edition of their mail order catalogue and some of the items advertised for sale made interesting reading.

Many of the brand name items we see on gun store shelves today weren't there and the prices of items they were selling had me thinking just how much they've risen over the past six decades. As decimalisation wasn't introduced here until 1966 I've shown the prices in dollars not pounds, but have left the weights in pounds (lb) with one pound being equivalent to roughly 500 grams.

Gun powders advertised were Curtis & Harvey black powder in 1lb tins in sizes FG and FFG costing just \$2.50 a tin, while the only smokeless powders shown were Shotgun Ballistite at \$3.50/lb, Nobel's Rifle No.1 smokeless for \$4.50/lb and 4740 at \$3.30/lb. ADI powders at this time were not in production and Winchester, IMI and the other American powders we use today aren't mentioned.

The next interesting items were projectiles with the Australian-made Taipan brand being available in most calibres and selling for between \$3 and \$5 per 100, while imported Norma ones were available in the same calibres for virtually the same price.

There's no mention of Speer, Hornady or Sierra products being available.

Loaded factory ammunition was available from Australian manufacturer Super Cartridge Company along with imported cartridges from Winchester, Norma and Kynoch. An example of prices were 100 Kynock .22 Hornet cartridges for \$10.70, 100 Super .25/303 at \$9.50 and 100 Norma in either .270 Winchester or .308 costing \$21.30. Primers were available from either Winchester or Peters for \$1.25 per 100, a far cry from the \$10 or so per 100 we pay today.

There were only a few centrefire cartridge reloading presses available, the Australian-made Super Simplex with rotating three-turret head costing just \$28 with an optional six-station head for an extra \$4.75. The Model 310 Lyman hand-held reloader with a set of dies was \$19.80 while the more robust Lyman All-American Turret reloading press cost \$108.50, quite expensive for the time.

Lee of America couldn't have been in production at that time, as I could find no equipment manufactured by them, though an in-line loader similar to one currently made by Lee was available from Australian firm Simplex. Called The Madden Reloader, it cost between \$9 and \$14 depending on the calibre required. There are several powder scales in the catalogue, a locally-

made one called the Hill's Powder Balance priced at \$16, a Redding costing roughly the same and the more deluxe Ohaus 505 at \$22.25.

Firearms listed in the catalogue were interesting including a Winchester Model 94 lever-action rifle costing \$84, the Winchester Model 70 for \$136, a quality Sako Forester at \$136 and the full-stocked Sako Mannlicher for \$146. Other quality rifles like the Mannlicher-Schoenauer cost between \$172 and \$184 depending on the model, Schultz & Larsens were available for about \$150, while you could pick up a new Brno Model 2 .22 repeater for \$74.

In the 1960s vari-power telescopic sights couldn't have been popular as there were none advertised with only fixed-power scopes available. Those which stood out included a Bushnell Banner 4x costing \$33, a Karl Kholes Helia 6x for \$76 and a Pecar 6x at \$70. Not surprisingly the prices of all these firearm-related items have increased markedly, but so has everything else we buy today. ●



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Q I'm confused about what stance I should be adopting when shooting clays. Many years ago I was a fairly competitive three-position rifle shooter and my stance then was pretty much standard for everyone. But since I've started playing around with clays it appears everyone stands differently with their feet at all sorts of angles. To make it worse, everyone I ask offers conflicting advice. Any help appreciated.

Karl Goodman, Qld.

A That's a good question and one with no definitive answer I'm afraid. Your stance for clay target can vary for a number of reasons with the discipline you're competing in being top of the list. I'm not sure what event you're using your shotgun for, but in clay target disciplines such as Sporting Clays or Skeet, where targets are thrown at known trajectories, your stance can be wider and more rigid than it can be for disciplines such as Trap where the target flight path is unknown.

That said, even in Trap events this stance can vary. For example in Olympic Trap where the angles are quite wide compared to our domestic or US versions of Trap, a much narrower stance is generally adopted. The reason for this is a narrower stance forces you to swing or move the shotgun along this unknown flightpath by moving your entire body, from the ankles up, therefore creating a faster and smoother technique. Wider stances tend to promote only upper body movement, which is fine so long as you don't need to move your shotgun across the skyline too far.

When you know the trajectory of the target you can calculate the exact position where you intend to break it. That way less gun movement is required, allowing you to set up a more stable stance somewhat similar, but far from identical, as you'd have had to adopt when competing in the 'standing' stage of your three-position rifle event.

In an event where you know exactly the position you're going to break the target, you also have the luxury of placing slightly more weight over your front leg, which will help negate the recoil from your shotshell.



Champion shotgunners like Aussie Olympian Laetisha Scanlan adopt a stance that works for them.

In Trap disciplines you must be careful of putting too much weight forward by simply bending your front knee, as this can lead to other issues relating to a fast and smooth reflex movement towards the target.

As a broad general rule the most common stance universally for right-handed shotgun shooters is this: Pretend you're standing on a one-metre-wide clock (a clock with hands, not digital). With your heels roughly 20cm apart, place your left foot facing 1 o'clock and your right foot towards 2 o'clock. This will put the middle of your body 45 degrees off-centre (1.30 on the clock), a position which should allow you to rotate equally both left and right. Again, this is just a general rule but a good guide to get you started and one of the most basic fundamentals to master. Left-handers can do likewise but point your right foot towards 11 o'clock and your left foot facing 10 o'clock.

You say everyone offers different advice in regard to stance, though to be honest there's not one exact option to fit all. Even in Trap shooting the stance I mentioned above needs to be varied slightly depending on what station you're standing on, to cater for the most angled target you may have to engage. Larger people generally need slightly wider stances to allow for their body size in relation to balance, while

smaller competitors may have to transfer more weight forward of centre when mounting the shotgun to their shoulder. This will help alleviate recoil so they can have an effective and fast instinctual second shot if necessary.

Experiment with these slight variations to work out what's best for you and don't be too proud to study some of the best competitors in your discipline and copy what they're doing - they generally stand the way they do for a reason. When I say 'best' competitors I'm referring to those who actually collect prizes at the end of the day, not those who suggest they're the best in the club car park or on social media. These are the ones who generally need to keep experimenting with their technique! Good luck on your mission. ●

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Q In my cousin's barn I unearthed a rusty old muzzleloader barrel which he said I could have along with an interesting percussion lock he said came from the same gun. I found a number of marks on the barrel - including the name John Clive - and a hard-to-read one which is possibly 'Holborn London' on top of the breech end of the barrel. There are also some proof marks which you'll see in the photo.

The 670mm barrel is also marked '48 Field' underneath the breech end and appears to be smoothbore and 16.4mm in diameter at the muzzle. The lock has 'LSA 1871' and a 'Crown over V' proof marking as well as some smaller marks inside the lock plate. If you can tell me anything further about this curious old gun I'd be obliged.

Bob Kilsby, SA



A This is certainly an interesting relic or perhaps pair of relics, as it's not certain they're both from the same gun. The lock is in very nice shape although the sear is missing. It's substantial in size, made by the London Small Arms Company (LSA) and despite being perhaps oversized in relation to a relatively small shotgun, the curvature of the lock plate exactly matches the curve of the nipple region on the rear of the barrel. It features a War Department marking on the inside (broad arrow over WD) as well as the LSA proof mark 'Crown over X over 14' with the number referring to an individual inspector.

The barrel is a bit mysterious, containing as it does what looks like a bayonet catch. My guess is it's been repurposed from an earlier rifle and bored out to 16.4mm, which explains the inclusion of '17' in the proof and inspection markings. This would be the gauge of a barrel of this diameter as it matches the diameter of a lead ball weighing 1/17th of a pound.

John Clive was a reasonably well-known gunmaker based in Birmingham from 1814-1869, despite the proof markings having been applied in London. It's a pity the barrel has been de-rusted so aggressively as some details have been lost and had it been done electrolytically or using the 'molasses' method, more information would have been retained. The probable marking of Holborn London refers to the district where many gunmakers and shops were located in the 19th century.

Geoff Smith

Q I'm concerned about using steel shot for duck hunting in my late father's Beretta S56 over-and-under shotgun. It's in excellent condition and is choked half in the bottom barrel and full in the top and I know he always used 32-grams of lead shot in size No.5. If safe to use, can you recommend a load that would be about the equivalent of that in steel shot please?

Mike G, NSW



Exercise care when using steel shot in a gun not specifically steel proofed.

A What a treat to have inherited your dad's shotgun and have the same passion for hunting ducks. Those old Berettas were the forerunners of the 680 series and, apart from being quite light and therefore inclined to have some noticeable recoil with serious hunting loads, they were extremely well-made guns.

Yours should be fine to use with steel shot so long as you heed the advice of the shotshell manufacturers and don't fire steel loads through chokes greater than half. This will mean you'll need to have your top barrel bored out to half, either that or have chokes installed and restrict yourself to half choke.

In your case you could have the barrels opened up to quarter in the bottom and half in the top which would be the most economical approach. With 70mm case length steel loads designed for hunting, this would give you patterns the equivalent of half and full, which is what your father would've been getting with the gun as it's currently choked shooting lead shot.

Steel shot is much harder than lead and about 30 per cent lighter so you'll have to do a bit of juggling and experimentation to find a load comparable to your dad's favourite. You'd probably have to upsize the shot to say No.4 and ideally have a high-velocity 34 or 36-gram load to fill the pattern with the larger shot size, in order to approach the pattern density and lethality down-

range that his 32-gram No.5s would've had.

There's another form of steel 12-gauge shotshells coming out in Europe, the UK and US called High Performance Steel, which involve bigger payloads and greater speeds with larger pellets in 3" shells. These are only recommended for use in up to quarter choke and with guns appropriately proofed and chambered for their use.

You have to be careful when shooting steel in any gun not specifically steel proofed. Discuss with or take the gun to your local dealer to buy steel shotshells and ask for their advice. Once you've done that you can get out there among those ducks and continue your dad's legacy.

Paul Miller

Q I intend to buy a centrefire bolt-action rifle as I do a lot of rabbit and fox shooting and a friend has given me a load of once-fired .223 brass. I've been using and like the .22/250 cartridge and would appreciate your opinion on which cartridge would be best for the type of shooting I do.

Robin, via email

A Both the .223 and .22-250 are excellent cartridges and suitable for use on rabbits and foxes. If most of your shooting is done inside 300 meters, bearing in mind you've a good supply of .223 cases, then I'd go with the .223. Keep in mind though, you must full-length size those used cases before reloading them for use in your new rifle.

Barry Wilmot



Q I found this unusual looking cartridge in my father's belongings after his passing last year. I say cartridge, as it looks as if it would be used in some sort of firearm. Can any of the Top Shots identify this please?

Tom, NSW

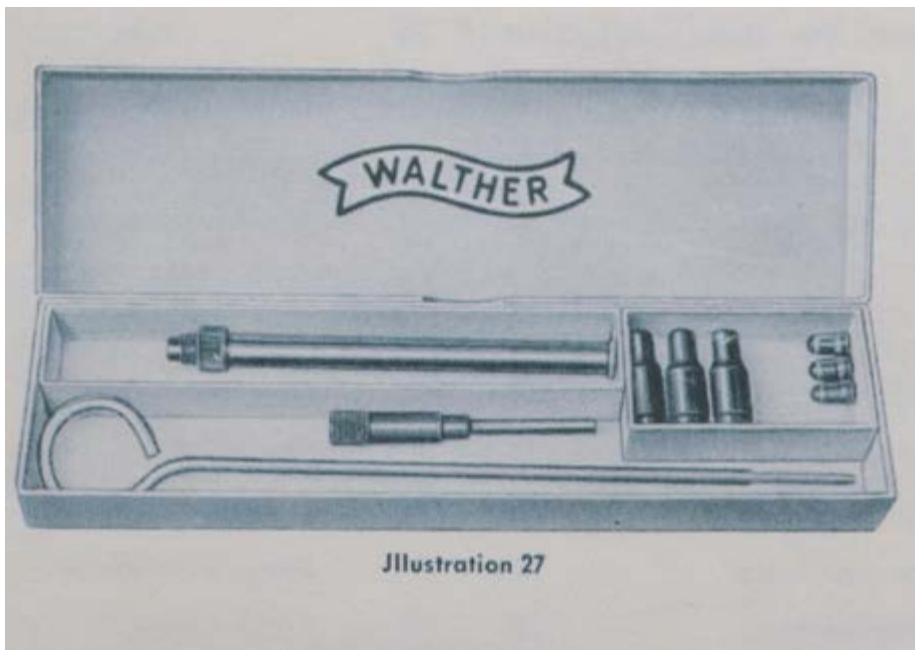
A Thanks for the nice photo, Tom and yes, it does look odd and something not often seen in this part of the world, though it is quite common in Europe. What you have is a 4mm M20 Practice Cartridge, designed to be used in many types of rifles and pistols for short distance indoor use.

Introduced in 1920 by Karl Weiss in collaboration with RWS in Germany, the intention was to allow shooters to practice with firearms indoors in safety without using fully loaded ammunition. The cartridge is shot in conventional firearms by inserting the practice round into a sub-calibre chambered tube which is then placed inside the barrel of a rifle or pistol.

The cartridge is referred to as being 'inside primed' and contains no powder itself, the priming composition alone propelling the 4mm (.177") ball down the tube. The copper case has no rim as such, simply a bulge (which is the primer) at the base. Some adaptors are made for self-loading pistols but have to be loaded manually as the M20 cartridge is too weak to cycle the action.

I've included a page from a Walther P38 instruction manual depicting two alternative set-ups, one using adaptor cartridges and the other an insert tube for the full length of the pistol's barrel. Your photo shows part of the headstamp of the letter U inside a shield which suggests the manufacturer was RWS Dynamit Nobel.

Rod Pascoe





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NEW \$7490



MBX Staccato 2011 Double Stack
9mm, 10 shot, 126mm length magazine
NEW \$239

MBX Staccato 2011 Double Stack
9mm, 10 shot, 141mm length magazine
NEW \$249



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY Echelon
9mm, 10 shot, cased with two mags, 5.28" Threaded barrel, optic ready slide, tritium night sights.
NEW \$1449



STACCATO XL
Competition, 9mm, 10 shot, 5.4" bull DLC coated barrel, cased with two mags. Optic ready, 2.5 LBS match trigger.
NEW \$6990



HECKLER & KOCH VP9T 9mm
10 Shot, cased with two mags, 120mm threaded barrel, optic ready slide
NEW \$2090



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY 1911 Emissary
All black, 5" bull match barrel, black cerakote finish, tritium front sight, front light rail
9mm 9 shot or 45acp 8 shot.
NEW \$2690



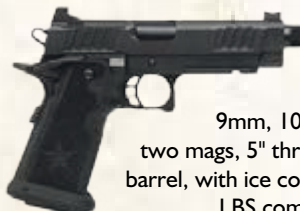
STACCATO Model P Comp
9mm, 10 shot, cased with two mags, 5" threaded dlc coated barrel, with ice compensator, 3-3.5 LBS competition trigger. Optic ready slide.
NEW \$5990



HECKLER & KOCH VP9 Match
9mm, 10 shot, cased with four mags, 5.4" match barrel
NEW \$2190



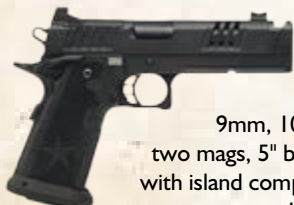
SPRINGFIELD ARMORY SA-35
9mm 10 shot, checkered walnut grips, classic matte blued finish, 120mm barrel.
NEW \$1590



STACCATO Model P
9mm, 10 shot, cased with two mags, 5" threaded dlc coated barrel, with ice compensator. 3-3.5 LBS competition trigger. Optic ready slide.
NEW \$5690



SPRINGFIELD ARMORY Prodigy
9mm, 10 shot, double stack, 5" match bull barrel, front light rail, optic ready.
Without optic **NEW \$3099**
With optic red dot **NEW \$3649**



STACCATO Model XC
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SPECIAL
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\$599 /per 6300



REMINGTON
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38 Special, 130gr, FMJ,
ammunition
SPECIAL
\$265 /per 300



REMINGTON
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JHP, ammunition
SPECIAL
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Holographic weapons sight, 68 MOA Ring with
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finished receiver
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classic blued finish
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CIMARRON 1873 Marshall
357 Magnum, 10 shot, 18" barrel,
classic blued finish
NEW \$2990



CIMARRON 1886 Carbine
45-70, 6 Shot, 22" round barrel,
color case finished receiver
NEW \$3290



CIMARRON 1873
Revolving Carbine
6 Shot, 18" barrel, classic blued finish
revolving rifle, 357 Mag or 44/40
NEW \$1799

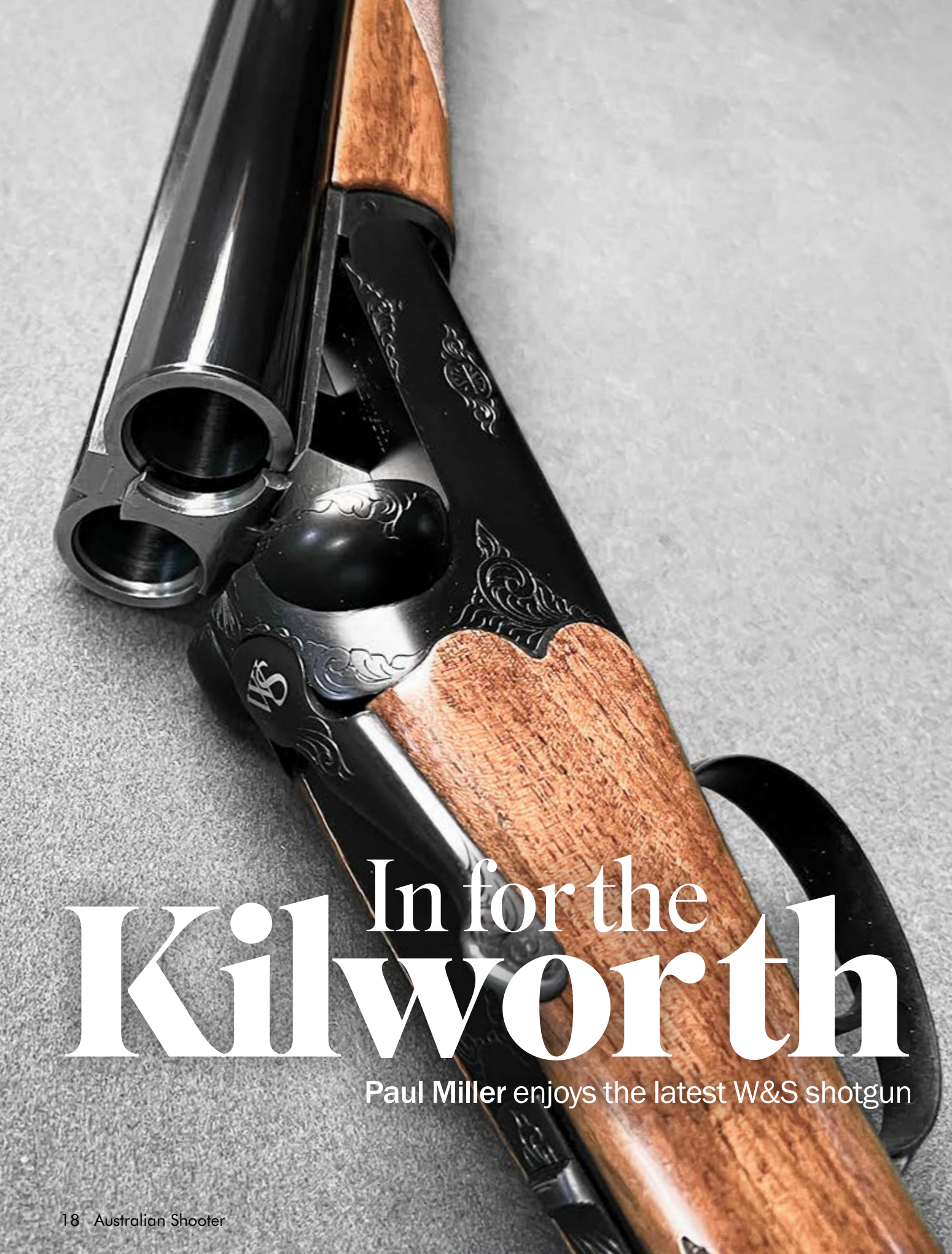


CIMARRON 1873 Trail Blazer
357 Mag, 10 shot, 18" octagonal barrel
Colour case finished receiver
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CIMARRON 1894 Deluxe
30-30, 24" Octagonal barrel, 8 shot, colour
case finished receiver, checkered timber stock
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In for the Kilworth

Paul Miller enjoys the latest W&S shotgun

Webley & Scott is a well-known English brand founded in Birmingham in 1790 which, more than two centuries on, still produces top quality shotguns and is now jointly owned by an Aussie businessman/manager in the UK and the Fuller Group here in Australia. I was delighted to be offered one of their quality side-by-side shotguns for review, as I've always had a soft spot for them.

The first shotgun I ever fired was while spotlighting from the back of a ute with my late uncle on his country property at Waubra near Ballarat. I can't tell you how proud I felt as a 12-year-old to finally be given a "real man's gun" and the chance to shoot a few rabbits around the hay sheds. That lovely Beretta 12-gauge was my eldest cousin's 21st birthday present and I was a little nervous using it until I'd bagged a few rabbits.

I fell in love with shotgunning that very night on the back of the ute and have been a committed shotgunner and frequent side-by-side user ever since. So back to Webley & Scott. The most recent addition to their product line-up is a quality side-by-side in 12-gauge called the Kilworth which is a very impressive piece of equipment.

Stock and fore-end

The Kilworth could best be described as a classic English game gun. The stock is 14.75" long with an elegant Prince of Wales pistol grip and no recoil pad. Where you might normally expect a recoil pad there's a checkered butt plate which is very popular in UK game-shooting. The stock bolt is

accessible via two screws which release a barely-visible panel centered in the checkered rear end of the stock. The timber is said to be 2.5 grade walnut and tightly grained with fine parallel figuring and a nice oil finish.

Stock drop dimensions are 1.5" at comb and 2.25" at heel, a nice compromise for most shooters. There's a little cast for right-handers but as a lefty I felt quite comfortable shooting Skeet. These dimensions, coupled with the Prince of Wales grip, felt good in the hand and meant control of the gun's mount and swing were pretty much effortless. It had that 'alive but controllable' feel of a high-quality, well-balanced gun.

Both the long splinter-shaped fore-end and stock have fine laser-cut checkering which gives secure grip and perfectly complements the rest of the gun. The fine fore-end would necessitate the use of shooting gloves or a barrel sleeve if firing numerous shots in a short space of time, as your fingers will definitely make contact with the barrels. The bulkier American beavertail fore-end gets around this problem but English guns always have these elegant splinter versions, far more stylish but definitely not as practical.

Barrels

On unpacking the Kilworth the first thing that struck me was superb bluing on the 30" barrels, a beautifully lustrous dark blue with a look of real depth. They're chambered for 3" shells, steel proofed and come with the usual suspects in a five-choke selection and, as you'd expect on an elegant gun like

this, these screw flush into the barrels. A raised and tapered file-cut rib draws the eye perfectly to the target and there's a single brass bead at the muzzle.

There's always debate around side-by-side versus over-and-under shotguns as to which has the better sighting plane. To be realistic I think the latter wins the argument for competitive shooting, though the former with a raised rib like this isn't far behind. The two barrels with that rib still draw your eye nicely and I found it no handicap whatsoever with this gun on clays (it would obviously be the same in the field). The English have historically favoured a side-by-side for game shooting, though quality over-and-under guns are now accepted on these traditional and upmarket shoots - how times have changed.

Patterning

At the board, both barrels shot perfectly to the same point of impact with patterns about 50/50 above and below point of aim, an impressive level of regulation when you see it proved on a pattern board. It gives added confidence when you know both barrels are well regulated and shooting exactly where you're looking.

I've never liked the term 'point of aim' as you point a shotgun, you don't aim it. The only time you 'aim' a shotgun is when patterning or shooting at a stationary target, which is pretty rare. Shotgunning is about moving the gun, having the courage to pull the trigger and smoothly following through after the shot. Try aiming a shotgun like a rifle when shooting moving targets like clays or game and you'll invariably miss.



Left: A Prince of Wales grip adds to the elegant look of this quality field shotgun.

Right: Top opening lever is tastefully adorned with the WS initials in gold.



In for the Kilworth

Action

The box-lock action is nicely finished in semi-matt black and scallop-backed which looks smart and requires a lot more effort by the stock-maker when fitting stock to action. This alone is the sign of a better grade of gun. The single mechanical trigger isn't selective so you're always firing the right barrel first. This is typical of English game guns which are used on various species of driven birds, that is, birds coming at and over you from afar.

Your right barrel is tighter choked than your left as the second is invariably used for a closer follow-up shot, passing overhead or going away. That's the theory anyway and for duck shooting this is usually fine. If chasing rabbits or foxes in Australia, you'd mostly expect across or away shots so you could put a more open choke in the right barrel and a tighter one in the left. If using steel shot you shouldn't, for safety reasons, exceed half choke in either barrel as steel through a half choke equates to full choke with lead shot.

The single trigger is crisp and broke comfortably at around 5lb. The action and fore-end latch has minimal tasteful border engraving, while the initials WS in gold adorn the top of the opening lever and bottom of the action which also has Webley & Scott in gold. All very tasteful to my eye without looking 'blingy'.

Shooting impressions

Every Webley & Scott shotgun we've reviewed down the years has been well made and handled superbly but this is a cut above, it felt alive in the hands yet perfectly controllable. Being a side-by-side it's different to your typical over-and-under feel but this posed no handicap on clays and would feel especially nice in the field.

Fitting a recoil pad would arguably make it more practical, as would a selectable trigger, yet this gun fits so well that perceived recoil isn't a problem and, with

its beautifully checkered butt-plate, you'd never risk damaging that checkering by laying it on a hard surface or leaning it against a tree.

I'm confident the Kilworth will be embraced by traditionalists in England and see no reason why side-by-side enthusiasts here wouldn't love it too. It would also make a most capable side-by-side 'novelty' gun at clay events and is, as the Poms say, a very nice piece of kit! It comes with a smart semi-soft case of industrial foam inner and lookalike suede leather outer, not as robust as a hard case but perfectly useful if treated with respect.

I thoroughly enjoyed shooting the Kilworth which brought back a flood of happy memories of my uncle and cousins and a ton of school holiday adventures on the farm in Victoria all those years ago. Highly recommended. ●

• Next month: *The Webley & Scott Imperial 20-gauge.*

Specifications

Manufacturer: Webley & Scott (made in Turkey)

Model: Kilworth

Gauge: 12-gauge, 3" chambers (also available in 20 and 28-gauge with 28" barrels)

Action: Box-lock mechanical cocking

Trigger: Single non-selective, manual tang safety

Barrel length: 30" with 3" chambers, steel proof

Chokes: Five flush in skeet 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 and full

Stock and fore-end: Walnut (grade 2.5) with satin oil finish, Prince of Wales pistol grip and long splinter fore-end

Stock dimensions: 1.5" at comb and 2.25" at heel, slight cast for right-handers, 14.75" length of pull

Weight: Just under 8lb (3.7kg)

Accessories: Friction choke wrench, instruction manual.

RRP: About \$4000 but shop around

Distributor: Outdoor Sporting Agencies



Action underside features elegant gold inscriptions and minimal fine border engraving.

Stylish Webley & Scott carry case for adequate protection.





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SRP \$1,049



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Available in MOA 1/8th. 30mm tube, side parallax 10y to infinity. Locking Turrets. Designed for F-CLASS Shooters.

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NEW



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Available in MOA 1/8th. Illuminated reticle, Ultra High Density Glass, 30mm tube, side parallax 10y to infinity. Locking Turrets. Designed for F-CLASS Shooters.

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Set your sights on these

Daniel O'Dea concludes his roundup of SHOT Show

Daniel tries the Thales XTRAIM Weapons sight at the range day.

Last month we gave you a taste of some of the new firearms presented at this year's US SHOT Show in Las Vegas, yet firearms are just a small part of an event brimming with just about everything Shooting, Hunting and Outdoors Trade. There are purpose-built hunting vehicles through to a 'backpack toilet' - seriously - so this time let's look at a little more product with a focus on optics then a few things best described as 'Only in America'.

Marveling at advancements in the quality of budget optics during the past decade or so had me wondering: Just where do the premium optics companies go from here? Case in point are Swarovski's AX Visio binoculars, the latest 'smart' binoculars which not only have Swarovski's renowned Swarovision glass, they incorporate visual intelligence which will, at the touch of a button, identify no fewer than 9000 species of birds and animals.

Not only that but you can mark targets or items of interest and, when you hand them to a companion, the unit will guide them to the viewpoint automatically by a series of arrow pointers appearing in view. You can create photos or videos and share with others via the 'Live View' function and there's even a compass mode that'll provide a course heading to a viewed landmark.

Many of these features may be found in some new digital optics but without the unmatched viewing quality of premium

analog lenses. Swarovski put it best describing them thus: "The AX Visio effortlessly combines analog brilliance with intelligent function." And still with Swarovski, their new EL32 and NL Pure ranges are also worth checking out.

Bushnell's new Bone Collector 1800 provides a laser rangefinder using applied ballistics software to not only provide accurate ranging out to 1800 yards (that's 1.6km or one mile!), but ballistics solutions to assist in hitting your target. RRP is only \$US199 so hopefully they'll still arrive at a budget price in Oz.

I won't even start on night-vision or thermal but there was plenty on display in what is undeniably a growing technology and market. On the 'nowhere to hide' front, Thales offer the XTRAIM Weapons sight. Only available to law enforcement and military, it's a day-night sight with 'de-camouflage' feature which thermally highlights by silhouette, targets to be dealt with as required at ranges out to 300m. Scary stuff if you're on the wrong end of it.

On the civilian side, Trijicon have their IR-Hunter series of thermal riflescopes. Offered in three lens sizes (24, 35 and 60mm) they feature faster system controls with new and improved rotary knobs, along with expanded functionality with USB-C connection for external battery-pack compatibility. A more durable top-mounted battery compartment makes replacement easy, while Trijicon's latest Q-LOC

technology mount provides rapid and reliable fitment. Improved reticle choices include MOA, MRAD, .223 BDC, .308 BDC and .300 BLK BDC.

Nightforce have a great new spotting scope in the CFS 6-36x50 F1 where the CFS stands for Configurable Field Spotting. This new design includes a choice of three first focal plane reticles, a 120-degree rapid focus ring, adjustable eyecup and integrated 1.5" dovetail base. Compact at 358mm long and weighing just 955g, accessories include a spotting scope accessories cage and platform, allowing the unit to be used in conjunction with thermals, night-vision, red dots, laser rangefinders, data cards and other devices. Reticles include Mil-XTs, MOA-XTs and Horus Tremor4.



Swarovski's AX Visio binoculars will identify 9000 species of birds and animals.

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Multi-spectrum binocular

HABROK 4K

Digital Hunting Daywalker



Explore Daytime Hunting in A New Way

All in one solution

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Thermal Monocular

+

Laser Range Finder

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4K UHD

Image Resolution

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Thermal Detection Range

1000m

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The old saying goes, 'everything's bigger in the US', even the coolers it would seem. After all, why butcher in field when you can dump a whole carcass in your esky for later. Do exactly that with the 450 from Grizzly Coolers, that being 450 quarts or 425 litres! At 1.5m wide and .75m high, it weighs 102lbs, not far shy of 50kg empty. That's not a problem though as it has pockets for your forklift.



If you can't find your cooler in the dark you can always grab your big torch. Meet the Powertac Dreadnought, a flashlight with a central LEP which covers 3.2km surrounded by an LED array producing more than 100,000 lumens. That's going to draw in a lot of moths. Thankfully this behemoth comes with a shoulder strap.



SHOT Show caters to the ladies too. Try one of the latest outfits from Miona. The Bullet Casing Dress is, according to the designer, "worn by strength of character rather than strength of body, it's graceful, powerful and terrifying at the same time. Cold as metal and hot as a gunshot blast." Just avoid airport metal detectors. Oh, and when you get home enjoy a nice long soak in a bathtub full of brass.





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SIFA



Set your sights on these



Of course it wouldn't be Vegas without the bling and there was plenty on display, whether it be gold ARs, gold AKs and even gold tommy guns. But who needs to pull a gold tommy gun out of a violin case when you can pack a gold M1919 belt-fed in your guitar case.



This next one adds a whole new meaning to 'opening a can of whoop-ass'. Perhaps paying homage to Popeye and his spinach, we have Survival Ammo, basically 12-gauge in a can. Throw a few in the pantry next to the baked beans for a rainy day, though it's not coming to a Coles or Woollies near you and is definitely not microwave-safe.



When all else fails resort to Plan B. A gun case with a loaded RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) at your disposal.

INTRODUCING THE ALL NEW



Innovative Break Open
Design Allows Access
For Cleaning & Alternative
Loading/Unloading Options.
3 Models Available.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	BARREL	CAPACITY	WEIGHT	CHOKES	LOP
BPXT	AXOR ARMS BUSHPIG XT 12G	20"	5+1	3.2kg	5	38cm
BP20	AXOR ARMS BUSHPIG 12G	20"	5+1	3.2kg	5	37.5cm
BP28	AXOR ARMS BUSHPIG 12G	28"	5+1	3.2kg	5	37.5cm



TSAOUTDOORS

SIFA Shooting Industry Foundation Australia

VISIT THE WEBSITE
bushpigshotguns.com.au



Set your sights on these

Motor vehicles also play their part and needless to say many are of the military persuasion. Perhaps the ultimate in ATVs for thinning out hogs Texas-stye would have to be the one with three (that's three) Dillon mini-guns mounted. So let me do the math - 3000 rounds of .308 a minute multiplied by three for 9000 a minute or 150 rounds a second. \$1.50 a round at \$225 a second equals \$13,500 a minute. Ouch!



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- High light transmission
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- Slender, compact design
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RS-4 2.5-10x50

Reliable universal scope for field and forest.

RS-4 3-12x56

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MADE IN GERMANY



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Set your sights on these



If you're more into field sports you can't go past the Cabra from Ultimate Top Drives, a luxury wagon which lets you sit out front on the quail platform for some upland hunting. If you prefer a bird's-eye view you can sit and even drive from the articulated passenger cab, capable of raising you and five of your closest hunting buddies almost four metres into the air on hydraulic rams. Fitted with every conceivable feature from dog boxes to corn feeders, this all-terrain vehicle even allows you to signal your green climate credentials with its full-time four-wheel-drive hybrid electric power train.



Perhaps something more modest for your existing vehicle would be a pistol safe, a new set of headrests or the two combined. The Headrest Safe gives you just that, which I guess is like having a gun under your pillow, only while driving.



When things get a bit tasty during the next zombie apocalypse, look no further than Pulsefire and their new handheld portable flamethrower, the latest rail-mounted accessory for, you guessed it, the AR-15 rifle. Gasoline fuelled, battery powered and with more than four minutes of fire time, it's guaranteed to heat things up. ●



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They work **Leica** dream

Dion Hudson applauds the classy Geovid Pro



The Leica Geovid Pro 10x42s are well protected with a rubberised finish and waterproofing to 5m.

With my last rangefinder binoculars finally giving up on me after a decade of solid use, it was time to venture into the market and find a replacement. Leica had recently launched their Geovid Pro 10x42s so why not? Danny from Delta Tactical was called and within days there was a package ready for pick up at the local post office and the binos were mine.

In the box was a quick-start guide, rubberized dust caps, lens cloth, battery, lanyard and soft storage case. Full instructions are downloadable as are some great YouTube clips for the 'how do I' questions which inevitably arise with new technology. As with its smaller sister units 8 or 10x32s, the larger 8 or 10x42 Pros all have Bluetooth and feature integrated ballistic calculation courtesy of Applied Ballistics and the Leica ballistics app for Android and Apple.

Leica's ballistic app is easy to use and after pairing to your phone, you need to create a file for each firearm you're going to implement, the only minor issue I hit being having to flick between Euro and US

(metric or imperial) for sub-categories like entering bullet weight and muzzle velocity. Applied Ballistics' light is supplied which translates as calculated solutions to 875m, so if you want it upgraded you have to do so via the app.

As the end user I try not to get caught up in specification wars or regurgitate nebulous data with no real-world application, but that aside these optics weighed in at bang on a kilo (including battery) and with eyecups extended are 18cm long, so push the outer limits of a compact binocular. I just managed to squeeze them into my standard-sized chest harness so would check prior to buying an aftermarket harness that they'll fit, as most manufacturers have a size chart which seem to accommodate their regular or medium offerings.

Power is delivered via a single CR2 camera battery (supplied) and will last about a year of regular use. There are only two buttons on the right, the upper for laser/enter and lower for menu and ancillary. Press and hold the menu button to cycle through the toggle options - units, time out,

Bluetooth and most importantly the operation. This gives you three options of direct line of sight to target, calculated distance based on trigonometry of distance and angle, or ballistic solution to include scrolled elevation and windage, delivered in your preferred setting (Mil, MOA or click value). You can also adjust these settings via the app.

The laser button offers two options and a single press gives you range while a long press-and-hold enters active scan where the laser 'pings' continuously as the button is held, a great option if you're trying to pinpoint a small target among clutter. The diopter adjustments and eyecups are firm but easy to affect with no slop or mush often found on cheaper alternatives. The index finger focus wheel is the same and allows easy focus, all of these quality finished as expected with a premium optic. The outer covering feels like a rubberised protective coating and makes grip and use a breeze, while keeping the unit looking new without marring or scratching.

I've deliberately saved the best till last - the glass - and having used Leicas and other



NEW!



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They work Leica dream

high-end optics for the past few decades I'm still impressed. Clarity and colour transmission to your eye are phenomenal and second to none. A comparison is like watching a new high-definition TV and having an old set beside it with contrast and brightness set too high. When you use Leicas next to cheaper glass you really notice and appreciate the difference, almost like the glare is removed with colours and definition enhanced.

Across the breadth of glare, heat-haze and low light they're standout performers, allowing you to discern finer details and colours the human eye are optimised for. Spotting a still, slightly pink rabbit ear in underbrush in lowering light and at distance is the first example I found, with the optics transmitting that fine variance I'd have overlooked in lesser quality. The difference is going to be noticeable if glassing for game that's not moving or holed-up in cover and shade.

The app, as with all good brands, is an example of pursuing excellence, ever-evolving and improving. It's easy to use, offers a suite of features and integrates with select Kestrel weather stations to give wind and atmospheric to further improve ballistic calculations in real time. The other 'first' here is the makers now offer a function they call Leica Pro Track. Pressing that in the main screen prompts you through

the steps of taking a range and magnetic bearing then plotting it with Google Maps, giving you a drop-pin on the screen.

This is simple to use and generically is good to achieve a relatively accurate position to the intended target, though that said, caution must be taken to ensure you have good phone GPS reception and correctly calibrated bearings to reduce the potential for error. Things like magnetic catches and latches aren't your friend with sensitive electronics.

The laser is an offset 'third-eye' style and rated to 2950m on reflective objects, with an accuracy of plus or minus .5m-200m and .9m-400m. Unlike some other brands this claim was fairly easy to achieve and even hand-held results from things like trees were a snap to 1800m. Scan mode feels slightly slower than other models at about three ranges per second compared to four and accessing it seems to take a little longer too, though still works well for obtaining fine target fidelity. The notable difference is first-time ranges appeared very reliable when compared to competitors which may be faster to 'reload' but need multiple attempts to range.

The external offset laser means the internals can remain uncluttered by technology and, in layman's terms, gives Leica a distinct advantage to create premium optical clarity. I tested in dusty and

saltwater haze that'll give even the most expensive and powerful lasers a hard time. I'm pleased to report that again, unlike some brands which state they 'can' function to a stated range in 'optimum conditions', the Leicas had no issue penetrating and measuring through it all with no embellishments on their stated capabilities.

This is something of a novel concept that they work as they're meant to and, in my opinion, far past the usable distance which all but extended range target shooters will ever need. Best results always come from a stable position like a tripod, yet Leica don't have a mounting point to put a camera adaptor or similar mount in, though there are a wealth of after-market options available and I look forward to testing some.

So, who's going to want these? In short, everyone from bowhunters and air-gunners to precision rifle shooters and of course hunters. Anyone who's spent time behind glass will appreciate quality that'll keep you in the game longer due to your eyes suffering less fatigue. There are several other brands that'll hold appeal as cheaper alternatives, all with rangefinder, integrated ballistics and phone app. Yet I suggest if the finest quality optics, fit-out and finish are important and you want the added benefit of integrated rangefinder and ballistic calculation, the Leica Geovid Pro line should definitely be on your radar. ●

Mechanical fit and finish are superb with positive diopter adjustments, focus and eyecups all firm yet smooth.





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243WIN, 270WIN, 300PRC, 300WM,
30-06SPRG, 308WIN, 6.5CM, 7MMRM



Winners in the 2024 Yarra Valley Grand Prix Trap event Catherine Skinner (second), Penny Smith (first) and Laetisha Scanlan (third).

Shooters at the sharp end of Olympic push

Rachael Oxborrow

Australia's elite target shooters, many of whom are SSAA members, are in the final stages of securing quota places and qualifying for the Paris Olympics and Paralympics in July, August and September, following a tough competition schedule where their skills, stamina and mental strength have been put to the test. Teams for rifle, shotgun and pistol were announced in March with many familiar names on the list including Jack Rossiter, Dane Sampson, Dan Repacholi, Laura Coles, Brittany Melbourne, Laetisha Scanlan, Catherine Skinner, Thomas Grice and James Willett.

Athletes have so far secured 12 quota places across rifle, pistol and shotgun events and now team members are vying to qualify for the Games proper. The domestic component of competitions for Olympic hopefuls have now finished and teams will progress to the international phase of qualification. Five air rifle shooters and 10 pistol competitors started this campaign at the ISSF Final Olympic Qualification Championships in Rio de Janeiro last month. There's no international phase for the 50m 3-Position event in accordance with the nomination criteria.

The 12 shotgunners in the running were due to compete in the ISSF Final Olympic Qualification Championship in Qatar in late April and ISSF World Cup in Azerbaijan

later this month. These events make up the final component of the Olympic nomination process for those athletes. Shooting Australia Chief Executive Officer Adam Sachs travelled with the pistol and rifle teams to Rio and was excited to support the hopefuls on the international stage. "This is a significant component of the Olympic nomination and selection process for our athletes," he said.

"At the conclusion of competition in Rio the athlete's qualification scores, combined with their domestic performances, will tell us who's at the top of the leaderboard in each event and will progress to Olympic nomination. There's also an opportunity to secure additional quotas for the Australian team to add to the already secured four quotas in both rifle and pistol."

Shooting Australia's High-Performance Manager Kathryn Periac is supporting the shotgun team in Qatar and Azerbaijan. "Shotgun athletes are in the final stages of preparation in a three-day pre-departure training camp at Melbourne Gun Club before entering an intense period of competition against the best in the world," she said. "The 11 competitors are all striving to finish on top of the nomination leaderboard in their events."

"Currently we have two quotas in women's Trap, one in women's Skeet and

one in men's Skeet to nominate athletes for. There'll be additional quota opportunities in Qatar and we're preparing to optimise the chances of securing one or more additional quotas, including a first in men's Trap. Athletes are well prepared with a great team of coaches and performance staff around them. Our highly talented and focussed shooters are ready to rise and shine again on the international layouts."



Anton Zappelli competes in the R6 Mixed 50m Rifle Prone (SH1) event in New Delhi in March.

James Willett on his way to winning the 2024 Yarra Valley Grand Prix Trap event in March.



OUR 2024 PARIS OLYMPICS TOP CONTENDERS AS OF MARCH

Women 10m Air Pistol

Sascha Kroopin, Elena Galiabovitch, Katie Nicholls

Men 10m Air Pistol

Dan Repacholi, Bailey Groves, Matt Sydes

Men 25m Rapid Fire Pistol

Sergei Evglevski, Scott Anderson, Paul Eskaf

Women 25m Pistol

Elena Galiabovitch, Alison Heinrich, Ellie Rudder

Men 10m Air Rifle

Jack Rossiter, Dane Sampson, Alex Hoberg

Women 10m Air Rifle

Charlotte Bland, Elise Collier, Emily Cane

Men 50m Rifle 3-Position

Jack Rossiter, Dane Sampson, James Cane

Women 50m Rifle 3-Position

Olivia Cartwright, Savanna Stey, Matilda Eylander

Women Skeet

Aislin Jones, Laura Coles, Brittany Melbourne

Men Skeet

Paul Adams, Joshua Bell, Keith Ferguson

Women Trap

Penny Smith, Catherine Skinner, Laetisha Scanlan

Men Trap

Mitchell Iles, James Willett, Thomas Grice



10m Air Pistol hopefuls Bailey Groves, Dan Repacholi and Matt Sydes.

Due to a longer timeline and different selection processes to those for Olympic athletes, Paralympic qualifications are in the early stages. Natalie Smith is confirmed to compete in the 50m Rifle 3-Position, after she secured Australia's first Paralympic quota place while competing in the 2024 New Delhi World Cup in March. Also hoping to secure a position is SSAA shooting ambassador Scottie Brydon and other well-known athletes including Anton Zapelli, Chris Pitt and Rohan Daw.

The Paris 2024 shooting events will be held at the National Shooting Centre in Chateauroux, about 300kms from the capital. The Olympic Games run from July 27 to August 5 with the Paralympics following between August 30 and September 5. ●

• Photos courtesy of Shooting Australia



Australian 3-Position shooter Olivia Cartwright.

BLACK HOG DOWN!

In part two of his rifle build, Mark van den Boogaart uses the BRX-1 to good effect

After a couple of successful trips to the range it was time to get the new BRX-1 Minercrafter dirty. This is a real straight-shooter and the 20" barrel coupled with five-shot magazine and Aimpoint optic made for the perfect walk-up combination. It's essentially a modern version of the scrub gun, a short-barrelled and high-capacity rifle that's quick to aim, fire and cycle. For me that meant pigs, goats and, if I was lucky, maybe a deer or two.

Sticking with the close-quarters theme I zeroed the BRX-1 for 100m though the .308Win chambering and Aimpoint optic are obviously capable of far more. In fact I'd shot well out to 200m with the set-up during a previous range visit, yet it was my eyes rather than the equipment that were proving the weak link in the chain.

With confidence in both the rifle and my ability to use it successfully, it was time to go hunting. Unfortunately our dry El Nino

summer was producing more than 200mm of drenching, hunt-postponing rain each month since December so options were limited. Then late in January came a decent afternoon with relatively clear skies, so I made the decision to head for the Brisbane Valley. I'd some trail cameras to check on and while it would be quick visit, the BRX-1 was along for the ride. As this would be my first time walking the hills I fitted a sling, lifted a box of 150grain Sako Super Hammerheads and hit the road.

The heat was up as was humidity along with a few spots of rain, though not enough to damped my resolve. The block had really copped a flood with a few new slips appearing on the gully slopes, the grass responding accordingly to be anywhere between waist and above head-height in places. Of my five cameras two were now below the grass line, one carried all the hallmarks of being underwater while another had been completely washed away.

Yet the last one held plenty of game signs, including a series of images showing deer and a boar.

During the next four hours while sweating up hill and down gully the BRX-1 proved a comfortable carry, its shorter barrel and overall compact design certainly appreciated when moving through scrub. Though I didn't spot game I did shoulder the rifle regularly just to get a feel for it, while also adjusting the Aimpoint intensity down to display a finer, less obtrusive red dot. Now I was really looking forward to putting that on a game animal.

A few weeks later came a weekend invite to a property in south-west Queensland. It was in known deer country but for the past six months pigs had become a major problem so I grabbed the BRX-1 again. It seems of late that no trip's complete without bucketing rain and, setting off on Friday morning, I drove through the tail-end of 12 hours of a 200mm drenching. It

Finally a feral on the ground.



Black hog down!

was pretty much all rain until I crossed a fogbound Cummings Gap and into relatively clear skies on the western side of the Great Divide.

A couple of hours later I met Mark, the property owner, at a local petrol station from where we headed down some minor roads and eventually a dirt track to the block. It's a fantastic property and the chances looked good I'd finish the weekend with some game on the ground. After sorting out my gear we rolled out of home base in Mark's Polaris. I hadn't ridden in one before and was immediately impressed by its leg-saving abilities. This was going to be fun.

Our plan for the afternoon was to sit over a clearing and see what moved in the fading light. Technically we were a little early and as the Polaris cut down travel time, we took the long way round and in doing so spotted pigs way off in the distance. It was great to see game so early in the afternoon and I took it as another positive sign for the weekend. During the next couple of hours we sat quietly over the clearing which proved quite the macropod meeting place, so no shots were fired.

Next morning we headed out before dawn and joining us was good friend Ian from The Hunters Campfire who was acting camera operator and back-up gun. With Mark in the lead we made our way to Pig Hill, in effect a long climbing ridge running along a rough



That's going to slow things down a bit.

east-west axis. Literally five minutes into our journey and still about 20 minutes from Pig Hill we spied a dark blob up front, a pig snuffling around something in the grass.

Two small piglets then appeared so we assumed it was a sow, though it was still too dark to properly identify our target. As the light slowly increased so did my shooting opportunity, though just as a shot started to form so did the breeze. Like clockwork an easterly gust accompanied the light, as first the piglets then the sow winded us and took off into the scrub.

A short while later we reached our intended jump-off point. Pig Hill was a scrubby, tangled mess broken at varying intervals by small clearings and it was these we were interested in, as they usually held feeding pigs in the early morning light. Mark certainly knew what he was talking about and as we approached the third such clearing we spotted them. While the wind was in our favour the sun wasn't and I had to find a good shooting position to minimise glare.

Sitting at the base of a scrubby bush and at about a 45-degree angle to the pigs I picked my target. After sliding the action I put the dot on one of the larger ones, settled down into the shot and fired. The mob bolted into heavy scrub and walking back to Mark and Ian I was unsure what had happened. The consensus was it had been a solid hit and with Ian checking the viewfinder he confirmed I had indeed dropped my target.

We kept moving and on reaching the final clearing on Pig Hill descended into a gully then climbed back up to home base. After breakfast we got to it and spent the rest of the day exploring, spotting game, pigs and deer at distance during late afternoon. Two of the pigs were monsters, a genuine razor-back boar which flew across a track and a lumbering brute of an animal making its way over the horizon.

As light faded we decided to check the fence line and travelling three abreast in the side-by-side, bumped a couple of pigs along

a boundary line which bordered crown land. They clearly regarded it as a safe haven and rather than move deeper into the property and away from the noise of the Polaris, they headed for well-worn divots which allowed them to scoot under the wire.

With the light disappearing I initially didn't realise there were two of them. The first, a fleet-footed blur, broke through the grass on the side of the track and stepped into the clear. Sliding the action I brought the rifle up and put the dot on its vitals. The report of the .308Win added to the noise and general mayhem as the pig dropped and kicked to a halt.

The sound of the shot caused the bigger one to react and go to ground. That small movement caught my eye, allowing me the chance to quickly slide back the action and prepare to fire again. Like his compadre, he eventually broke cover and with the slightest lead I fired and struck a direct hit below the ear. Finally, after a day of missed opportunities it was time to put a couple of notches, figuratively speaking, in the stock of the Minecraft madness BRX-1.

This is my second project build with Beretta Australia and while the BRX-1 is more rightly a customisation of an existing platform compared to the Indi build, the goal was the same: To create something that might be better than its individual parts.

Rather than the mythical all-rounder, the customised BRX-1 matched with Aimpoint H2 Micro is something quite specific, a 21st century update on the classic scrub gun. Light, short, fast-cycling and quick-handling with easy target acquisition wrapped in a custom colour palette designed to set it apart. Yep, it's a keeper. ●



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NIO FRILLS



Con Kapralos tests the affordable Remington 783 Synthetic Combo

The Remington 783 bolt-action rifle isn't a new model, having been in production for more than 10 years. Promoted as the 'workhorse' of the current line-up, it survived the turmoil of the Remington bankruptcy and now in the new era is still in production, filling a niche as an entry-level centrefire. Pretty it's not but it was never meant to be anything more than a solid and dependable rifle, be it for the new hunter or farmer needing a tool for pest control.

The 783 designation was devised by Remington Arms with the '7' testament to the Model 700, the '8' acknowledging the Model 788 introduced in 1967 and the '3' reflecting 2013, the year the 783 was first manufactured.

Nio is Australian distributor for Remington and sent *Australian Shooter* the 783 Synthetic Combo, which consists of the rifle in .308 Winchester mounted with a Bushnell Trophy XLT 3-9x40 rifle-scope in two-piece Remington 700-style Weaver bases and alloy rings. The 783

Synthetic Combo is offered in eight calibres ranging from .223 Remington up to .300 Winchester Magnum.

At a glance

The rifle is a traditional turn-bolt repeater with push-feed action, detachable box magazine and 560mm sporter-weight barrel. A pillar-bedded synthetic stock completes the rifle and bare it tops the scales at 3.18kg and has an overall length of 1065mm.

Barreled action

The receiver is made from round carbon steel bar-stock, retaining that profile with thick walls adding to its strength and rigidity. A small ejection port which is enclosed on top also serves to keep out any debris but allows ejection of cases from the action, fired or unfired, without issue. Top of the receiver is drilled and tapped to accept bases and with the review rifle combo fitted with two-piece Weaver-style bases it makes scope-mounting simple.

The bottom profile of the receiver is designed to accept the detachable box magazine and magazine latch, as well as being drilled and tapped to accommodate the action fasteners, one screw engaging the receiver ring and the other into the back of the tang. A recoil lug is in the style of a simple steel plate fitted between the face of the receiver ring and barrel proper. Such an arrangement is common nowadays and works well.

The barrel of the review rifle is of a sporter-weight profile made from high-carbon steel and measuring 560mm (22"). It's button rifled with a 1:10 twist for the .308 Winchester cartridge and should handle most popular .30-calibre projectile weights for that calibre. The muzzle is neatly finished, being recessed with a target-style crown but devoid of muzzle threading.

Barrel attachment to the receiver is achieved via a locking nut, a system used by Savage for many years and now favoured by manufacturers worldwide. It allows the barrel to be accurately and precisely head

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spaced, which permits quick and efficient setting of the barrel to the receiver. It helps reduce manufacturing costs and works well, testament to the fact many rifles which use such a method shoot accurately to boot. Both barrel and receiver have a nice deep blue-black finish which also extends to the bolt.

Bolt

This is of a standard push-feed design with recessed face, dual-opposed locking lugs and a plunger ejector through the bolt-face. A Sako-style hook extractor is neatly positioned in the right-hand locking lug and, together with the plunger ejector, makes short work of handling fired or unfired cases from the chamber. The bolt head is a 'floating' design in that it's attached to the bolt body with a steel retaining pin.

To the rear the bolt handle works on a 90-degree lift and is nicely profiled though the flattened, pancake-style bolt-knob just doesn't offer the amount of grip I'd have liked. A traditional rounded bolt knob would have been more suited. The bolt can be simply removed from the receiver by sliding it to the rear and pressing the lever attached to the left side of the trigger group.

Stripping it for maintenance should be easy enough following the instructions in the user manual.

The Remington 783 Synthetic rifle in bare form with fitted Weaver bases as standard.

'Business' end of the Remington 783 showing layout of the action with ejection port, bolt-handle notch and safety.



Safety and trigger

The 783 is fitted with the Cross-Fire trigger group, a variation of the Accu-Trigger design introduced by Savage Arms many years ago. The mechanism relies on a centre-lever through the face of the trigger blade itself which must be fully depressed before the rifle will fire. Trigger pull can be adjusted by following the instructions in the manual but in this case was fine for a hunting application.

The safety system consists of a two-position manual lever on the right side behind the bolt-notch. The letter 'S' stamped into the tang indicates the 'Safe' position with 'Fire' indicated by 'F' directly behind the bolt-notch. When the safety's engaged it blocks the trigger mechanism but still permits the bolt to be cycled.

Magazine

The detachable box magazine is made from a mixture of polymer and steel, the base being polymer as is the follower with a steel spring attached to it. The magazine box is steel and permits a dual-stack arrangement of four rounds in .308 Winchester. These were easy to load and faultlessly picked up by the bolt

Specifications

Manufacturer: RemArms, US

Model: 783 Synthetic Combo (supplied with Bushnell Trophy XLT 3-9x40 scope, rings and bases)

Action: Bolt-action, push-feed, steel receiver, drilled and tapped for scope mounting.

Barrel: 560mm (22"), high carbon steel, button-rifled, 1:10 twist (.308 Win)

Calibres: .308 Win (tested), 223Rem, .243 Win, 6.5 CM, .270 Win, .30-06 Sprg, 7mm RM, .300 WM

Sights: None. Two-piece Weaver bases fitted

Magazine: Four-shot polymer/steel (standard calibres four-shot, magnum calibres three-shot, .223 Rem five-shot)

Stock: Nylon reinforced polymer synthetic, black, 'Super-Cell' recoil pad.

Weight: 3.18kg (bare), 3.66kg (combo as supplied for testing)

Length: 1065mm

Distributor: Nioa

RRP: About \$1000 but shop around

when chambering a round. The magazine sits flush with the underside of the stock and clips into place via a spring-loaded catch on the front edge of the magazine body.

Stock

You can't say synthetic stocks are something new as they seem to dominate sporting rifles these days. The one on the 783 is of a black nylon-fibre mix with a pleasant American profile, devoid of a



Standard dual-opposed locking lugs on a floating bolt-head and steel bolt body and handle.



The magazine is good and easy to load.



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- Cold hammer forged barrel, standard rifling
- 3 shots removable polymer magazine
- Two positions safety, with bolt stop
- Polymer stock



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\$2,190 SRP

CALIBRES

7mm Remington Magnum
.30-06 Springfield | .308 Winchester
.300 Winchester Magnum
.338 Winchester Magnum

FEATURES

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cheek-piece or Monte Carlo combs. Both the pistol grip and fore-end areas encompass stippled panels for added grip along with shallow grooves which assist with grip.

Provision for attaching a sling are anchoring points moulded integrally within the stock but for the sake of a few extra dollars, simple QD-sling swivel studs would have been better. To the rear is Remington's 'Super-Cell' recoil pad, 20mm thick and claimed to reduce felt recoil by up to 50 per cent. It's quite soft and while the .308 Winchester calibre isn't a big recoiler, it certainly made shooting a tad more comfortable.

Internally the stock's finished very neatly with all surfaces around the receiver mortice and magazine well clean and trim. The slot for the recoil plate is just forward of the well and two aluminium bedding pillars adorn the action screw holes. When the barreled action is dropped into place, the screws can be tightened to a correct torque and the barrel is free-floating. The trigger guard is a separate polymer entity and held by a screw behind the magazine well and the rear action screw itself.

Optic

The rifle is fitted with a Bushnell Trophy XLT scope in 3-9x40 specification.

Bushnell are one of the world's most respected manufacturers and the Trophy XLT range is an entry-level optic suited to general hunting and plinking applications. Magnification on the review rifle is spot-on for hunting and gave a clear image at the range and in the field. The reticle is of a BDC-style layout with holdover graduations on the lower vertical post. For general range work and field use it was sighted in at 50mm high at 100m.

Testing

Range testing involved bore-sighting the rifle at 25m and using that distance to have it shooting just below point of aim. Taking it out to 100m, adjustments were made and testing of several favourite hunting loads commenced and what's pleasing is the rifle shot all ammunition pretty well. Three-shot groups were standard and none exceeded 1.5 MOA, my pet handload consisting of a Hornady 150gr SST over AR2208 powder giving clover-leaf patterns as expected. Factory-ammo wise, Federal's standard Power Shok 150gr soft-points were excellent at just under MOA as were Federal 130gr Speer hollow-points.

An early summer sortie for deer was on the cards, though recent aerial culling in my usual hunting area would mean a lot of hard

yards with the reality being any deer would either be flighty or absent. Slinging the 783 Synthetic over the shoulder, hard yards were duly done and the rifle carried well as the total weight including scope of 3.66kg is spot-on for such a hunting combo.

Unfortunately, any deer we did shoot fell to my friend's Remington Model 700. It would've been nice to take one with the 783, though spotting deer of any kind these days in South Australia is a fortunate occurrence and bagging a couple for the freezer was a welcome bonus.

In summary

Many so-called experts in the print and electronic media are quick to dismiss the 783, trying to compare it with the venerable Model 700. Putting that comparison aside the 783 is an excellent rifle with a host of features unique to the model, while being affordable and accurate to boot. It's not meant to win any beauty contests and is simply a working rifle with the famous pedigree of the 'Big Green' behind it. The 783 Combo with Bushnell XLT optic retails around the \$1000 mark but it pays to shop around. More at nioa.com.au ●

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DOGS OF WAR

A dog attack in progress, resulting in the loss of two lambs.

Derek Nugent on the never-ending fight against wild canines

When is man's best friend not his friend? Simple: When it's a rogue feral dog targeting both livestock and native animals alike. By accident or design, Australia is a continent infested by feral species. Over the centuries a myriad of non-native invasive plants and animals have become firmly established across the landscape with all manner of beasts from rabbit to buffalo including fox, deer, wild pig, horse, donkey, goat and even camels now happily calling Australia home.

But at what cost? The destruction of native ecosystems and animal species comes immediately to mind as does ongoing losses to agricultural production and output. Without doubt though, one of the most virulent and savage contributors to this situation is the predatory behaviour of *Canis lupus familiaris* gone rogue: The wild dog.

History and distribution

In Australia the term wild dog refers to any undomesticated canine living free in the wild

and specifically includes dingoes, dingo-dog hybrids and dogs run wild. It's not a scientific term but more a convenient euphemism used colloquially in research material, media releases, government publications (including legislation) and wider circles when discussing impacts and control measures.

The dingo (*Canis lupus dingo*) is said to have arrived here from Asia roughly 4000 years ago. Domestic dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) arrived with European settlement in 1788 and consequent cross-breeding resulted in hybridisation of the two which naturally continues to this day. The net outcome is a declining population of pure-bred dingoes and an ever-increasing number of feral dogs of hybrid/domestic origin.

The exact number of wild dogs in Australia is virtually impossible to calculate; however, state and federal government research and projects undertaken by tertiary institutions, conservation and lobby groups seems to suggest the following approximations. In respect to dingoes alone there's an estimated 10,000 to 50,000 with

the only 100 per cent pure-bred population being found on Queensland's Fraser Island. The Tanami Desert population comes next with a 90 per cent purity rate.

All other populations are contaminated by hybridisation to some degree and state-by-state that degree of genetic impurity is as follows: WA 41 per cent, SA 68, NSW 99, NT 13, Qld 80, Vic 99, resulting in an accepted average national figure of 66 per cent. This is suggestive of there being some 6600 ferals and 3400 pure dingoes in a population of 10,000 animals, though not all studies agree with this analysis.

In respect to all wild dogs as a single population, an interesting study was conducted by Uni NSW around 2019 with DNA samples taken randomly from 5039 wild dogs, with results somewhat contradictory of the hybridisation data listed previously. Surprisingly, this study revealed some 64 per cent of sample animals were indicative of pure dingo while only 36 per cent showed hybrid or feral origins. This study suggests that of every 100 wild dogs,



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Trail camera shot at dawn of a female (white neck) and this year's pups.

64 were pure-bred dingoes and 36 were true ferals, so to extrapolate in a population of 10,000 wild dogs it seems 6400 would be classified as pure dingoes and 3600 as ferals.

The seemingly contradictory outcomes of these studies serves to demonstrate the difficulty in determining the true numbers of wild dogs in Australia, particularly as the genetic definition of a 'dingo' is quite fluid across jurisdictions and open to interpretation. Yet by fusing the implications of each study and using accepted dingo numbers as a baseline, a fairly broad estimation of wild dog numbers can be had, though its accuracy is quite another matter.

Using this methodology it would appear the wild dog population, inclusive of dingoes, would lie somewhere between 16,000 and 150,000 individuals, though the former seems ridiculously low and the latter suspiciously high. The true number then lies somewhere in-between these two extremes and remains open to speculation as populations vary season to season, district to district and state to state. Yet the one incontestable fact is wild dogs are an established, significant predatory species widespread across the nation, present in all states and majority of environments and ecosystems.

Biology and behaviour

A plethora of research papers and reports have been produced by state and federal government departments with a vested interest in the issue of wild dogs and their management. Their work when reviewed produces a consistent and detailed analysis

of wild dog biology and behaviour, the agreed wisdom being they have an average lifespan of 5-7 years with some perhaps attaining the age of 12.

Appearance is very much dependent on the ancestry of each animal, with its genetic inheritance being reflected in its physical 'look' (size, build, colouring). Most are short-haired and can weigh up to 60kg. The dingo itself tends to be ginger with white points (ears, paws, tail) with a short bristled tail and average weight of 16kg. White and black variants occur naturally as well. Research suggests hybrids, which are sometimes impossible to pick from pure-breds, have increased the weight and size of some 'dingoes' by up to 20 per cent, tipping the scales at 24kg.

Wild dogs are social animals and regularly form packs for the purposes of defence and hunting and a hierarchy around breeding and rights to food exists in each pack. Unlike a dingo, a female dog has two oestrus cycles annually so can in theory breed twice a year. In reality, breeding takes place in the autumn and winter months, producing an average of five pups per litter after a 63-day gestation.

The dominant female in a pack will become fertile before subordinate females, though all reach sexual maturity at about two years of age, males at three. A pack's territory can vary in size and will often overlap that of others, while some animals maintain a solo existence and range over a larger area and across the territory of several packs.

Wild dogs are most active at dawn and dusk but can be encountered at all hours of the day and night. They'll cover up to 15km a day while engaged in 'intense' activity like hunting and 'exploratory' activity like scent-marking. A dog appears to be active 65 per cent of its day and resting 35 per cent. Wild dogs will hunt both individually and as part of a pack and target a wide range of prey including agricultural stock (sheep, cattle and their offspring), a range of feral animals like deer, goats and their young and native animals including koalas.

They'll sometimes attack an animal without killing it, called 'surplus killing' which is common predatory behaviour across many apex species and probably related to the dog's instinctive reaction to chase a fleeing animal, which can result in shocking injuries and lingering death. While a dingo can't bark, feral dogs both bark and howl and do so as a means of communication, the latter to locate other dogs, attract pack members and challenge intruders. Scent marking is another well-established means of communication.

Impact and management

Wild dog predation has a significant impact agriculturally, economically, environmentally and socially across Australia each year. Socially there's an unimaginable emotional and psychological impact on landowners faced with the daunting prospect of ongoing predation on their stock and livelihood.

The true economic dimensions of this impact are almost impossible to accurately quantify as each jurisdiction produces and publishes its own figures in respect to the cost of both impact and management of these animals. The Centre for Invasive Species Solutions suggests a national annual agricultural loss of some \$90+ million, a figure supported by SA Government research.

However, Queensland Government sources claim a loss of \$70+ million annually to the state's grazing industry alone, while the NT Cattleman's Association places their members' losses at \$60+ million. The Victorian Department of Agriculture cites losses of 2000 sheep annually, while ABC sources estimate 10-20 per cent of calves were lost annually to dog predation in WA. In fact, noted WA dog hunter Matt Cole in 2019 took 173 wild dogs off six properties in six months in the Kimberly.

As a case in point David Stoate, owner of Anna Plains Station 250km south of Broome, says his annual (2019) spend on wild dog control measures exceeded \$50,000. The animals also carry an identified 38 species of pathogens and parasites,



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both animal borne and zoonotic (able to infect humans). These include Neospora, a parasite which can be transferred between dogs and cattle and is estimated to cost Australia's dairy and beef industry \$110 million annually and is responsible for 30 per cent of all abortions in cattle.

Beyond the obvious and dire agricultural impact, wild dogs are also an acknowledged threat to native wildlife including 14 endangered or vulnerable species (mammal, reptile and bird), with small populations in niche ecosystems particularly at risk. Recent Australian National University research estimates losses among all categories of native animals to feral predation approaches a staggering three billion a year.

While these are mainly attributed to cats and foxes, other ferals like pigs and wild dogs contribute their share. The latter target whatever food sources exist in their locality and this includes kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, possums, koalas, wombats and the like. Native birds, especially ground nesters like coucals, curlews and swans are also at high risk. Frogs and reptiles like bearded dragons and blue tongue lizards are not immune either, with some dogs becoming specialist hunters of a particular species which drives smaller localised populations to the brink of extinction.

The fact these dogs also target other feral species and play a part in managing local populations of foxes, cats, rabbits/hares, pigs, goats and deer, particularly through predation of their young, doesn't outweigh the unmitigated devastation they inflict on livestock and native animals. Wild dogs are a curse on the community and the one 'service' they may be seen to provide doesn't render the need to manage their numbers moot, quite the reverse.

Their effective management is a necessarily blunt affair. A variety of control measures exist including shooting, trapping, baiting and the use of exclusion fencing and guardian animals. Shooting is opportunistic and mostly effective in controlling small populations of dogs or particular problem animals, as is trapping which is more specialised, time-consuming and labour intensive.

Baiting programs are an economic and effective measure usually involving poisoned meat baits distributed by hand, vehicle or air. Baits are treated with 1080, PAPP or strychnine, though sadly can take a toll on non-target native species which is clearly a highly undesirable outcome.

Fencing options can be useful in excluding wild dogs from particular paddocks and restricting their movements across a property, though there's significant cost associated with construction and maintenance. The use of guardian animals

like donkeys, alpacas, llamas and indeed other dogs is also an option and one widely practiced in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Regardless, each has varying degrees of success and usage in concert is likely to have the most impact.

The situation in my home state of Queensland is straightforward with the wild dog categorised as an invasive animal under the Biosecurity Act of 2014, which means landowners have a legal responsibility - a General Biosecurity Obligation (GBO) - to control them on their land. This includes the dingo which is only protected in certain areas like national parks.

Subsequent to the legislation wild dogs cannot be kept, fed, given away, sold or released into the environment without a permit. Furthermore, all local government jurisdictions are required to develop and implement a community biosecurity plan for their region. Most have wild dogs as a high priority and require landowners to take reasonable steps to minimise their impact and I can only assume this is the same across Australia.

Reality bites

I've no qualms about targeting wild dogs on my property and on the holdings of neighbours and friends beset by this canine menace. Nothing fires me up more than finding the remains of a partly devoured koala or having to put down hideously maimed stock.

Aside from meeting my GBO under the Act, I firmly believe I'm doing more for conservation of native species and ecosystems by being out and about with a rifle and dispatching wild dogs on sight than any city-based 'greenie'. I doubt the anti-gun lobby gives any thought to the essential role played by thousands of us who apply our time and effort to controlling wild dogs and the social, economic and environmental benefits which flow to local communities because of it.

This article is by no means meant to be a definitive exposé on the wild dog in Australia, it's more a considered synthesis of the available material on the topic from a diverse range of stakeholder sources. This includes universities, government agencies, media, conservation groups and agricultural agencies and putting aside the emotion, bias and agendas of particular interest groups, several rock-solid facts emerge.

Firstly, like all Australia's feral animals the wild dog is firmly entrenched in the environment and is very much here to stay. While numbers can't be accurately gauged and may vary from region to region, it's reasonable to accept the population is at best stable but more than likely

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Dogs of war



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increasing with hybridisation swamping the dingo gene pool.

Secondly, the wild dog has a significant undesirable impact across many aspects of life. It costs the agricultural sector millions of dollars in losses and control measures annually, even if that figure itself is difficult to calculate. Emotionally it places a further burden on the resilience of landowners whose stock and livelihoods are under constant attack, while environmentally these dogs place at risk localised individual populations and long-term viability of many native species.

Finally and most emphatically, the wild dog needs to be controlled. In this respect and in spite of woke attacks on our ability to own and use firearms, there's a role for all of us to play whenever a legitimate opportunity arises. Whether as an individual or part of a dedicated program like SSAA Farmer Assist, there's a chance to let actions speak louder than our detractors' words to the benefit of the environment, friends, neighbours and the community as a whole. ●

• *Statistical data and factual material for this presentation was garnered, summarised and synthesised into an original article from a variety of publicly available sources.*

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LEAP OF FAITH

Mark van den Boogaart's a convert to the Springbok bipod

Before we begin I must formally declare a potential conflict of interest. At present I own five different types of shooting rests - a monopod, three different styles of bipod and a tripod. All are very good, well designed, made by highly respected manufacturers and individually are expensive pieces of kit. Yet I use none of them and they're all currently stored in the studio.

Why so many? Well I like the idea of a shooting rest, it's just that I've never found a product which takes my idea beyond an idea. I've bought them, set them up, practiced with them, taken them to the range and carried them hunting, yet when the rubber hits the road I end up leaving them at home.

So it's from that perspective I now look over the new Spartan Springbok bipod *Australian Shooter* received for review. Spartan Precision Equipment, based in the south of England, make excellent gear and the quality and materials used are second

to none. More importantly, they make smart gear, incorporating well thought-out mounting and attachment systems which results in their products being effective in the field. Back in 2019 I reviewed the Spartan Javelin bipod while on a hunting and family trip to the UK and was impressed by the brand then and remain so now.

Turning to the Springbok bipod, in making use of silicone, 7075 aluminium and carbon fibre, these are lightweight at just 300 grams and appear very well made. As stated on the Spartan Precision Equipment website, the lowest ground clearance of the Springbok is 49.5cm and the highest (legs extended) 97.5cm. Because of the design of the attachment system the Springbok also has a 15 degree cant rating and 30 transverse rating so while this is a bipod, it's really more of a shooting rest which allows you to use it in a number of different positions.

The Springbok attaches to your rifle via the Spartan Classic Rifle Adapter mounting system. If you haven't seen it in action,

rather than rely on a mechanism mount this adapter and bipod make use of a magnetic connecting system (something called the MagnaSwitch). Once you fit the adapter to the underside of the fore-end of your rifle stock, you can plug in the Springbok or any of the Spartan range of rests.

But what makes the Springbok stand out is how it operates. Instead of having each leg attached via a pivot to a head unit, they connect directly into a silicone joint. This joint is very flexible and allows the legs to move independently, rather than follow a uniform pattern of movement. In doing so you have a stable rest no matter the contours of the surface it's resting on. You just set the Springbok on the ground and the silicone head, with its inherent level of tension, finds a natural resting point. It's may sound little odd but it does work.


Combined with the flexible head unit the leg-length of the Springbok is also adjustable. Using a quarter-turn locking mechanism the three section legs, one fixed and two moving, telescope in and out. Length adjustment is infinite within the total range of movement, so you can actually tune the height to suit your needs.

Following the Spartan approach of doing things differently, the legs of the Springbok are upside down. Generally on a monopod, bipod or tripod the leg section closest to the head unit has the largest diameter, the middle one slightly smaller and so on through each section. Not so with the Springbok as the bottom section actually has the largest diameter, meaning the strongest leg section is connecting to the ground every time.

Finally, at the end of the lower leg is a removable silicone cap which provides a very

The full Classic Rifle Adapter kit.





'grippy' connection point. If you find you do need more grip just remove the cap to expose a replaceable hardened spike which really digs in and lock the legs in place.

I decided to test the Springbok in a couple of locations at the range and on a hunt in the Brisbane Valley. While not so well suited to shooting from a bench as the leg spread was a little too wide for a range bench, shooting from a seated, kneeling and modified prone position was excellent. For me the stand-out feature was the ability to change position without having to adjust the Springbok, as the spring tension of the silicone head unit allowed the legs to find their own position and hold your rifle in a point of tension.

In the field the real benefit of the Springbok was its ability to hold the rifle in a 'ready-to-fire' position. Sitting on a slope and glassing down into a gully, my rifle was in a stable and safe resting position while I looked around. Each time I moved I simply picked up the rifle, detached the Springbok, found a new position and was set up again in no time.

Considering my (to date) failed efforts to incorporate a shooting rest into my hunting kit, the Springbok certainly presents a convincing case for consideration. Apart from the obvious build quality, attention to detail and design smarts, they just work. The Spartan Precision Equipment Springbok Bipod is distributed by Nioa and at time of writing has an RRP of \$449 and the adapter \$85. ●

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Visitor snub in NT strong-arm tactics

Rachael Oxborrow

Licensed visitors to the Northern Territory will be unable to buy ammunition and will only be able to use their firearms under supervision of an NT licence holder unless they apply for and receive express permission. This remarkable regulation change has been made without consultation with the section of the community it impacts, and will restrict target shooting competition operations and the vast recreational hunting industry and tourism opportunities in the Top End.

The changes have come about following a review of the NT Firearms Act and corresponding regulations by the Firearms Policy and Recording Unit and the NT Police Legal Branch. At no point was the law-abiding firearms community consulted or notified this change was coming, despite multiple attempts by the sector to have a working relationship with NT Police Minister Brent Potter, who was appointed to the role in October of last year.

The NT Firearms Council (NTFC), of which SSAA (NT) is a member, is the peak representative body which advocates for the interests of firearms owners, users and businesses. Its executive sits on the government's Firearms Advisory Council (FAC), established under the Act to advise the Minister and Police Commissioner on regulatory issues affecting firearm owners and users.

Despite this formal role and long history of working with the government, NTFC has been ignored during multiple requests

to meet with the Police Minister. SSAA Darwin President, SSAA (NT) Vice-President and NTFC President Andy Armstrong said this ongoing block by the Minister had continued for the best part of six months until late March. Mr Armstrong said while the face-to-face meeting was less than productive, NTFC looked forward to working constructively with the Minister's staff into the future.

"This raft of regulatory changes out of NT Police and the government was announced without consultation and is insulting," he said. "The amendments have become a burden on firearms users, businesses, sporting groups and interstate visiting shooters. These changes have been introduced without adequate consultation or input from either the Firearms Council or Firearms Advisory Council, which has clear statutory roles in making recommendations on firearm licensing and use under the Act."

Mr Armstrong said the Police Minister's ongoing disregard of licence holders and ignorance of the effects on the wider community in the NT was a disgrace. "The concerns of the NTFC are that Territory licence holders are being disadvantaged and treated with indifference compared to licence holders in other jurisdictions," he said.

"The government appears content to ignore the concerns of its peak advisory body which represents 17,000-plus licence holders across the Northern Territory. This number would extrapolate to around 20 to 25 per cent of Territory households owning



Brent Potter: No consultation.

a firearm. You'd think that six months out from an election, government would be concerned their actions are likely to lead to significant loss of votes, but that doesn't appear to be the case."

This regulatory change and disregard for public consultation adds to a recurring theme of targeting firearm laws and law-abiding users with increasingly stringent controls without sound evidence and reasoning. In recent months, Tasmania Police conducted a review of regulations which has brought about the need for licensing and storage requirements of pre-1900 firearms for the first time. The ongoing fight in Western Australia, where the government is refusing to distinguish between law-abiding firearm owners and illegal firearm as the true public safety concern, also continues.

In all situations, the tens of thousands of SSAA state and territory members are best placed to support the ongoing efforts of SSAA executive members by voicing concerns with their local elected members and media. SSAA (NT) through NTFC will continue to advocate and fight for recognition and respect for law-abiding firearm owners and provide updates to members when available. ●

You'd think that six months out from an election, government would be concerned their actions are likely to lead to significant loss of votes...



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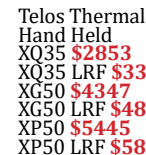
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Keep it simple

John Dunn has advice for budding knifemakers

During the past decade or so I've been surprised by the number of people who told me they've always wanted to have a go at knifemaking, though sadly too many have no idea where to start so the dream never becomes reality. Knifemaking courses are available in many areas and while they're an excellent way to gain an insight into the craft, some undoubtedly find the costs involved just too much. And that's a pity as the skills and knowledge gained from them far outweigh any temporary tightening of the wallet.

For the independent minded, another way to venture into the craft is to buy a beginners' knifemaking kit such as those offered by Gameco Artisan Supplies (artisansupplies.com.au). These kits contain everything needed to produce a simple but useful knife, together with detailed instructions about the processes involved. Combine those with some of the information to be found on the internet and just about anyone can make a determined start.

The Gameco Beginner Kit

This consists of an 18cm length of 3.2mm steel, 3.2mm pin material, a length of lanyard tube, two wooden scales for a handle, a selection of sandpaper and detailed instructions on how to marry them all together. There's also a list of the tools and equipment needed, many of which a lot of people will already have. Though some basic practical skills are required and care needs to be taken with each step to ensure the best possible result, none of this is 'rocket science'.



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Drilling the holes in the handle scales. Note pin inserted in hole on the left to ensure the second pin hole and lanyard tube hole line up.

Getting started

The first and most important step is to read the instructions. These aren't as daunting as they appear and provide a step-by-step plan of action and lots of practical information that'll come in handy further down the track for those who decide to take up knife-making a little more seriously.

Designing and laying out

All good knives start with a concept drawing, preferably on graph paper so it can be scaled to fit on the piece of steel provided. Keep the design simple, bearing in mind this project is about making a start in the game, not producing a first-time masterpiece. The length of blade is determined by how long the handle must be to fit your hand. On this project a blade about 75mm long is probably about as much as you could hope for while retaining a handle of suitable length. Make a cardboard template of your design then transfer that shape to the steel with either a permanent marker pen or metal scribe.

Making the knife blank

With the design laid out on the steel to minimise cutting, the blank can now be profiled using whatever metalworking tools

are available to you. Experienced knife-makers do most of their shaping work on grinders but the beginner can achieve the desired shape with hacksaws and files if necessary. Now's also a good time to decide where the handle pins will be located as well as the hole for the lanyard tube should you decide to fit one. These holes must be drilled before the blank is hardened and tempered.

Marking out the blade

With the basic shape of the blade established, you now need to mark out a centre line on the cutting edge, essential when it comes to establishing the knife bevels. So too is establishing the location of the plunge lines on either side of the blade as these define the finished article.

Creating the bevels

These can be formed by filing - not as easy as it sounds but probably not a bad idea on your first attempt (most knifemakers grind the bevels). Once the bevels have been formed, the blade needs to be polished and this should be done before it's hardened and tempered, because if it isn't, the residual scratch marks on the bevels will be difficult to remove.

Heat-treating the blade

For many people, heat-treating a knife blade is something akin to black magic. Trust me, it isn't and can be done quite simply by following the supplied instructions. Hardening and tempering a blade is arguably the most important part of the knifemaking process as it determines how well the finished article will cut and hold an edge. There are other and better ways to harden and temper a blade consistently but the method described in the kit will do for now and hopefully lead to bigger and better things. Once the blade has been heat-treated it will need to be polished again.



Shaping the handle on the grinder.

CZ 600

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Keep it simple



Top; The blank almost ready for heat-treating with holes drilled in the tang and bevels ground. The blade should be polished before heat-treating. Bottom; The finished article - a simple little knife.

Fitting the handle scales

Using the holes you've already drilled in the handle as guides, drill the pin holes in the scales. Clamp each scale to the knife, drill one hole and fit a pin before drilling the second hole, as this ensures the holes will line up when the knife is assembled. Fit a pin in the second hole then drill a hole for the lanyard hole if you're going to fit one. Take the scales off and finish the front of each scale as they won't be accessible after the scales are glued and pinned into place. The scales can then be pinned and glued to the knife and the handle finished to shape.

Sanding and finishing the scales is the

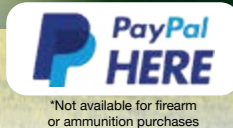
final step in the creative process. Even if the finished article isn't as schmick as you'd perhaps like it to be, it's still something you've made with your own hands and as all makers know, there's a lot of satisfaction and experience in that regardless of the outcome.

Summing up

If it seems I've skipped over a lot of detail in this look at a knife kit it's because I have. The instructions for the project are quite detailed and I couldn't see much point in repeating them when it's all been said before and is best read in context with the process anyway. For anyone interested in

knifemaking, a kit like this is a good way of getting started. There's quite a bit of work involved and it'll take some people into uncharted territory but no-one learns without trying - and there's a payoff in the experience gained.

Though some of it can safely be regarded as blarney, there's always plenty of knifemaking information on YouTube but for anyone seriously interested in taking up knifemaking, I suggest a formal course be considered. The experience to be had will far outweigh any actual associated costs. The Gameco Beginner Kit sells for \$39 plus postage, more at artisansupplies.com.au ●



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TOP OF THE CLASS!

Nic Grguric on a historic weekend in South Australia

On a sunny weekend last September shooting history was made (or should that be 're-made'?) For the first time in around 150 years, a small group of history enthusiasts shot the full military 'Class Firing' course of fire as per the 1859 rules developed at the School of Musketry in Hythe, England at the same distances, with the same historical targets and using the same black powder muzzleloading rifles.

The group responsible for this momentous undertaking is The Adelaide Regiment 1862, a living history and historical re-enactment association composed mainly of SSAA members. The group's purpose is to recreate the South Australian Volunteer Military Force as it appeared between 1862 and 1870, for the purposes of public education and personal enjoyment.

This involves acquiring accurate replicas of the uniforms, arms and accoutrements used by the original Volunteers, all based on extensive archival research, then learning the skills they had such as the 1861 drill manual, historical camping and of course marksmanship. The firearms used by the current group are limited to those actually on-issue to the South Australian Volunteers during the 1860s, predominantly the .577 calibre Pattern 1853 Enfield Rifle (more commonly known now as the 3-Band Enfield).

Class Firing, introduced in 1859 as mentioned, was originally an annual shoot in which all members of the British Army, including her colonial Volunteers, were expected to take part. Its purpose was to provide a standardised course of fire that would allow the shooting proficiency of the force to be assessed, then compared with previous years and other units. It wasn't a competition as such but those who excelled were awarded the title of 'marksman', which had associated perks such as the wearing of the crossed rifles badge and, in the case of South Australia, awarding of a medal and right to participate in government prize matches.



First class qualifiers Nic Grguric, Lee Chapman (marksman), Gordon Hazel, Ashley Cooper (marksman) and Mark Bleby.

Top of the Class!

As The Adelaide Regiment 1862's aim is to 'do what the originals did', it was only natural they should undergo Class Firing themselves. By shooting to the original rules exactly, they'd be able to directly compare scores and performance with historical information as published in newspapers of the day. This is true 'historical shooting' and it's thought no-one in the world has attempted this shoot since the days when the Pattern 1853 Enfield was in service.

The 1859 Class Firing rules required those muzzleloaders to be shot from 150 yards (137m) out to 900 yards (a staggering 823m). The Regiment secured the weekend use of a 1000-yard range thanks to Murray Bridge Rifle Club at Monarto Shooting Complex 65km east of Adelaide, then went to work making all the items needed to recreate an 1860s military-style shoot.

These included range flags, replica 1850s scoring flags and paperwork and a target frame along with a set of targets made to 1859 specifications. Added to that, each participant had to hand-make approximately 100 paper cartridges containing a projectile and the black powder charge, with some even going so far as to package them in replicas of the original wrappers.



The shoot was divided into third, second and first classes (third being lowest and first the highest), and within each class were four range distances with five shots to be fired at each. At each class, shooters had to attain a set minimum score in order to be eligible to fire in the next. If he didn't make the minimum score in a particular class, he was eliminated and will have to wait a year to try again!

Shooting positions were also strictly prescribed, designed to reflect battlefield formations of the day - standing unsupported from 150-300 yards, kneeling allowed from 400-900 yards with laying prone not an option. Sights on the rifles had to be 'as-issued', so were simple iron V-notch rear sights with height adjustment (but no provision for windage adjustment) and a simple blade foresight.

Target dimensions were as per the table below with scoring as follows. Bull: 3 points (only at third class distances); Centre: 2 points; anywhere else on target: 1 point. A system of coloured flags was used by the marker in the butt to signal the value and location of shots to the firing point.

Target Class	Dimensions (height x width)	Centre Ring (2 points)	Bullseye (3 points)
3rd Class	6ft x 4ft	24"	8"
2nd Class	6ft x 8ft	24"	N/A
1st Class	6ft x 12ft	36"	N/A

Icing on the authenticity cake for the group came when the SA History Trust allowed them to take a moulding of an original South Australian Volunteers shooting medal from 1860 in its collection, then replicas were made to present to those who earned 'marksman' status.

At last the much-anticipated day arrived and seven stout-hearted Volunteers assembled at the range in full 1860s uniform

on Saturday morning, for what was to be two full days of historical long-range black powder shooting. No-one present knew how they'd fair, if anyone would progress to the vaunted first class or, even better, attain the prestigious title of marksman and claim a sterling silver medal. None of those present had ever fired an Enfield at such long ranges, so thankfully the weekend weather was perfect with fine days and only light breeze.

The third class ranges were shot first from 150-300 yards with all but one participant exceeding the minimum score required, as the rest moved on to the second class shoot. With distances now pushed out to 400-600 yards, all made it to first class which was an achievement in itself. At this point the day was over and after field-cleaning their rifles shooters settled in for the night, sitting around the fire wondering what the morning would bring when they'd shoot for medals.

Sunday dawned clear and fine and those who'd advanced to first class took up position to shoot from 650-900 yards, though the 12ft wide x 6ft high target with 3ft centre looked miniscule through open iron sites at that distance. Given this was further than anyone present had ever shot a rifle, two of the remaining participants scored enough points to achieve marksman status and were duly presented with their coveted silver medals. Achieving marksman meant they'd indisputably mastered the Enfield rifle-musket by those exacting standards more than 150 years ago.

For everyone involved, the event was a highlight of their shooting lives and hopes are high to repeat the experience later this year.

• *The Adelaide Regiment 1862 is always looking for enthusiastic members to join. For more information go to [facebook.com/adelaiderifles](https://www.facebook.com/adelaiderifles)*



Watching for the scoring flag with anticipation.



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XCEEDING PECTATIONS

An updated classic pistol
impressed Daniel O'Dea

The Beretta 92 would have to be their most iconic handgun ever. Introduced in 1975, almost 50 years later it remains both a viable and competitive pistol option for many. Be it Hollywood fame from the 1980s in classics such as *Lethal Weapon* and everyone's favourite festive flick *Die Hard*, or its adoption by the US military in 1985 as the M9 (replacing the venerable 1911A), it has always held appeal among pistol shooters as a must-own or try at some stage in their handgun journey. Ongoing updates and revisions during the past five decades have kept it relevant and are testament to the integrity of the fundamental design.

I've had the pleasure of both owning a few variants and reviewing quite a few more during my own firearms lifetime, so when offered the latest reiteration for assessment I naturally jumped at the chance.

The Beretta 92X Performance 'Custom' is literally a customised version of the

92X Performance Pistol released in 2019. Beretta claims: 'The 92X Performance was created to satisfy two requirements: Speed and Accuracy. A new competition pistol that's uncompromising and aims for top performance, offering the world of competitive dynamic shooting one of the most reliable and world-renowned locking systems together with a steel frame, heavier Brigadier slide and the new Extreme-S trigger mechanism.'

Of the above features the steel frame presents quite a departure from the 92's traditional lighter alloy version, with Beretta openly admitting they set out to make the pistol heavier for better stability and muzzle-rise control when shooting. The steel frame also differs to include an extended beavertail design.

Likewise the Brigadier slide is a heavier (meatier) option which, depending on what story you choose to accept, was either developed at the request of US special

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Xceeding Xpectations

Command - who'd allegedly suffered some slides cracking on in-service M9s with extremely high round counts - or alternately for the increased pressures developed in the .40S&W round at the request of law enforcement in the Beretta 96. Either way we end up with a heavy-duty slide with more mass which also incorporates serrated slide rackers front and rear of a parallel sawtooth design. All this delivers a pistol tipping the scales at 1350g in 92X Performance base spec.

The other big departure from the standard of arms when it comes to the 92X Performance over your average 92 is it's Single Action only as opposed to the usual double action/single action. To that end the familiar slide-mounted decocker-safety lever is replaced by a frame-mounted one positioned in similar fashion to a 1911. More subtle improvements include an extended magazine release and extend and modified take-down lever which doubles as a thumb rest.

All up the 92X Performance provides just about everything you might want in a competition pistol, though with this Custom version Beretta Australia takes it a step further. So what exactly do they do? Quoting from their website: 'The product has been fine-tuned and customised by Beretta Australia's head gunsmith to create a top-performing, stunning pistol.'

'The trigger has been converted to single action only and lightened to a 3.5lb pull weight. Reset, take-up and creep have been minimised to provide a crisp, repeatable class-leading trigger system. The pistol has also been augmented with performance

Extended take-down lever doubles as a thumb rest.

parts from the famous Italian brand, Toni Systems. New grips, magazine base plates, extended magwell, oversized magazine release and a lighter hammer spring add practical performance and look fantastic.'

Toni Systems are a manufacturer of high-end accessories and 'go fast' parts for a whole range of different firearms and competition disciplines from dynamic pistol sports through to clay target shooting. They have an established relationship with Beretta so the use of their products for such a project makes sense.

The pistol arrived in a classy Beretta case secured by an integral combination lock. It contained both the customised 92X Performance resplendent in its new



The 92X milliseconds after firing the cartridge extracts. Under recoil the case ejects and a new round is chambered. As the spent case flies the 92X is already back on target.

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Beretta 92X Performance Custom with red grips.

Toni custom grips and gear, and both the old standard grip panels and oversized grip wrap. Other items include a spare magazine, loader, gunlock, small sight tool, hex key and the usual manuals and warranty cards.

The gun can be ordered in one of two grip colours: blue or red. Lifting the lid on the case, the red grips are accented against the Nistan finish of the frame and slide and, contrasting with the matt black barrel, magwell and fire controls, this one's flashier than a Milan fashion show and every bit as Italian.

Make no mistake, this is a very heavy Beretta 92 and about 45 per cent weightier than the M9A4, definitely built for competition and certainly not a 'carry' gun. The Toni System machined alloy grip panels sport aggressive texture, so once you have it in hand it's not going anywhere and although heavy, on presentation it feels firm and well balanced.

At the range that additional weight has the desired effect as it deadens recoil and keeps the gun flat for quick shot-to-shot recovery. Physics will tell you a heavier item takes longer to get moving and stop so technically, all other things being equal, a heavier pistol should take longer to draw

and be slower to transition between targets, though in practice that doesn't necessarily translate. For starters, it doesn't matter how quickly you get to the next target if your sights are still high from recoil. For many, weight equals controllability which in turn equals smoothness which equals speed so it's the old adage: Sometimes you need to slow down to go faster.

In static competition, weight can be a no-brainer, as in general terms heavier guns are easier to shoot and more accurate. In dynamic competitions where score is measured across both speed and accuracy, you can never miss fast enough to win. Again, in very general terms, accuracy will normally out-do speed.

I found the gun easy to shoot. With heavy pistols the weight tends to be barrel forward, yet with this one seems centered in the grip and moves with your hands as opposed to whipping around out front. For me that meant smooth between targets and easy to control. Last word on the weight would be horses for courses and the 92X Performance Custom will of course favour shooters with the muscular fortitude to best take advantage of that weight without concern of fatigue.

Fully adjustable competition sights with a square notched blade and bright red fibre optic front dot are easy to find on presentation and provide a good sight picture on target. The Extreme X Trigger has a slight curve and pre-travel takes up to a firm wall before a clean break. Reset is short, tactile and audible while pre- and over-travel adjustment screws are accessible from the top of the magazine well.

Front and back straps on the grip frame are checkered and as a full-sized framed

pistol it does fill the hand, though my medium-sized fat-fingered mittens had no issues connecting with all controls. The high beaver tail and low extended ambidextrous safety, combined with the extended take-down lever thumb rest, all make for perfectly firm alignment for a thumbs forward two-handed grip.

The Toni System extended flared well easily funnels magazines into position and the extended bases make it easy to palm them home. Likewise, the extended release makes punching them out a breeze and they eject and fall free cleanly. The 92X Performance Custom is a well-featured competition pistol, ergonomics are excellent and with a more high-end feel than standard Beretta, you get the benefits of their locking system and clearance of the open slide and ejection port in a great-looking functional and accurate package. ●

Specifications

Pistol: Beretta 92X Performance Custom
Action: Single action
Trigger: Extreme X
Calibre: 9mm
Capacity: 10-round extended base plate magazines (2)
Barrel: 125mm (4.9")
Rear Sight: Square notched adjustable
Front Sight: Red fibre optic
Length: 222mm (8.7")
Height: 147mm (5.8")
Width: 33mm (1.3")
Slide: Steel (Nistan finish)
Frame: As above
Weight: 1350g (47.61oz)
RRP: About \$3799 (ask your dealer)

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Let yourself **Thrive**

ZeroTech red dot sight put **Geoff Smith** on target

ZeroTech Optics was founded in 2018 by Tasco Sales Australia. The parent company has been supplying optical devices since 1965 and is well known to most shooters. Their Thrive HD Red Dot sight offered for review comes with a low Picatinny mount and features a non-magnifying 28mm x 20mm lens on to which a 3MOA variable brightness red dot is projected.

The unit feels substantial even at 71 grams and comes in a robust box with a lens cleaning cloth, rubber cover and two small Torx keys to enable adjustments to windage and elevation as well as access to the battery tray and mounting screws. ZeroTech make a wide variety of optical products and accessories for shooters which come with a lifetime warranty. This is useful when mounting on hard-recoiling handguns which can sometimes shake loose delicate electronic circuits. The Thrive is also guaranteed waterproof, fogproof and shockproof.

The sight is 28mm high and has a flat 45mm-long base with a pair of holes to engage with locating dowels on the Picatinny base via a pair of small Torx-headed set screws. Powered by a CR2032 battery which fits neatly into a tray at the side, the unit features auto 'off' with motion operated 'on' and is claimed to give up to 50,000 hours of battery life. The battery tray being fixed with screws renders the sight legal in regard to button battery legislation.

Locating the battery in this side tray lets you change it simply by unscrewing the



two screws, sliding it open and swapping it over, which is far better than having to take the whole unit off its mountings. The dot is adjusted via buttons marked + and - which enables the display brightness to be raised or lowered through 11 settings.

Windage and elevation adjustments are click-stopped with each click giving one minute of angular movement. The full range of adjustment is 90 minutes (1.5 degrees) for both elevation and windage, meaning that at say 25m the extent to which the red dot can be shifted is 654mm vertically and horizontally.

On examining the external features of the sight, I decided to fit it to my trusty Taurus Model 66 revolver on which I've installed an appropriate Picatinny mount. It has a 300mm barrel and, despite having had lots of use, remains ridiculously accurate so I thought it would offer a suitable platform on which to test the sight. The mounting plate is attached to the sight proper by two Torx screws as well as the mounting dowels so is very rigid. I imagine other mounting plates with alternative plate mountings are used.

After ensuring everything was properly aligned and tightened, I took the Taurus to the range and fired several groups of three shots, starting at 5m and moving progressively back to 25m. It was adequately zeroed in less than 10 minutes so I set it to give central hits on the 25m target using a 6 o'clock hold. Thereafter I attended a field silhouette shoot using .38 Special loads.



Front of the sight showing its curved lens.

A good friend of mine had come along hoping to shoot the match with his handgun, though unfortunately the canteen had run out of the ammo he needed. Consequently, he also shot the match using my gun. It was the first time he'd used a red dot sight and commented very favourably, especially after knocking down a good number of 'difficult' targets including 75m turkeys and 100m rams.

I conducted a variety of further formal tests using rested shots, chronographed carefully to check for velocity variations and was suitably impressed. The red dot is bright enough to remain clearly visible on the sunniest of summer days so acquiring the sight picture is simple.

Once shooting is finished, the cover is replaced and the unit switches itself off then next time, removing the cover 'wakes' the unit up in readiness for further use. In all, the Thrive has several such features normally only found on much more expensive sights. The test unit was supplied by ZeroTech Australia and at time of writing has an RRP of \$299. ●

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Purdey: A name for the ages

Tom Auger charts a rich legacy

When a tailor creates a suit they're precise with their measurements and techniques, so you receive a garment which fits you exclusively. British gunmaker James Purdey & Sons follow the same principles when creating their bespoke firearms.

One of the joys of this process is the knowledge that, from the very first fitting, every element is made entirely to your personal specifications. Each detail of your Purdey, from the wood you pick for the stock, the barrels, personalised hand-engraving and finishing, is tailored to your preferences to fit those exact requirements.

To build a firearm in tandem with Purdey's dedicated team is to witness traditional English gunmaking at its finest. When they create a gun the aim is to make it beautiful and make it work beautifully for 100 years and beyond and the process is adding your name to the Purdey legacy.

Brief history

For those not in the know, Purdey & Sons has a long and prestigious history in the production of high-quality firearms, particularly shotguns. The company was founded in 1814 in London by James Purdey - an apprentice gunsmith before establishing his own workshop - and his commitment to craftsmanship and innovation laid the foundation for more than two centuries of success.

Throughout the 19th century they built a reputation for producing first-class firearms, earning the favour of royalty, aristocrats and discerning sportsmen. In fact to this day they still hold the Royal Warrant as gun and cartridge makers for the King of England. The company was known for its meticulous attention to detail, high-quality materials and innovative designs and on Purdey's death his son, James Jr, succeeded him and continued the family tradition.

One of the notable features of Purdey shotguns is their distinctive and elegant

design, often characterized by fine engraving, high-quality wooden stocks and precision engineering. Innovations such as the Purdey bolt, a unique system for fastening the barrels to the action, further enhanced the performance and reliability of their firearms and over the years, the company adapted to changing technologies and market demands while maintaining that commitment to craftsmanship.

Innovation meets tradition

Purdey are best known for their world-renowned sidelock side-by-side shotguns, who's action was perfected in the 1880s and now has more than 140 years of production behind it. One of the oldest styles of guns they produce, it's still a popular choice even today as it incorporates a unique assisted opening action and remains the classic game gun.

They also manufacture a range of over-and-under shotguns which have gained in popularity since the turn of the last century due to the perception they're more versatile and can be easier to shoot, especially for newcomers, though traditionalists would likely disagree. The most notable of the three over-and-under models is the Purdey Sidelock with its intricate action which is yet to be bettered. Built off the James Woodward & Sons design patented in 1913, it's known as being lightweight and exceptionally robust which Purdey has refined to perfection. Two other models in the over-and-under line-up are the Trigger Plate and Sporter which combine modern engineering with traditional expertise, offering shooters a versatile and reliable option.

Although best known for shotguns, Purdey also make bolt-action and double rifles which are favoured by big game hunters around the world. The bolt-action is built on a titanium chassis which is embedded into the walnut stock and runs from the pistol grip to the forend. This innovative system is unseen when the rifle is fully assembled as the action is built directly



The Purdey sidelock over-and-under shotgun.

into the chassis rather than the wood, as is traditional with London Best rifles.

Yet the pinnacle for any dangerous game hunter is the Purdey sidelock double rifle. Along with his son, Purdey developed the famous 'Express' double rifle with the name inspired by the-then newly introduced express trains and reflected the velocity, power and accuracy of the new product, something which was eagerly adopted following its introduction in 1852. Today the Purdey double rifle is built on their patented Beesley action, making them a true self-opener and allowing for fast opening and reloading, giving absolute confidence to the hunter, a crucial factor when facing dangerous game.

Since 2021 Brisbane-based Pro-Tactical have been official authorised agents for James Purdey & Sons in Australia and can assist with any orders and enquiries. To find out more about etching your name in the Purdey history books and being part of an incredible legacy, contact them at sales@protactical.com.au



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State gun laws still at loggerheads

John Maxwell



Knives are by far the most common cause of homicide in Australia.

Here's something you don't see too often - politicians from both sides declaring they'll overturn a police move to tighten gun laws. That's what's happening in Tasmania, where Police Commissioner Donna Adams announced in January they'd eliminate an exemption excluding pre-1900 firearms from licensing, registration and storage requirements.

From what police said the exemption only (or mostly) applied to antique muzzle-loaders, many of them family heirlooms and pieces held by collectors. This came into effect on January 18 with Tasmanian police embarking on a transition project, warning those who own antique firearms must now take steps to ensure they complied. For those without a licence that would involve disposing of the firearm or acquiring a licence and going through the registration process. Not on, responded the Liberals. "We've listened and accept that the changes introduced recently don't get the balance right," said Felix Ellis, who just happens to be Tasmania's police minister.

Labor promptly promised to match the Liberals' commitment to amend the laws. Not surprisingly the Greens were unhappy, as was Roland Browne of Gun Control Australia. "The Liberal and Labor parties have decided they know best when it comes to community safety and that is just so wrong," he said.

Tasmania was heading for a state election on March 23, the outcome of which will be

history as you read this. At time of writing the Liberals were in power on the island state, the last Liberal state government standing in a nation of Labor state, territory and federal governments. Tasmanian state governments are inevitably finely balanced and at the 2021 election, the Liberal Party was re-elected to a third term with 13 of the 25 House of Assembly seats, Labor nine, Greens two and one independent. For the March election the parliament increased to 35 seats, opening the way for more minor party and independents MPs.

As shooters well know, Tasmania's where it all started. With the Port Arthur tragedy and 1996 National Firearms Agreement, the state's permissive laws gave way to laws generally consistent with the rest of the nation. And they certainly weren't out of step with an exemption for pre-1900 guns. For example, Victoria permits possession of pre-1900 long-arms and handguns with a licence; however, they must be muzzle-loaders or those firing metallic cartridges, which aren't commercially available. In practice that means flintlocks, matchlocks and their kin and even remote-controlled model warship cannons.

Queensland takes a similar approach but does require registration of pre-1900 handguns, though no licence. NSW doesn't exempt pre-1900 revolvers. Tasmanian police justified the crackdown on old guns as improving community safety. "A firearm can be used to intimidate or threaten,

regardless of whether it can be fired. That's why replica firearms aren't legal," said Assistant Commissioner Rob Blackwood.

But if there was any specific incident or incidents to back the need for this change, police made no mention. Yet the exemption was problematic for a number of reasons, they said. First off it wasn't actually legal. Under the Tasmanian Firearms Act, the Commissioner didn't have the power to exclude a whole category of firearms. Furthermore, the exemption appears to have been broadly interpreted, apparently allowing some people to own firearms able to fire commercially available cartridges. There are of course a significant number of pre-1900 firearms which work perfectly well with appropriate factory ammunition, for example various models of Winchester.

Police also said it was difficult to determine whether commercial cartridge ammunition was available for a particular firearm, technological advancements meaning previously obsolete cartridges were now available. It was also difficult to determine a firearm's actual year of manufacture.

Assuming the Liberals have been returned to office, the government will legislate to ensure antique gunowners are able to safely store their firearms "while respecting the value these antique pieces offer". However, that won't be the broad exemption which previously existed.

Ellis said there'd be no licensing requirement or need for owners to sit a firearms

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State gun laws still at loggerheads

Police technically don't own the guns they carry on a daily basis

safety course, though any guns manufactured before January 1, 1900 would need to be registered with Tasmania Police. They'll also need to be securely stored to prevent theft though that won't apply to cartridge firearms, no matter whether pre-1900 or for which commercial ammo is unavailable.

So what about Labor? "A Tasmanian Labor Government will match the Liberals' commitment to amend the law and ensure antique gunowners can keep their firearms without having to obtain a gun licence and comply with other recent changes," said Labor MP Shane Broad.

But Tasmanian shooters face yet another challenge - a decision by the state's Court of Criminal Appeal which, on the face of it, appears to mean anyone borrowing a friend's gun could be guilty of firearms trafficking. Further to that, police could be in the same predicament as they technically don't own the guns they carry on a daily basis.

How could this be, you may well ask? It all started in October 2020 when Tasmanian police searched a man's home and found an air rifle and homemade .22 pistol, which he admitted he'd acquired from another person, apparently for two packs of cigarettes. Neither was registered. He was duly charged with Unlawful Trafficking

in Firearms based on his admission he received the guns from other persons and transported them from one place to another.

He pleaded guilty but the judge vacated his plea on grounds there was no intention to sell or pass them to another person, based on the ordinary meaning of the term trafficking. The Tasmanian Attorney General then appealed and that's when it gets very legalistic. The Court of Appeal ruled the trial judge erred in directing the jury it was open to the accused to rebut the presumption he was trafficking in guns by proving, on the balance of probabilities, he was not trafficking. Got it?

Though in this case the guns were unregistered and the defendant apparently unlicensed, this appears to have significant implications for licensed Tasmanian shooters who, for example, take a friend's legally-owned and registered gun on a hunting trip. And possibly police too. Clearly the defendant committed various breaches of the state's gun laws but it seems highly questionable to label him a firearms trafficker.

Now the Tasmanian election is run and done, politicians examining the legislation relating to pre-1900 firearms could usefully also turn their eye to fixing this issue. And Tassie isn't the only state adjusting weapons laws, as late last year Queensland announced a ban on the sale of replica firearms such as gel blasters, along with edged weapons, to under-18s.

Juvenile knife crime and knife crime in general has long been a problem in Queensland, as it is in many other places. That was tragically highlighted on February 3 this year when Vyleen White, 70, was stabbed and killed in a robbery attempt in a shopping centre carpark in Ipswich. A 16-year-old has been charged with her murder.

In May 2023, Queensland passed what was termed Jack's Law, granting police greater powers to stop and search for concealed knives on public transport and nightclub precincts. That followed

the murder of Jack Beasley, 17, who was stabbed to death in 2019 outside a Surfers Paradise convenience store during a night out with friends. In practice that means police deploying handheld metal detectors, with a trial period on the Gold Coast in 2021 and 2022 detecting a worrying assortment of machetes, screwdrivers, flick-knives, knuckledusters, tasers and a replica gun.

Following Mrs White's death the Queensland Government moved to increase penalties, with a maximum 18-month jail term for a first offence of knife possession in public and two years for a second offence. The government also planned to fast-track laws prohibiting the sale to minors of knives as well as axes, swords, sickles, daggers, double-edged blades and spears, with retailers required to lock away sharp weapons. Vendors must also check identification before such items can be sold.

All of which brings Queensland more into line with other jurisdictions. For example NSW and the ACT ban knife sales to anyone under 16, while in Victoria, SA and WA that applies to under-18s. Typically exemptions apply for occupational use such as kitchen knives and small utility knives, such as those on multitools. Queensland remains the only Australian jurisdiction where gel blasters remain legal but clearly their sale to minors isn't the main problem.

According to the latest Australian Institute of Criminology *Homicide in Australia* study, for 2020-21 knives remain the most common murder weapon, used in 38 per cent of homicides (79), followed by firearms in 11 per cent (23) and hands and feet nine per cent (20). "Knives and other sharp instruments have consistently been the primary homicide weapon in Australia between 1989-90 and 2020-21, with 35% (3071) of incidents," the study said.

Across that period firearms were used in 17% (1492) of homicides, falling from an average of 20% in 1989-90 to 1998-99 to an average of 14% during the following two decades. ●

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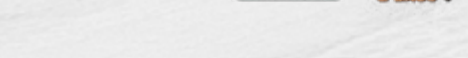
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Atkinson CREAM OF THE CROP on Australia Day

Brendan Atkinson, left, receives the Two-gun trophy from event organizer Robert Tobler.

The SSAA Australia Day benchrest competition has been a popular fixture on that discipline's calendar since 1980 and is usually contested over two days but, as the holiday fell on a Friday this year, a third match was included for the Sporter class. The event was hosted by the Majura Range in Canberra.

Sporter class for rifles not exceeding 9lbs kicked things off at 100 yards with many fine groups produced, the best of them being a .136 shot by Paul Sullivan, though the aggregate went to Mark Tallar with a .2868 for his five groups. But it's at 200 yards where matches are usually won and, in tricky conditions, patience was key. The smallest group of .382 went to Gavin Marshall while the aggregate saw a victory for Brendan Atkinson whose .3116 was well clear of the field. The grand aggregate and Ian Josselyn Memorial Trophy in Sporter class also went to Atkinson on .3476 from Ean Parsons on .3769 with John Babic scoring .3875 for third.

Light Barrel class for 10½lb rifles brought more entries and more small groups with Ray Beavis putting down a .116 on his first target which no-one was able to better, the aggregate going to Barry Tucker who shot with care for an aggregate of .2394. At 200 yards you had to shoot better than half an inch to have a look-in and the best of those was a .322 by Paul Sullivan who also took out the aggregate with a .3011, indicative of the conditions. The grand aggregate for Light class went to Michael Thompson with .3014 followed by Mitchell Tallar on .3044 with Sullivan third on .3083.

The final day brought the Heavy Barrel class for 13½lb rifles by which time conditions had improved considerably, the smallest group at the shorter yardage being a .119 shot by Parsons. The aggregate was a hard-fought contest which in the end went to Atkinson with a .1996. The final aggregate for the weekend saw some really small

groups shot, the best of them a .288 by both Peter Armstrong and Malcolm Price, though the aggregate was a runaway win for Parsons whose .2362 was well clear of the field. The grand aggregate saw a well-earned victory by Parsons, ever sprightly at 80 years of age, with .2284 from Atkinson on .2413 and Les Fraser third on .2742.

The Bob Daniels Memorial Trophy for the Two-gun winner went to Atkinson on .2771 from Mitchell Tallar (.2926) with Parsons third on .2930, the Three-gun trophy also going to Atkinson on .3006 from Parsons (.3210) and Mitchell Tallar (.3413). Once again an excellent event for which Canberra is renowned and the competitors send their thanks to all who contributed to its success. ●



Light Benchrest aggregate winner Michael Thompson.



Heavy Benchrest champion Ean Parsons receives his prize from Robert Tobler.



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National

Handgun Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoot

March 1-May 31, 2024

All SSAA clubs

Program: Small Bore, Field Pistol, Big Bore. Prizes: SSAA Merchandise Vouchers to the value of \$300 (one at \$100 and four at \$50). All entries go into a draw, first name drawn receives \$100, next four \$50 (only one voucher per person). Contact: Russell Mowles handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

National Junior Challenge

July 4-7, 2024

Captains Mountain Complex, Qld

Program: July 4: Pre-registration and practice. July 5: Rimfire Field Rifle (42 shots); Rimfire Hunting Rifle (Qld) subject to interest as extra 40-shot event. July 6: Rifle Metallic Silhouette (80 shots). July 7: Rimfire 3-Position (60 shots). No entry fee, medals for first three in core events and overall age-group winners. Facilities: Cabins and camping available at the complex. Breakfast, lunch and dinner available Thursday-Saturday, breakfast and lunch on Sunday. Contact: junior@ssaaqld.org.au See National website for full details.

Ultra 500/IHMSA National Championships

September 24-25, 2024

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA

Program: Ultra 500 matches Unlimited, Unlimited Any Sight. Medal presentation on Wednesday. Facilities: Clubhouse and canteen. Contact: Bob Midworth secmhmsc@gmail.com or Russell Mowles handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

IHMSA National Championships

September 27-October 4, 2024

State Shooting Park, Virginia, SA

Program: September 27: Practice day for Small Bore and Field Pistol. 28-30: Competition for Small Bore Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited, Unlimited Any Sight, Unlimited Standing. Field Pistol Production, Production Any Sight. October 1: Practice for Big Bore. 2-4: Competition for Big Bore Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited, Unlimited Half Scale, Unlimited Any Sight, Unlimited Any Sight Half Scale, Unlimited Standing. Facilities: Clubhouse canteen and camping. Contact: Wendel Poschl vyposchl@bigpond.net.au or Russell Mowles handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

Combined Services National Championships

October 3-6, 2024

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA

Program: Please refer to SSAA National website for extensive program details. Rules: In accordance with SSAA

Combined Services Official National Rules (Revised 2022) No.5. Contact: peter.bogatec33@optusnet.com.au

LEAD APS 150 National Championship

November 2, 2024

Belmont Range, Qld

Program: 150-round match, combination of PPC and APS starting at 3m and moving back to 50m. Facilities: Basic at range, more in Belmont complex. Contact: Trevor Gordon or Bob Pierce lawenforcementactivities@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

NSW

SSAA (NSW) Big Game Rifle State Championships

May 17-19, 2024

Windamere Regional Shooting Complex, NSW

Program: May 17: Set-up, practice and Match 1. May 18: Matches 2-7 and state AGM. May 19: Matches 8-11. Nominations due by May 3. Prizes: Medals for 1-3 in all individual events. Facilities: Camping and caravans permitted, toilets and hot showers. Caravan park nearby. Contact: Ben Doherty bfjdoherty@bigpond.com

Qld

SSAA (Qld) LEAD APS 150 State Championship

May 11, 2024

Belmont Range, Qld

Program: 150-round match, combination of PPC and APS (3m to 50m). Facilities limited on range, more at Belmont Complex. Contact: Trevor Gordon or Bob Pierce lawenforcementactivities@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

SSAA (Qld) Long Range Precision Championship

May 24-26, 2024

Captain's Mountain Complex

Program: 23 May range open for Zero checking 2pm. 24th - 8am sign-on, 9am start; Match 1 Rimfire 150m on Mini-core Target; Match 2 - Rimfire 250m on Mini-core Target. 25th - 8am sign-on; 9am start. Match 3 - Centrefire 500m on Mini-core Target; Match 4 - Centrefire 600m on Mini-core Target. 26th - 8am sign-on, 9am start; Match 5 - Centrefire 800m on Core Target; Match 6 - Centrefire 1000m on Core Target. Nominations from SSAA website. Send to Secretary: luna@ssaaqld.org.au or PO Box 101, Inglewood, Qld 4387. Rimfire: \$50, Centrefire: \$60, all events \$80, single event \$25, juniors half price. Pay by 25 May. Cash on the day. Event is for Rimfire and/or Centrefire Class A or Class H of the Rifle Field Events. SSAA

Long Range Precision Shooting Official Rule Book No. 1 applies. State medals for 1st-3rd for Rimfire, Centrefire Class A and Class H and Juniors, Aggregates and Teams medals. Cabins and camping available. See SSAA website for pricing. Contact: Richard White (07) 4652 4270.

SSAA (Qld) LEAD APS 180 State Championship

June 8-9, 2024

Belmont Range, Qld

Program: Two-day event, 90 rounds each day, Police Service match starts at 50m moving downrange to 7m. Facilities: Basic on range, more at Belmont complex. Contact: Trevor Gordon or Bob Pierce lawenforcementactivities@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

SA

SSAA (SA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

June 22-23, 2024

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA

Program: Saturday 80 shots rimfire, 40 shots air rifle. Sunday 80 shots centrefire. Range open 8.30am both days for practice and weigh-in. Facilities: Barbecue catering, hot showers, toilets and cooking facilities, on-site camping. Contact: Mark West markwest@kentcivil.com.au or 0421 775 101.

SSAA (SA) Fly Shoot State Championships

July 13-14, 2024

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA

Program: July 11: Bench draw available. 12: Flag setup available. 13: Centrefire 500m Fly: 5-target competition. 14: 200yd Rimfire Fly: 5-target competition. Prizes: Patches for hits on the fly both days. Facilities: Barbecue available for use, camping permitted (limited sites with power), hot showers, toilets and cooking facilities. Contact: Pat on 0455 280 024.

SSAA (SA) Air Rifle State Championships

September 7-8, 2024

SSAA Para, Greenwith, SA

Program: September 7: 10m Precision Air Rifle (40 shots), 10m 3P Air Rifle (60 shots). September 8: Field Target Air Rifle Open (30 shots), 10m 3P Air Rifle (60 shots). Prizes: Medals for all grades including U15 and U18. Facilities: Canteen, light meals, snacks, tea, coffee, drinks available all day. Accommodation: Motels within 15 minutes, caravan parks 20 minutes. Camping on range with showers, toilets and power. Contact: Paul Rawlings paulee06@bigpond.net.au or 0403 436 905.

Tas

SSAA (Tas) Sporting Clays State Championships

June 7-8, 2024

T42 Riddell Range, Runnymede, Tas

Program: 100 targets both days, two grounds. Prizes for grade winners and overall. Facilities: Camping on site, limited showers and laundry, canteen available both days. Contact: Dale Foggio 0408 361 638.

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Ultra 500 State Championships

May 7-9, 2024

Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic

Program: Unlimited, Unlimited Any Sight. Prizes: State Championship medals. Contact: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

SSAA (Vic) Scoped Silhouette State Championships

May 25-26, 2024

Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle Park, Vic

Program: Saturday 80 targets centrefire, Sunday 80 targets rimfire, sight-in Friday from 12.30pm. Medals for first three in each grade. Facilities: On-site camping and café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Handgun Metallic Silhouette Big Bore State Championships

July 26-28, 2024

Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic

Program: Big Bore. Prizes: State Championships medals. Contact: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

SSAA (Vic) Air Rifle Silhouette State Championships

September 15, 2024

Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, SSAA Springvale, Vic

Program: 80 shots, 9.15am practice, 10.15am start. Medals for first three in each grade. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

SSAA (Vic) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

September 19-22, 2024

Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle Park, Vic

Program: Thursday set-up and sight-in, Friday 80-shot rifle, Saturday 80-shot pistol, Sunday 80-shot smallbore. Medals for first three in each grade. Facilities: On-site camping and café. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

WA

SSAA (WA) Fly Shoot State Championships

May 11-12, 2024

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: CF Heavy gun, CF Light gun, smallest grouping, highest target score, 2-Gun (LG & HG). Rimfire: Smallest group, highest target score, Juniors, 3-Gun (CF LH/HG and RF). Fly patches on offer for all events, classes capped at 30 shooters. Facilities: Barbecue lunch and cool drinks included in fee. Contact: Stuart Pethybridge 0417 991 314.

SSAA (WA) Benchrest Centrefire State Championships

May 25-June 3, 2024

Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA
Program: May 25: 300yds Heavy Bench; 26: Unlimited; June 1: Sporter; 2: Light Bench; 3: Heavy Bench. Medals for top three in all grades, trophies for two-gun, three-gun and four-gun. Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets and barbecue facilities, limited power, canteen not available. Contact: Trevor 0417 085 528 or benchrestwa@iinet.net.au or Dave 0400 205 892 or benchrest@jarrahdalshooters.org.au

SSAA (WA) Lever Action State Championships

May 31-June 2, 2024

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Friday: Practice. Saturday and Sunday: 9.30 am start, practice from 7.45. Delegates meeting 5pm Saturday. Prizes: WA state medals and perpetual shields. Facilities: Camping at range with power and water, breakfast and lunch available to buy. Contact: Stephen Ellis 0418 388 991 or leveraction@ssaawa.org.au; Pete Corboy 0401 677 383 or president@plarc.com.au

SSAA (WA) Single Action State Championships

June 1-2, 2024

Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA
Program: Friday: Range set-up all day, volunteers welcome (confirm with Billy Dixon). Saturday: Stages 1-2, 3-4, 5-6. Sunday: Stages 7-8, 9-10, presentations. Facilities: Camping available from May 31 to June 2. Contact: Peter Konowalow 0417 186 280 or peterkono@bigpond.com or Billy Dickson 0407 980 955.

SSAA (WA) Benchrest IRB State Championships

June 15-16, 2024

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA

Program: Six-card match over two days. This is a selection match for State team as per selection criteria. Prizes: Medals (incl. Junior), WA State perpetual trophies, door prize. Contact: Will Barrett 0422 744 901 or willbarrett@optusnet.com.au

SSAA (WA) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

July 4-7, 2024

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Thursday, July 4: Practice. Friday: Rifle Match. Saturday: Pistol Cartridge. Sunday: Small Bore (all 80 shots). Medals for top three in all grades, trophies for two-gun, three-gun and juniors. Facilities: Plenty camping room with showers, toilets and barbecue, limited power, meal provided Friday night. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or laswa2011@gmail.com, clas@iinet.net.au

SSAA (WA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

October 26-27, 2024

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: October 26: Centrefire Silhouette, Centrefire Hunter. October 27: Air Rifle, Rimfire Silhouette, Rimfire Hunter (all 40 shots). Prizes: Medals in all grades, SSAA gift vouchers and other

prizes. Facilities: Some camping, limited hot showers. Contact: Paul Dunn pauld1939@gmail.com or 0407 428 175.

SSAA Inc Event Cancellation/Postponement Policy

An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA Inc, SSAA State Office or club directive. SSAA Inc will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA Inc championship event for any reason. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.

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SSAA Victoria 2024 AGM notice

2024 Annual General Meeting and postal ballot declaration

The AGM will be held from 2pm to 4pm Sunday, September 29, 2024 - details and any changes to be advised at www.ssaavic.com.au and on your ballot paper.

Nominations to fill four Board vacancies will open May 13, 2024 and close June 14, 2024. Nominations to be posted to **Returning Officer SSAA (Victoria), PO Box 336, Nth Melbourne, VIC 3051**; or emailed to jim@ybg.com.au

Results of the postal ballot, which opens July 22, 2024 and closes August 23, 2024, will be announced at the 2024 AGM.

Financial accounts for the year ending April 2024 will be available at www.ssaavic.com.au prior to the meeting or upon written request.

For details contact the State Office by telephone :03 8892 2777 or email: admin@ssaavic.com.au

By order of the Board, SSAA Victoria



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SSAA Member Alert

Members are reminded that if you are using membership of the SSAA as your genuine reason for your firearms licence, you must ensure you renew your SSAA membership in time. Please be aware that state and territory police firearms registries regularly cross-check firearm licences and your member status. To support your genuine reason and keep your firearms licence and to make sure that SSAA can support you, make sure you renew your SSAA membership.

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(Name of competition)
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Go to ssaa.org.au/our-media/competition

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Juniors – Walkers Hearing Protection – TSA Outdoors
Ashlea Saunders, NSW

AWS22

Mansfield Voucher – Mansfield Hunting & Fishing
Leah Hepworth, Vic

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Just how do we measure success?

We sporting shooters are a weird lot when it comes to measuring things. We'll happily interchange metric, imperial and even archaic weights, measures and graduations with nary a second thought. I say .308, you say 7.62mm - now we know exactly what we're talking about, both the similarities and differences.

Is that a 6.5mm, no it's a .25-06, okay that's cool. When the conversation turns to big game hunting its .375 H&H for the Anglophile, our American friends .375 Ruger and 9.3mm for those from the Continent. And speaking of Anglophiles, anyone know that point on the map where a .275 Rigby becomes 7x57mm Mauser?

Off to the range to sight in your Metric Swede and shoot imperial yards. Just be careful, if you lose a millimetre somewhere you might end up replacing your 6.5x55mm Swedish pickled herring for 6.5x54mm (Greek) baklava. Then there are gauges. The 12 or 20-gauge shotgun, no worries and the .410 shotgun, that would be gauge I assume? Sorry, that's calibre and if you don't know why most shotguns are spoken of in terms of gauge, look it up as it's one kooky way of measuring something.

Turning to some of my favourites is the venerable .30-06, a 30-calibre projectile (don't forget the dot point) introduced in 1906. Another popular one is the .30 Winchester Centrefire or, as we know it, the .30-30. A 30-calibre released in 1930? No, a 30-calibre projectile propelled by 30 grains of smokeless powder, and I do mean grains (like sand) not grams.

And what about accuracy. MOA or Minute of Angle is what you want, a one-inch group at 100 yards, right? Not exactly. It's 1/60th of a degree but one inch at 100 yards will do. Even optics aren't immune to the peculiarities of it all. Who else sets their cutting-edge laser range-finding 10x42mm binoculars to measure distance to target in yards? Now if your head's spinning, don't worry, we'll tackle magnums another time and I promise to steer well clear of talking about how we measure powder and projectiles.

Another set of measures even more difficult to accurately regulate are the ones



Blood trail . . . a measure of success or failure?

we create for ourselves. You know the ones without a scale or even worse, a scale that seems to slide. Take time for example. Hunting really messes with the clock as before the hunt everything moves slowly. Then somehow all of weeks, days and hours are compressed into seconds once you spot your intended game, then after the shot time starts to loop back and forth, especially if you miss.

As life sometimes plays out I was stuck in just one of those endless loops as I drove home from a recent hunt. It was my first chance to use the new Beretta BRX-1 rifle in the field and overall the hunt and rifle proved a success. Game seen, chances taken and in the end game on the ground, yet in my mind things hadn't gone to plan. Thankfully my truck's fuel gauge is accurate so, heeding the position of the needle, I stopped to refuel. Then back on the road I decided my hunt clock needed recalibration.

It had been a successful hunt and a great weekend. I'd spent time with a mate, all the while being hosted by a generous property owner who could really cook a steak. So what was the problem? Well it was the first hunt. After successfully stalking in on marauding pigs in the early morning light, I took aim and fired. My intended target then ran off and disappeared.

Now I've missed before but this time I was confident I'd landed a shot, as were

my fellow hunters. Looking around we found a blood trail leading straight into a thick tangle of scrub then Ian, via the video camera monitor, confirmed a high shoulder hit. Blood, high shoulder, 30-calibre premium projectile, everything was in my favour yet no pig. We followed the blood trail, honestly it wasn't that hard, to the edge of a steep drop-off and then nothing. Conclusion: A well-hit pig had gone over, job done.

But I couldn't quite let it go. Even when I had success later that day, the first hunt still sat there in front of me, obscuring my view of an otherwise successful trip and for me the answer lay in the stakes involved. An undercooked steak goes back on the grill and as for an overcooked one, there's always tomato sauce. When it comes to hunting however, the stakes (rather than steaks) create a much more critical measure. If you get it wrong it can be very bad, which is why relief rather than elation is our first emotion when we get it right.

After turning it over and over I finally decided to give myself some advice. Try not to ignore the good stuff, be prepared, aim well, shoot straight, celebrate your wins and learn, rather than dwelling on the times when things don't go exactly to plan. ●



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