

Have gun, will travel - Schultz & Larsen cut-rifled barrels take things up a notch

AUSTRALIAN Shooter

April 2022
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THE MAGAZINE FOR SPORTING SHOOTERS

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REVIEWS

- Sig Sauer combo • Steiner Predator 4 riflescope
- Lyman tumbler • Canik Rival pistol



Handgun regulation becoming an enduringly tangled web

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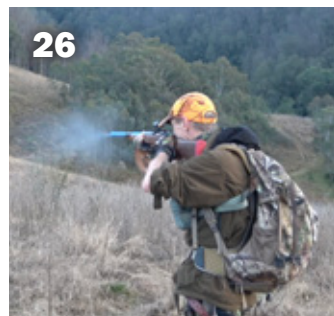
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NEXT ISSUE

Australian Shooter has teamed-up with Beretta Australia for a custom-build rifle project - specifically a Tikka CTR in .308 Winchester - and next month our man Mark van den Boogaart delivers the first in a three-part series on the whole start-to-finish process.

Walther's Performance Duty Pistol is now available to Australian shooters in 9mm Luger and our reviewer reckons it's "Walther's best effort yet to not only deliver an overall superior firearm but build a pistol incorporating all the features for an accurate shooting club gun".

The ScopeX2 Zoom Adapter by Sector Optics is an innovatively engineered attachment which fits on and over the objective end of a straight tube scope, enabling an increase of two-times magnification to the scope's fixed or variable range.



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National News

Hunters can help our flood-ravaged landowners

Extraordinarily heavy rain across much of Australia's east coast has created widespread flooding and ongoing devastation for communities in Queensland and New South Wales and as waters recede and rescue and clean-up teams go to work, the impact of the floods is shocking to see. A number of SSAA facilities and offices have been affected as a part of this widespread natural disaster and our thoughts are with those members and their communities.

As regions regenerate, the local ecosystem will likely bounce back with intensity and this will inevitably include non-desirable fauna which will require management, meaning for landowners this will add to their already heavy workload. Resources such as the SSAA's Farmer Assist program were developed to provide landowners with a simple way of finding safe and qualified hunters to help them with wildlife management, so please make sure you help spread the word about this valuable tool and sign up as a member if you're keen to lend a hand, not just along the east coast but Australia-wide.

Meanwhile research into goat meat as a commercial option for Australian markets has indicated consumer acceptance and opportunities for industry-adopted standard practices. Work by the University of New England in NSW has been restricted to researching farmed goat meat due to funding but researchers hope to replicate their work on wild-harvested rangeland goats. Australia exports goat meat around the world but there's no large-scale domestic demand or commercial supply chain in place, though it's a meat coveted by specialty butchers, restaurants and hunters alike.

The versatility of this game meat is showcased as a part of our international award-winning *Field to Fork* cookbook series and any efforts to diversify Australia's meat markets is more than welcome in this current climate of uncertain markets, high meat prices and delayed supply chains. Game meat harvesting is a sustainable way of providing food for the table - just ask our hunters!



Table fare: Wild goat meat is a favourite with Aussie butchers and restaurateurs alike.

Finally, SSAA National's work to further research in the areas of sustainable harvesting of duck and quail has gone global in recent weeks. The research, commissioned by SSAA National and conducted by wildlife biologist Dr Graham Hall, was introduced to the World Forum on Shooting Activities (WFSA) by SSAA National Wildlife Programs leader Matthew Godson, who presented the body of work to the annual WFSA conference of more than 44 hunting, shooting and industry associations. *Exploring the current and future sustainability of duck and quail hunting in Australia* will be released in the coming months via the SSAA website and we look forward to sharing it with members and relevant stakeholders at that time.

Attendance at the WFSA conference is just one of the many ways SSAA National advocates for the shooting sports and recreational hunting with a focus on relationship-building and lobbying. Through our SSAA Legislative Action (SSAA-LA) we specifically praise and publicise lawmakers and commentators who support us, while exposing the ignorance of those who wish to damage our sport.

To keep abreast of important political news, national and international perspectives on legislative and regulatory developments and other time-sensitive matters, subscribe to SSAA-LA news updates via the SSAA National website www.ssaa.org.au

A leading light indeed

BEFORE HEADING OFF on a trip recently I was checking the batteries in my many torches and headlight when I discovered my P17 Ledlenser torch was working but the light was not overly bright, so I decided to install new batteries. The first two slipped out fine but the third was well and truly jammed with the usual white fuzz and crystals indicating a leaky battery.

They had the Ledlenser name on them so, unable to extract the battery, I contacted their Australian office and was advised to send it back to them, thinking they had some magical extraction device. A couple of weeks later a package arrived with a brand new boxed P17 and letter with a seven-year warranty. You won't find much better service than that so well done Ledlenser - you've made a SSAA member very happy. Keep up the great service.

Dave Kenny, WA.

Play the smart card

IN RESPONSE TO Geoff Rath's letter in your September 2021 edition. With regard to the issues of Swiss cards, they're great not just for taking on trips but also for everyday life and with a small knife, scissors, tweezers and nail file are must-have in my book.

As an Aviation Protection Officer with more than seven years' experience - yes, one of those annoying people who make you take off your shoes and remove your Swiss card when going through the metal detector - I have to say we follow rules and regulations set down by the Federal Government.

While much of the time we don't agree with taking prohibited items from honest people, we have a job to do and regulations to follow. The list of prohibited items is long and constantly changing as new 'threats' become known to those who make the rules. I too once forgot I had the Swiss card in my wallet and had to surrender it, so my advice is to put it in your check-in luggage and all will be fine.

Mark Heelas, WA

Keep the Action going

I'VE REALLY BEEN enjoying your 'Legislative Action' articles by John Maxwell on issues relating to the situation in the US, the John Howard disarming policy and the long-term issues we're all now living with as a result of it (appearance laws and the like). I hope this section will thrive and continue to tackle some of these important topics in detail, with a focus on the government's position on gun laws to help us all be better informed. Keep up the good work.

Matt, via email

Happy to be a bore

AS A SSAA Range Officer I read with interest the article on bore sighting by Bill Fawcett (*Shooter*, September 2021). It's surprising how many people who attend ranges have little or no idea about bore sighting or how to sight-in a scoped rifle as many expect that because the rifle and scope are new, everything should naturally be in alignment. Or you get those who say "When I bought this, the guy at the shop put a thing on the muzzle (collimator) and sighted it for me". They then wonder why their shots are so far off their point of aim.

As an R.O. I always try to assist these shooters and, where bore sighting is possible, carry out the procedure. I then ask the person to try a shot at 25m and guide them through making fine adjustments before asking them to shoot groups at longer ranges for final adjustments.

Occasionally it's necessary to centre the scope's reticle before starting and I find the easiest way to do this is to wind each adjustment all the way out until it stops, then counting the 'clicks', wind it all the way in until it stops then wind it out half the number of 'clicks'. Not perfect but close enough for a starting point on the range.

Frank Gasparini, via email

Time for change is now

I REFER TO the article by Russell Mark entitled 'The only way is up' (*Shooter*, September 2021). What he said made a lot of sense because something needs to change if we as Australians are going to perform better in the shooting sports at future Olympic Games. How do we as

members of the sporting shooters community change the way Shooting Australia selects competitors to represent us on the biggest stage of all? Any suggestions as to where we start to change this process would be appreciated. Please thank Russell for bringing this important information to our attention.

Paul Lee, via email

Well I never . . .

IN RESPONSE TO the question posed by Mark van den Boogaart in his article 'It's a Barbar' (*Shooter*, September 2021) I offer the following. The letter J was the last one added to the English language and the first significant book in English to adopt that letter was the King James Bible, first issued in 1629. Up until then, words now beginning with J had used I and it's generally only in English that J is pronounced that way (jam, John etc) with most other European languages pronouncing it differently, usually like a Y.

The practice of using I rather than J continued long after 1629 with J only being gradually adopted. After all, the use of I had the most excellent lineage, a very good example being the supposed inscription over the crucified Christ, so often seen - INRI - which in the original Latin is Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum (Jesus Nazarene, King of the Jews). So for James (Iacobus) Barbar to inscribe IB would've been common usage in his day.

Fergus Keane, via email

- With thanks also to Judith Stove and Peter Hopson who offered similar information.

As good as a passport

I WAS WONDERING if any effort has ever been made to have government agencies widely recognise firearms licences as valid forms of ID? I'm sure technically they are but have never seen 'firearms licence' listed as an option on a 100-point ID check. Given the number of hoops and police checks required to secure one, I feel a firearms licence could almost be an ID master key of 100 points on its own. At the very least it should be worth the same as a passport.

Michael Mann, via email

Calls to aid with pest control are only going to increase

With widespread rain falling and at times bucketing down across this vast continent, there's going to be a massive breeding event involving many of our wild roaming species. From birds to kangaroos and everything in between, Australia has ended the drought with flooding rain which is a good news story for wildlife but for we humans it means we'll be forced to manage the outcome of widespread increases in breeding productivity.

In late January the ABC reported feral pig numbers were rising and costing farmers almost \$50m in the north-west of NSW alone, a study by agricultural research, development and extension provider AgEcon suggesting \$47m was lost due to feral pig impacts in that region alone over a 12-month period between 2020-21. It had been more than 10 years since an economic impact assessment had been done and previous estimates were closer to \$14m across the entire state.

A representative from North West Local Land Services was quoted as saying they were blown away by the results of the study and numbers were out of control. Wheat farmers were the most affected with a combined loss of more than \$20m and cotton growers also had significant losses due to the high value of that crop.

An agronomist/pest control contractor



Feral pig numbers are exploding in some areas.

agreed and suggested feral pig populations were increasing off the back of good seasonal conditions and plentiful crops. In areas which were drought affected and harboured low populations, two years of reasonably good crops, moisture and cover has allowed pig numbers to build up during the last winter crop and moving into summer, crops such as sorghum, cotton and mung beans were providing increasing feral pig populations with a rich source of protein.

A Northern Tablelands Local Land Services representative also suggested populations were increasing in their area because of the feral pigs' breeding capacity being second only to rabbits and said they're seeing an "explosion" in numbers throughout the area. A researcher trapping and euthanising feral pigs at Gunnedah removed 60 in less than 12 months within a small habitat area, including nine in one night.

This report is just one example of what'll

be happening across many parts of Australia right now. To limit the impact of species such as feral pigs there's no silver bullet to fix the issue - an assortment of tools from the toolbox need to be used and we're part of the solution. Although we may be hampered by a regulatory environment that denies us certain tools to boost our efficiency in pest management, we can still have an impact at property level.

If you have connections with property owners, now might be the time to touch base and see if they need assistance with pest animals as I firmly believe the next few years will be providing many opportunities to become involved in some form of pest control on the back of good environmental conditions.

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How strong is a piece of string?

Many readers will be familiar with the bushman's adage that you should 'never go into the bush without a pocketknife, a piece of string and a box of matches'. Things have come a long way since this was first offered as a life-saving tip by an anonymous expert but the basic idea is still valid.

With the advent of numerous custom knifemakers and countries like Brazil and China offering low-priced but reasonable quality knives, there's a far bigger range of cutting implements to choose from than just your typical folding 'bunny' knife, the old-timers' go-to preference. Likewise, fire-lighting has also come a long way. Ferro-cerium rods in many sizes and with diverse types of grips are readily available and have certain obvious advantages over the humble safety match.

But I'm particularly interested in the 'piece of string'. For some years following various tragedies involving high-rise buildings, I travelled with 100 metres of what's commonly called 'paracord' and two karabiners in my luggage. I was in a job which meant I had to fly to various foreign cities and stay in hotels and while I mostly tried to book ahead so I had a room no higher than the fourth floor, sometimes that wasn't possible.

Yet I refused to stay on any floor above level eight as I knew I could abseil to the ground from this height with my minimal gear, even though it might be an uncomfortable exercise. Even in an emergency don't be tempted to abseil using anything less



than the strongest (600kg-plus) genuine paracord - and don't leave the karabiners at home.

And be aware there are cheap 'lookalike' types of braided cord containing inner strands masquerading as the real thing. It's possible to abseil using the 'classic' method but it's shockingly uncomfortable as you can imagine. Two strands of cord are better than one and you can always retrieve the cord if it's not tied to something back in the room rather than just looped around it. I admit I never had to use my escape system for real and apart from two practice runs down the side of the office building, my method remains untested in a real-life drama.

There are quite a few escarpments where we often hunt goats and I can envisage having to use my cord and karabiners if we were ever trapped on a clifftop by a bush-fire. So I still carry a long hank of paracord in my day pack though it's far less useful than the much thinner 2mm braided cord sometimes referred to as 'hootchie cord' which, as the name implies, is used in military circles to rig a one-man shelter.

A 50m spool of this will fit in a cargo pocket to be readily available in any circumstance where inexpensive but strong cord

is required that will either be abandoned or cut into impossibly short lengths. I was reminded of its usefulness when I saw an advertisement for a TV show called *Alone Sweden*, where participants rigged a shelter in cursory fashion and found it practically blows away when the wind picks up.

Many of you will know the old trick of tying a clove hitch around a pebble or similar object placed in your tarp and using this as an anchor, rather than the manufacturer's eyelets which invariably tear out of any cheap tarp, leaving you in the rain with a flapping mess of fabric. The pebble, large gum nut or similar can be located anywhere convenient on the tarp and doesn't have to be along the edge and this flexibility in pitching a shelter means, for example, you can lift the centre with a cord over a suitable branch.

Yes, a good strong piece of string has endless uses so I hope you carry several dozen metres whenever you venture into the scrub. You never know!



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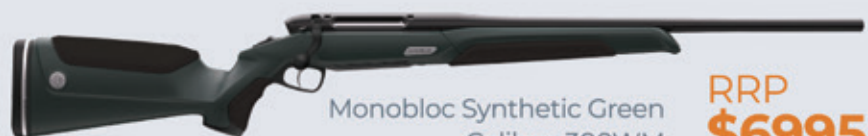
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Q With the cost of ammunition on the rise and, even worse, not being able to buy decent quantities to stockpile, do you think it's okay to practise with cheaper shotshells of less quality and reduced velocity and save the premium loads for competition?

Ken Zhao, Vic.

A That's a good question Ken and with what's happening around the world over ammunition prices and availability it's more relevant now than ever. I guess I need to start by asking what you define as 'cheap' shotshells and why you assume cheaper or even slower is less adequate? In some disciplines of clay target shooting there's simply no need to spend a fortune on premium shells - though I say that with a grain of salt.

If my life was dependant on breaking a 60m edge on a crossing target would I use any old shotshell? No way - I'd want one with high quality round and very hard shot, proven reliability and, most of all, consistency. But here's the thing, most shotshells available today have that and if they don't they simply won't survive on the market. If you're confident in your brand of shotshell then you'll probably hit what you're shooting at if you're doing everything technically correct. The moment you introduce doubt into your mind you're pretty much done.

So going back to your question: Would I practise with a different shotshell to those I was planning to use in competition? If it's the Olympic Games I was preparing for then not in a million years, but if it was a local club competition then obviously the care factor is much lower and it probably wouldn't phase me too much.

The reason I say I wouldn't recommend swapping and changing shells when preparing for Olympic competition is simply that keeping the ammunition constant eliminates a possible variation in performance



equation, which is a massive help mentally as well as possibly helping the quality of performances in training. I say 'possibly' because in many cases it would be hard to pick the difference between shotshells in the way they're breaking clays apart - but if you never change it eliminates the doubt.

Many years ago Winchester in Italy produced a shot shell called 'Thunder', a high brass variety with the most impressive and unique print on each individual shell. I'd no idea what was inside each cartridge but the outside looked so good I was convinced they'd help me. I actually shot quite well with them as I thought they were special. Years later I remember reading the technical specifications and ballistic report on these shells and was shattered to find out they were no better (or worse) than many of the other types of ammunition on offer from the same company. The fact is they helped me because I *thought* they would.

I've said it many times in this column - if you're looking to spend money on

shotshells, go for those with quality shot if you're looking to break targets at distance. For short-range shooting the shot hardness and quality won't come into play as much, but consistent shot patterns from low recoil ammunition is hard to beat in these events. Your argument that reduced velocity can be a disadvantage is incorrect as I'd suggest lower velocities in some disciplines like Trap (DTL) and Skeet can be quite advantageous, especially when hundreds of shots per day are required.

I can't spend your money but unless your 'second choice' ammo is so bad it can make a major physical difference to your scores then I wouldn't worry too much. If it keeps you going to the range and shooting targets then I say 'go for it!'

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Q I inherited a tiny double-barrelled .410 shotgun from my late uncle (Fred Loechel, a farmer from SA's mid-north) with which, way back as a young lad, I shot my first rabbit under his tutoring. I recall being told it was a 'poacher's gun' and enclose some pictures and wonder if you can tell me anything about it.

Bob K, via email

A Yes, these small folding guns were often called 'poacher's guns' as they could be hidden under the coat. The markings on your beautiful little gun include the following: 'The Liege United Arms Co Ltd' which is the English translation of the group 'Liegeiose D'Armes', a collection of artisans in Liege, Belgium who made firearms under contract for export as trade guns, often going to 'the Colonies'.

The ELG in an oval with crown above is the definitive black powder proof mark in use since 1893. The .410-50 in a sideways 'omega' mark gives the calibre in inches (.410) and chamber length in mm (50mm or 2"), this mark coming into effect in 1924 which suggests your gun was made between this date and most likely 1940 when, during WW2, Germany took over Liege gunmaking operations.

The other markings include the scripted EL which is the provisional proof mark in use since 1852 but reserved for smoothbore barrels since 1924, the 'Perron' breech proof mark (the little tower) in use since 1853 and inspection stamps 'star over M' (the mark of M. Louis Couchant, Inspector from 1923-1952) and 'star over AE' which is the stamp of an unnamed inspector. The number 10.4 is the calibre (.410") expressed in millimetres.

Your gun looks to be in very nice condition for its age and with fairly soft 2" cartridges should still be safe to shoot. If you have any doubts, a competent gunsmith could check it for you should you care to revisit some rabbits.

Geoff Smith



Q I bought a nice Winchester M1884 Low Wall in .17 HMR of recent manufacture by Miroku but unfortunately the seller forgot to tell me the rifle won't eject spent cartridge cases. My gunsmith had a look at the rifle and told me it had been rechambered from .17 Mach 2 to .17 HMR and in doing so there had been a 'roller' - a piece of steel swarf caught on the cutting edge of the reamer which had produced a ring inside the chamber.

Consequently on firing, the brass flows into the ring and becomes jammed there. I'm wondering if it would be possible to rechamber to .17 WSM since there's only a small difference in dimension between the two rounds or if it can be fitted with a replacement barrel from Winchester or from a custom barrel maker. Cost no object (within reason).

Ken Kenchington, NSW

A There are a number of ways your problems can be solved. While rechambering to .17 WSM will resolve your chamber issue, it will also mean opening out the extractor to accommodate the larger WSM rim diameter and could also mean moving the firing pin in the breech block to ensure it strikes the rim properly. There's quite a bit of work involved there and it could end up being an expensive proposition.

A new barrel chambered for the .17 HMR is probably the easiest fix if you can find one. Alternatively you could have the existing barrel shifted back in the receiver by having it cut off and rechambered, which would also mean refitting the barrel to suit the fore-end but that's a relatively easy task compared to rechambering to .17 WSM. RDT Products in Robertson, NSW make .17 calibre barrels and will be happy to help and would also set the barrel back without any problems.

John Dunn



Q Why are some shotgun recoil pads curved, some straight and others seem to have the top chamfered off?

Will, NSW

A Recoil pads on shotguns are extremely useful for several reasons and the shape of the face on the pad usually reflects the intended use of that gun. English game guns often have hard plastic pads which provide no softening of recoil but make it super easy to slip the gun into the shoulder, especially for overhead shots at game birds on the wing.

Trap guns invariably have curved pads top and bottom which can be mounted to the shoulder at your leisure before calling for the target as Trap is a 'gun-up' discipline. This shape of pad also distributes recoil more evenly over the shoulder as it tends to have the greatest surface area in contact with your shoulder and means felt recoil is often less.

Field, Skeet and Sporting Clay pads are usually made of a recoil-absorbing material like Trap pads but are designed to be mounted quickly in the shoulder from a 'gun-down' position. They tend to have the top chamfered off as you say and have minimal curvature to stop the gun catching

anywhere during gun mount. Usually the whole outside edge of the pad has a slight taper for the same reason.

A good trick with pads is to have a spare one - either thinner or deeper - to change between seasons when you're wearing less or more clothing depending on the weather (this helps achieve perfect gun fit). Some shotguns nowadays are designed to accommodate all clay disciplines with adjustable stocks and ribs so again, thought needs to be given to the shape of the pad if you intend to use one gun for Trap as well as Skeet or Sporting. A quality pad which helps absorb recoil is a great asset because, at the end of a long day's shooting, you'll certainly feel less tired and often have little or no soreness in the shoulder.

Paul Miller

Q A while back Rod Pascoe reported on the demise of ADI pistol and shotgun propellants. Do you know if there has been any updated information as to when shooters may be able to obtain these powders again or, for that matter, any similar powders. **Dave, WA.**

A There are lots of shooters keen to know the answer to that one Dave -

and it's not just powder but all reloading components and ammunition. ADI's latest information states they're not producing the APS series of powders for the 'foreseeable future' and as the only market for the APS product is here in Australia, I can't see them rushing to ramp up production for such a small market, though I hope I'm wrong.

For pistol and shotgun shooters who reload, this probably means the Alliant pistol and shotgun products, imported from the US and distributed by Nioa, will be the only powders available to us when and if the supply-chain issues caused by the pandemic subside and US customers stop hoarding all available stocks. Even before the pandemic, powder was a problem for Australian importers, distributors and retailers due to its 'dangerous goods' status.

At time of writing there's no Alliant pistol and shotgun powder in Australia and my hope is that when it does become available again, Nioa manage the distribution in a way that's fair and equitable across the country and can overcome the problems created by ridiculous dangerous goods transportation rules imposed by various governments. I also hope gun shops limit their sales to a certain amount per customer and resist the temptation to empty their shelves to cashed-up individuals who might otherwise clean them out.

I also long for the day when someone out there can find a way to import European powder to give Australian shooters a choice once more. For instance, Vihtavuori powders did well in Australia for many years until it too became unviable to import economically.

Rod Pascoe

ACCURA

THE ACCURA STORY

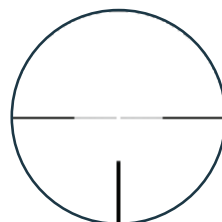
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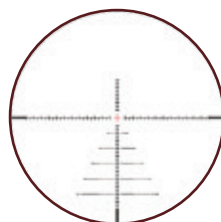
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Have gun, will travel

Schultz & Larsen's Hunter Traveller Composite rifle impressed Con Kapralos

Danish gunmakers Schultz & Larsen have been manufacturing bespoke longarms for more than a century and while their current catalogue does cater to tactical/long-range rifle options, they're best known for excellent hunting rifles and models such as the Legacy and Victory. One rifle which also shares the pedigree of their bolt-action offerings is the Hunter Traveller, aimed squarely at the hunter who demands a rifle that can be taken down into its component parts.

Its compactness and ability to use interchangeable barrels/calibres make it an excellent choice for those who require a single rifle platform with switch-barrel capability. The Hunter Traveller has been available with traditional walnut stock for some time, but demand for the rifle with a composite (synthetic) stock led to the Hunter Traveller Composite being released in 2019. It shares the same switch-barrel action as the walnut model but with a stock which can take whatever environmental conditions the user may experience.

Gone Hunting, Australian Schultz & Larsen distributor, offered *Australian Shooter* the Hunter Traveller Composite for review, the rifle supplied in a full-length hard case along with three barrels in 6.5

Creedmoor, .308 Winchester and 9.3x62. An optic in the form of an IOR Breaker 2-16x42 was also included.

At a glance

The rifle has switch-barrel capability to handle all weather conditions. The Traveller nomenclature means the rifle can be taken down (and barrels replaced) without dismantling the stock from the action, two small holes on the right of the stock (fore-end) giving access to the barrel retaining screws. The barrelled action is finished in a deep blue/black and is matched to the charcoal-coloured composite stock with an alloy action bedding design, ensuring any barrel mated to the receiver is free-floating.

Overall weight and length is dependent on the barrel fitted and its profile. The review rifle had a weight variation between 3.49kg and 4.11kg, the former with the 56cm fluted 9.3x62 barrel and the latter with the 65cm varmint in 6.5 Creedmoor. The .308 Winchester in 56cm sporter configuration yielded a 3.6kg weight.

Receiver

This is a design perfected by Schultz & Larsen, made from a single piece of steel bar-stock and subjected to numerous CNC machining processes to ensure not only

is the receiver finished to extremely high tolerances but it fulfills its purpose as a switch-barrel platform. The top of the receiver is machined to accept proprietary Schultz & Larsen scope mounting accoutrements as well as being drilled and tapped for Weaver or Picatinny-style bases. The profile is quite 'sculptured', the rear section almost hexagonal with the flats accommodating the bolt release lever (left) and safety selector (right).

The front receiver ring is circular with a single gas port on either side. The switch-barrel design is built into the front receiver ring and has been precisely machined to accept the barrel shank in a tight slip-fit. The bottom of the front ring and recoil lug are split off-centre with the left side (thinnest) being drilled and tapped to accept the barrel retaining screws. The adjacent side (thicker) accepts the front action screw, houses the two barrel retaining screws and a stud which protrudes into the receiver ring.

This stud mates with a corresponding slot in the barrel and when the barrel shank is inserted into the front ring, the stud and slot must engage 100 per cent. Installing a barrel into the receiver does require the bolt to be closed to set the headspace before the barrel retaining screws are

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Have gun, will travel



Rifle disassembled.

The supplied Allen key is used for removal of the barrel.

hand-tightened with the 4mm Allen wrench provided. Another two screws secure the action to the stock through the steel detachable bottom metal (DBM), which is flush-fitting to the underside of the stock.

Magazines

These are made entirely from steel with not a hint of polymer, magazines being of a single stack configuration and available in either 3 or 5-shot capacity. As the review rifle was supplied with three barrels (calibres), three magazines were on hand - two 'K' for the 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Winchester (in 3 and 5-shot) as well as 'L' for the 9.3x62 in 3-shot capacity. The magazine is held in place by a spring-loaded safety catch and released by pressing the small button in front.

Safety system

This is a three-position affair to the rear right of the receiver. In the rearmost position it locks the bolt and trigger, the middle blocks the firing pin while allowing the bolt to be operated and action cycled and moving the safety lever fully forward the rifle is ready to fire, as evident by the visible red-dot on the edge of the stock in the safety lever recess.

Bolt

This is based on a push-feed concept and is a one-piece design, highly polished with a straight bolt handle and rounded bolt



The reviewed rifle with three barrels, magazines to suit and an Allen key for barrel changes.

knob with flattened base, a blued steel bolt shroud completing the unit. The bolt head is of a three locking lug design which are the same diameter as the bolt body and results in a 60-degree bolt handle lift (the bolt head and locking lugs bear directly into the rear shank of the barrel).

Examining the bolt head closely, the face is recessed with a plunger-style ejector and one lug houses a claw extractor which ensures positive case manipulation when the bolt's drawn back. Another lug is stamped 'S' indicating it's a Standard bolt (for standard calibres). Bolt travel is via a lug in the back of the bolt-stop/release lever mating up with a longitudinal slot in the bolt body, resulting in silky-smooth bolt operation.

Barrels

These are what set the marque apart. While methods of barrel construction have enjoyed advances in metallurgy and metal

fabrication, Schultz & Larsen have stuck to using the best for their rifles. Many mass-produced rifles use cold-hammer forged barrels which are easier to manufacture in bulk but Schultz & Larsen opt to use cut-rifled barrels which, as the name implies, is the oldest method for rifling barrels and they use state-of-the-art machinery to ensure the utmost precision.

Using chrome molybdenum steel, each barrel is bored then cut-rifled to produce grooves and lands. Each pass removes approximately one ten-thousandth of an inch of metal (0.0001") and while the method is time-consuming and expensive compared to hammer-forged or button rifling, the resultant barrels are vastly superior in terms of interior finish. Such barrels exhibit superb accuracy, reduced fouling from bullet-jackets and maintain point-of-impact even under rapid-fire conditions though what's important to note is cut-rifled barrels require 'running-in'.



DAS WESENTLICHE.

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Have gun, will travel

The review rifle was supplied with three barrels, two sporter-weight in .308 Winchester and 9.3x62 and a varmint in 6.5 Creedmoor. The breech ends of the barrels consisted of a stepped shank which gave an excellent slip-fit into the receiver ring, the shank having lubrication grooves, two gas-vent ports and a slot machined at six o'clock which locates with the corresponding stud in the receiver ring.

Stock

As much as walnut stocks complement deeply blued/black metalwork on any classical rifle, the elements encountered in the field take their toll on wooden stocks and the advent of synthetic options has changed both rifles and shotguns for the better. The prototype composite stock was devised in 2017 with the final product released in 2019. The stock has a high proportion of glass-fibre content in the composite matrix and is extremely stiff, resulting in superior compression and stability which in turn minimises flex and shot dispersion and complements the cut-rifled barrel in achieving precise and consistent performance.

The pistol grip is full in the hand but not overly bulky and has panels of chequering either side. The buttstock has a small amount of cast and a well-designed cheek-piece which provides the right amount of height for scope/master-eye alignment and cheek weld for positive shooting. Sling swivel studs and a sorbothane recoil pad finish off the stock and the composite bedding platform mates up with the barrelled action perfectly to give excellent accuracy.

Bedding of the action to the composite glass-fibre stock was designed over three-plus years and takes into account the optimal compressive strength of the stock platform and barrelled action. A '360-degree' recoil lug around the barrel chamber and ultra-precise tolerances of the stock inletting hold the receiver and barrel shoulder like a tight-fitting glove, with no free-play or movement once action and barrel are mated to the stock.

Together with the bolt and action coming into play to achieve correct head-space and torque settings used for both the two barrel retaining screws and action screws, the geometric design of the stock and precise inletting results in a free-floated barrel married to the stock for the utmost in precision, accuracy and durability.

Assembly and barrel changing

Schultz & Larsen make it clear the ultra-precise tolerances engineered require the

Proof positive: Point of impact was validated even after the barrel was removed and refitted.



owner to adhere to the correct procedure when it comes to changing barrels, with emphasis on proper reassembly order and torquing barrel retaining screws to the correct specifications. As many owners will choose to run several barrels on one rifle platform, having a riflescope system which takes this into account also needs consideration - either a separate scope for each barrel or a scope with multiple adjustments for multiple barrels.

At the range

The .308 Winchester and 6.5 Creedmoor barrels were fully accuracy tested at 100m. A rapid-fire 'heat-test' was conducted of the 308W to ascertain point-of-impact changes with the cut-rifled barrel and the 6.5 Creedmoor tested for any changes in point-of-impact between removing/reinstalling the barrel.

The rifle was a pleasure to test with barrels in .308 Winchester and 6.5 Creedmoor. The .308 calibre shot all factory loads around the 1 MOA (28mm at 100m) mark or less, the exception being the Browning BXR 155-grain loads which averaged around the 45mm mark.

The Sako Gamehead 150gr Soft Point load was a cracker with average group sizes of 14mm which included two 3-shot groups at 6 and 8mm respectively. With the .308 barrel attached, a heat stress-test was conducted to examine how the cut-rifled barrel would react to rapid firing. Five 3-shot groups were shot at 100m with Federal's Vital Shok 130-grain Speer Hollow Point loads without allowing the barrel to cool. Those groups averaged 25mm (just under 1 MOA) and to say the barrel was 'hot' after the final 3-shot group would be a huge understatement - it was sizzling. The 6.5 Creedmoor barrel with its varmint profile shot superbly, attributed



The split front receiver ring which accepts the barrel shank.

to its heavier weight and excellent barrel harmonics. Several popular loads in the Creedmoor chambering were shot at 100m and all average groupings were under 1 MOA with several individual groups nudging 0.5 MOA (14mm) or better. Once again excellent performance from the varmint cut-rifled barrel.

The ability of a switch barrel rifle to maintain its point of impact when the barrel is removed and then replaced is paramount to the success of the rifle. With the 6.5 Creedmoor barrel installed and accuracy testing completed, two 2-shot groups were fired at a fresh target at 100m, the barrel then allowed to cool and removed from the action.

The rifle was allowed to sit with the barrel removed for 30 minutes then refitted to the action. Two additional 2-shot groups were then fired at the same target and, as expected, they shot in very close proximity to the initial two groups. The proof was in the target - the point of impact was validated even after the barrel was removed and refitted. I'd have loved to accuracy test the hard-hitting 9.3x62 but due to elements

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Accuracy Testing: Hunter Traveller Composite at 100m .308 Winchester Sporter barrel (16mm) - 56cm length. Groups in mm.

Ammunition	Best	Worst	Average *
Sako Gamehead 150gr SP	6	23	14
Browning Long Range Pro 168gr Sierra Tipped MK	19	41	32
Sako Gamehead Varmint Rx 130gr HP BT	22	29	25
Browning BXR 155gr	34	60	45
Federal Vital-Shok 130 gr Speer HP	20	34	25

Rapid fire – heat test

Group Sizes – 21, 34, 20, 24, 25 (mm) – five 3-shot groups fired in succession, no cooling of barrel allowed.

6.5 Creedmoor Varmint barrel (19mm) - 65cm length. Groups in mm.

Ammunition	Best	Worst	Average *
Hornady Precision Hunter 143gr ELD-X	10	20	14
Sako Gamehead Pro 130gr Tipped Game King	15	32	24
Federal Premium Gold Medal Berger 130gr Hybrid OTM	19	31	24
Browning Long Range Pro 130gr Sierra Tipped MK	12	31	24

* Average group calculated from five 3-shot groups at 100m.

outwith our control I couldn't.

Any negatives? None, though as a hunter who prefers lighter-weight rifles I'd try to find a combination/calibre where the overall bare weight is around 3.3-3.4kg. The review rifle with 9.3x62 barrel weighed 3.49kg bare so with a lightweight 2-8 power variable scope and rings it could scrape in below my personal 4kg limit.

Summary

The Composite is an exceptional hunting rifle available in 22 calibres ranging from 22-250 right up to 358 Norma Magnum. The rifle comes as a package and retails for around \$2778 (Magnum calibres \$2945) which includes the complete rifle with factory cut-rifled barrel threaded with thread protector, hard-case, Allen key, warranty card and two-piece Weaver bases.

Optional is the muzzle brake (\$164) and Picatinny rail (\$120). More at schultzlarsen.com.au ●

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Schultz & Larsen, Denmark

Model: Hunter Traveller Composite

Action: Push-feed bolt action, take-down

Barrel: Chrome moly, cut-rifled barrel available in lengths from 56cm-65cm and muzzle diameters 16mm-19mm (calibre dependent)

Sights: None fitted, receiver machined for proprietary S&L mounts, drilled and tapped for Picatinny/Weaver-style bases

Trigger: Single-stage, adjustable

Magazine: Steel, three shots in single stack (5-shot available)

Weight: .308W Sporter barrel, 3-shot mag and Picatinny rail 3.6kg; 6.5 Creedmoor Varmint barrel, 3-shot mag and Picatinny 4.11kg; 9.3x62 Sporter barrel, 3-shot mag and Picatinny rail 3.49kg

Stock: Glass-filled composite, QD sling swivel studs, sorbothane recoil pad

Distributor: Gone Hunting

RRP: Standard calibres: \$2778, Magnum calibres: \$2945



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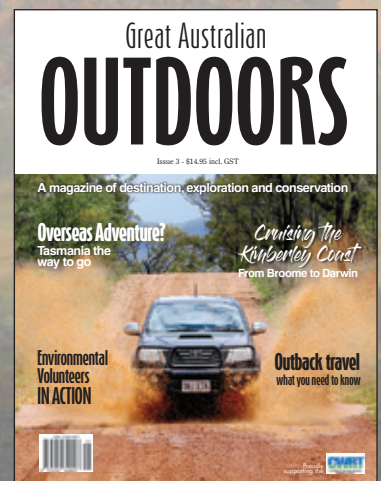
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SCAN AND ORDER



Marsh fallow!

A soggy weekend was nonetheless productive for Mark van den Boogaart

The plan was simple - head south to our annual father, son and uncle winter deer camp in the Upper Hunter. Enter COVID-19, lockdown, the all-too-familiar story and inevitable change of plans. Early one Friday about three weeks later Tim and I hit the road armed with a bundle of Border Pass declarations. Disappointingly, my son was back at school and for the first time in four years I'd be hunting the block without him.

Due to some minor flooding the trip down wasn't completely uneventful and on a quiet road about an hour south of the border we hit a creek crossing that demanded our attention. Arriving in late afternoon we set up camp. Saturday morning was cold and with dawn we saw first-hand the benefits of rain, the property transformed with a layer of thick frosted grass covering the front paddock. Of course all that rain also meant the dry creek we had to cross to reach the game was now in flood.

Unlike the road crossing, the creek was a real challenge and as water washed up over the bonnet I was glad for the rocky creek bottom, though hoped I wasn't going to hit a dislodged rock or worse, drive into the void

left by one. We made it without incident, stopping well above the creek line as we didn't know if the water was still rising or falling. We figured if we did become stuck we'd at least have something to eat and somewhere warm to sleep.

Our plan was a morning loop and as plans go it wasn't bad and started well. We spotted deer almost immediately and with Tim taking the first shot we had ourselves a nice meat animal on the ground before 8am. After the gutting procedure we hung the deer in the shade with the intention of returning later with the truck.

Moving away from the deer we turned uphill aiming to reach a point where the gullies crowned, allowing us to traverse the block at height and hopefully spot game below. Nearing the top we checked the wind and began to span the gullies and after an hour of slow walking, glassing and examining sign, we found ourselves in a small water-seeped meadow which fed an over-flowing dam.

The meadow was covered in tall weed and considering some advice given by a friend I climbed out and back towards the native timber, the suggestion a good one

as I soon spotted fallow. There was a good buck among them but I couldn't get my act together though after that missed opportunity we travelled through exceptional deer country and disturbed a lone fallow. We'd been moving along a track for some time and it looked like the deer was intent on doing the same but coming together it flared off and disappeared back into the scrub.

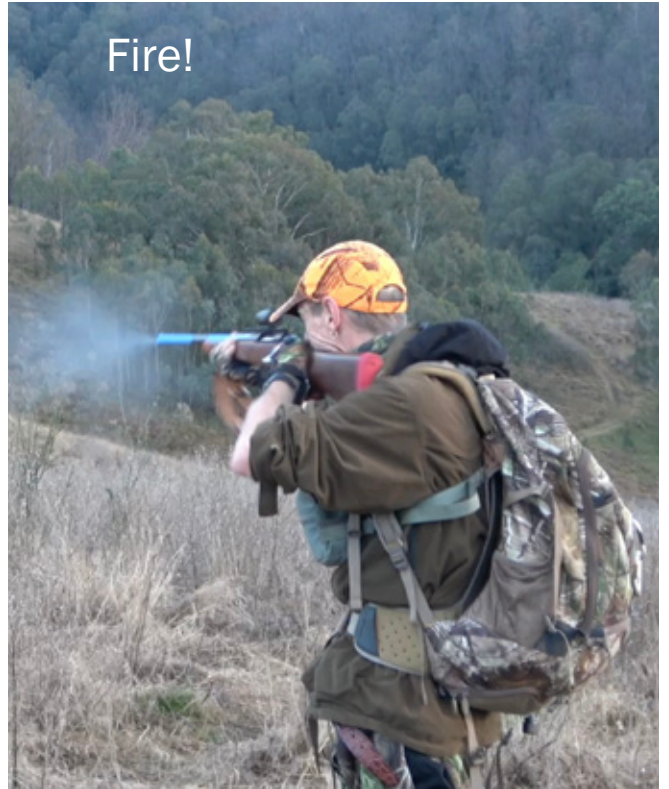
The track began to curve away from our intended direction so we cut into the gully system and with a gusty wind in our face continued to slowly step down towards the creek line below. About 100m from the creek we spied deer, a good mob of bucks unaware of our presence and, moving a little closer, I took cover near a large tree which also provided me with a solid rest and clear shooting lane. Checking the distance my rangefinder indicated 80m, which was perfect.

Glassing the bucks, it was the dark ends of one's palmate antlers which caught my eye and now I had my target I gave the buck closer consideration. He was well worth taking and presented a clean neck shot and at such close range on an undisturbed

Tim aiming on the
fallow deer with his
new Aimpoint set-up.



Fire!



Tim with his
fallow deer.



Closing in on the unsuspecting boar.



Tim with his pig - a first for the block.

animal it all came together with a single shot from my Scout rifle. As the other deer scattered I watched the buck tip forward and fold up without taking a step.

Now the hard work began as we broke him up and spread the meat across two packs then considered our way out. On one side was a sheer cliff wall, the other would push us away from our starting point, so we followed the creek. It was tough going with lots of slips, stumbles and falls but eventually we spotted a game trail heading up and out of the creek. It led to a crossing point where for the first time in six hours we laid eyes on the truck and after another hour we were back and soon loaded up and headed back to camp. So much for a quick morning loop.

Our Sunday pre-dawn start paid dividends and in the early morning light we

spotted a sow leading a mob of pigs. They were moving away from us but among the group was a straggler - a juvenile boar - and with Tim taking aim we soon had our first pig on the ground. Opting not to do another loop, Tim made the pig ready while I walked back to the truck for an easy load-out and with that done we decided to save on boot leather and travel under diesel power.

It looked all good until we became tangled up on a wet and slippery farm track so with discretion overruling enthusiasm - and after some tricky reversing - we headed off in a different and less treacherous direction. Returning to camp we dressed out the pig and paused to consider our options. With the sun sinking in the west we decided to really switch things up and as I had the new Burris BTH 35 handheld thermal optic with me for review, we swapped the rifles for a shotgun and waited for nightfall. As a plan it worked well and we marvelled at the game-changing power of thermal optics. Sadly we didn't find any pigs though we were in easy shotgun range of deer and could have taken an animal if we wanted.

Our last day brought another pre-dawn start and was also the coldest morning

by far and sitting in the field waiting for daylight, my feet started to regret my choice of socks. Strangely we saw no game. Tim stayed put overlooking some open ground while I set off on a long loop. It was an impromptu deer drive and again, while the science was sound it failed to produce. We then received word of COVID outbreaks and border jitters so decided to pack up and head north early. With plenty of meat on ice, a nice fallow deer rack and another weekend of hunting memories we were back over the border with time to spare. ●

• To my fellow SSAA members and readers. As a writer it's hoped my stories inspire others to hunt though sadly that inspiration has taken a battering over the past couple of years. It's been really tough for many and every week I speak to hunters who share stories of cancelled plans, missed events and absent friends. So what to do? Keep dreaming, keep planning, stay focused on being out there again and remain positive. We'll push past this eventually - in the meantime I hope you enjoy my stories.



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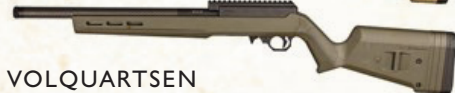
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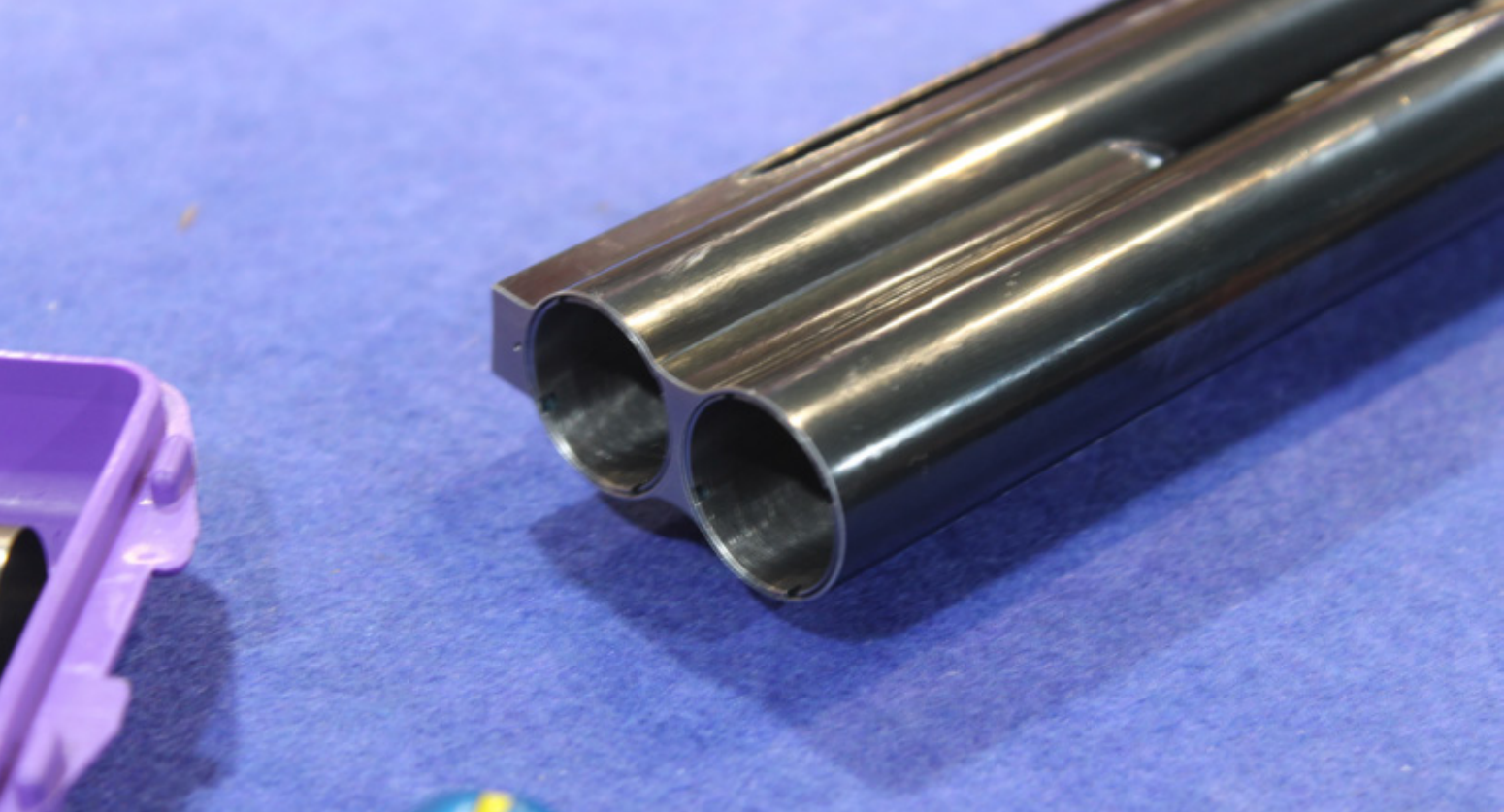
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Custom (re)built

Turning a spare shotgun from skeet into sporting was a worthwhile exercise for John McDougall

Being a long-time sporting clays, target and simulated field shotgun shooter, a skeet gun I had standing in my safe wasn't seeing enough action to justify keeping it so, after some time considering my options, I contacted Miall's Gunshop in Frankston, Victoria to further discuss alternatives. After speaking with John Miall, it was decided to customise the skeet gun with Briley thin-walled VX choke tubes, port the barrels for reduced muzzle flip and recoil and additionally lengthen the forcing cones to reduce perceived recoil from set-back - when the cartridge is fired it opens and leads into the tighter forcing cones heading into the smaller diameter barrel.

The idea of lengthening the forcing cones of the chambers leading into the barrel was to increase muzzle velocity, improve pattern density and reduce perceived recoil, which are all positives. Further to our talks I decided on light modified, modified and light improved modified as my choke





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P30L-SD



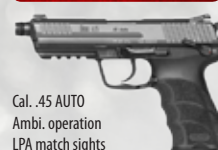
- SA/DA Trigger
- Adjustable LPA match sights
- Paddle magazine release, ambidextrous
- Interchangeable back straps and grip shells
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MAG CAPACITY

CAL. .22 - 10
CAL. .25 - 9

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FEATURES

PRESSURE GAUGE
CARBON FIBRE TANK
ADJUSTABLE POWER
SOFT TOUCH STOCK
AMBI. STOCK

MAG CAPACITY

CAL. .177 - 12
CAL. .22 - 10
CAL. .25 - 9
CAL. .30 - 7

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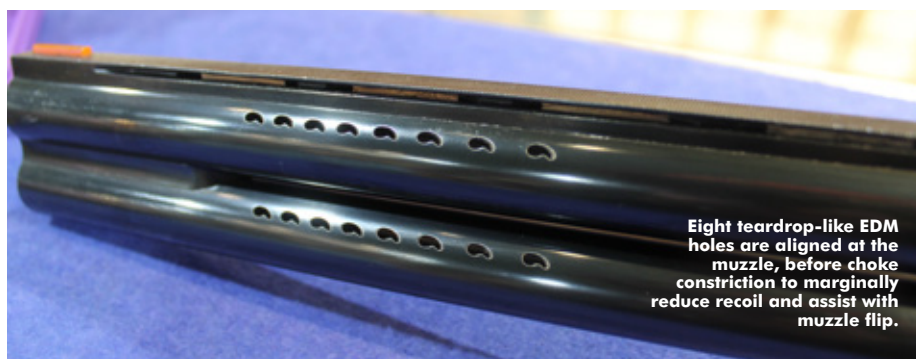
Custom (re)built

selection along with some Briley choke tube grease and the fabulous Briley speed wrench for quick changing of choke tubes. The wheels were set in motion when I dropped the Franchi Dragon skeet gun at Miall's Gunshop, home of Briley Australia.

For those who may not know, Jess Briley was an American who developed a unique way of fitting interchangeable choke tubes to a fixed choke shotgun. Initially, Briley used thin-walled 17-4 stainless steel alloy choke tubes and much later developed the amazing VX series which are suitable for steel shot use. Miall's gunsmith, John Kenyon, informed me all thin-walled choke tube installations now use tungsten alloy VX choke tubes suited to steel shot, especially since some gun clubs have been forced to move to steel shot target loadings.

By installing the VX tubes all variations of applications are covered. At this point I might also mention the Briley replacement choke tubes which differ from the thin-walled ones, these tubes having extended collars to replace the factory fully internal choke tubes supplied with the gun. When it comes to choke tubes I consider Briley, fitted in Australia, to be my number one choice.

The Franchi Dragon skeet gun had been in action at corporate shooting days I used to run at my local gun club on Phillip Island but since COVID lockdowns put paid to those, the Franchi became surplus to my needs. I put it up for sale in an associate's gunshop for several months without interest, so the Briley Australia treatment was seen as a resurrection of the gun for sporting clays. It would be suitable for all, particularly ladies and youngsters for



Eight teardrop-like EDM holes are aligned at the muzzle, before choke constriction to marginally reduce recoil and assist with muzzle flip.



A Briley speed wrench was supplied to enable fast changing of choke tubes.



An adjustable comb piece fitted by master gun stockist Kevin Wright was an essential addition to the Franchi.

sporting and the Franchi, with its lighter weight, shorter barrels and Kevin Wright adjustable comb piece on the stock, coupled with the Briley Australia treatment would see far greater use.

The revamp work was undertaken and after a month with lockdown lifted, it was time to pick up the gun and give it a run at sporting clays on the Frankston simulated field clay target ground. The modified skeet gun with its open chokes could still be used as a purpose skeet gun with the installation of Briley skeet chokes, though I was more interested in using it for simulated field clay target shooting and maybe hunting at some stage.

On my first visit to Frankston Gun Club the liveliness of those shorter 710mm (28") barrels compared to the 30" Bettinsoli shotgun I'd been using was remarkable, the precision patterns from the Briley thin-walled VX choke tubes quite devastating as targets were smashed to pieces and not just chipped. The gun seemed perfect for a lady or junior and the Briley modifications proved ideal.

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Custom (re)built

There was less muzzle flip, reduced recoil and comfortable shooting, especially since low-recoil 12-gauge loads were being used and while some advocate sub-gauge guns such as the 20-gauge for beginners, I've found over many years of shooting with newcomers, especially ladies and youngsters, a 12-gauge gun is my preferred starting point. Although lighter to hold, the 20-gauge gun shooting 28-gram loadings recoils quite heavily and muzzle flip can be a problem as, shot weight for velocity,

the lighter 20-gauge recoils more so than a heavier 12-gauge shotgun with equivalent shot/velocity loads. Recently I've used Gamebore 21-gram Evo loads and found them to be exceptional, making it delightful on the shoulder and at the target end of shooting.

In conclusion I can only say the decision to 'Briley' my gun proved a worthwhile exercise which could also apply to any field shotgun or trap gun with fixed chokes. Having a firearm you can't sell sitting

around for months wasn't an option I was prepared to accept and I highly recommend the work done by Briley Australia on my Franchi skeet gun, the fifth one I've had Briley chokes installed in and I can't fault the workmanship or performance. ●

SPECIFICATIONS

Gunsmith: Briley Australia, Miall's Gunshop, Frankston, Vic. www.mialls.com.au

Gun: Franchi Dragon Skeet, 710mm barrels, Kevin Wright adjustable comb piece, non-selective trigger and mechanical trigger selection action

Overall length: 1135mm/44¾"

Barrel length: 710mm/28"

Overall weight: 3.6kg/7lb 14oz

Barrel weight: 1.4kg/3lb 1oz

Chamber length and bore diameter: 70mm/2¾" and 0.728"

Work: Briley ultra-porting both barrels (\$400), Briley long forcing cones both barrels (\$250) and Briley thin-wall choke installation including two chokes, speed wrench, Briley lube and booklet (\$750). Additional Briley thin-walled VX choke tubes \$125 each

Warranty: Subject to assessment but all workmanship fully guaranteed



Forcing cones leading from the chamber into the barrel were lengthened for reduced recoil and increased pellet performance.

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**X-Bolt Hell's Canyon
Max Long Range**

RRP **\$2,495.00**

Calibres:

300PRC, 300RUM, 300WM, 6.8WST



Run out of steam

Take nothing for granted when hunting new territory, as Leon Wright found out to his cost

I hate flying. Actually, not flying as such but all the hassle of booking-in and going through Customs with firearms and ammunition, as dealing with the red tape and regulations can be a timely and stressful exercise. For that reason I much prefer hunting in our Aussie bush and the further away from civilisation the better. I've tracked sambar deer all round Victoria, hunted camels and goats in faraway places like the Kennedy Ranges in Western Australia, pigs and ducks everywhere in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland but have always yearned to hunt wild dogs and camels in the Simpson Desert.

Not owning a 4x4 vehicle the trip had been continually put on the back burner until my son Jason and I finally decided the time was right and booked a hunt through outfitter Bexley Carmen who operates out of South Australia. We flew into Adelaide and Bexley met us at the airport to make

sure we'd arrived safely - a nicer bloke you couldn't meet so I knew our trip was looking good.

Two days later we were camped in the Simpson Desert just below the Northern Territory border - and what a magnificent spot it was. When I picture a desert I think of sand dunes, sand and more sand so you can imagine my surprise when, after a short walk, climbing a nearby dune I was greeted with the sight of an expanse of water with ducks everywhere and, to top it off, flowers blooming all over. It was an incredible view.

More importantly there were wild dog tracks everywhere and after checking the zeroes on our rifles we were ready to go hunting. We ran into our first dog quite unexpectedly, tracking along the edge of the water when we spotted it coming down the other side of the expanse. At 50m it was an easy shot for the 300 Magnum . . . but retrieval being quite another matter.

In trying to edge his way across a dry section, Bexley sank to just below his knees when the dry crust above the mud gave way, an unpleasant experience though rather comical for us looking on. It wasn't long before we spotted another wild dog and while Bexley held its attention with his best howling technique, I pulled off a 210m shot with the Ruger 300 Magnum for our second success.

Our first encounter with camels is hard to explain as it was totally out of character for the Aussie bush, with half a dozen of them slowly moving along a sand dune. Jason and I put in a stalk but soon realised it was fruitless as, no matter how fast we tried to close the gap, it just wasn't working so after about a kilometre we reverted to the approved method of using the 4x4 to catch them. Piling out and reloading the rifles, in quick time we had a couple of large bulls on the ground and took some backstraps to



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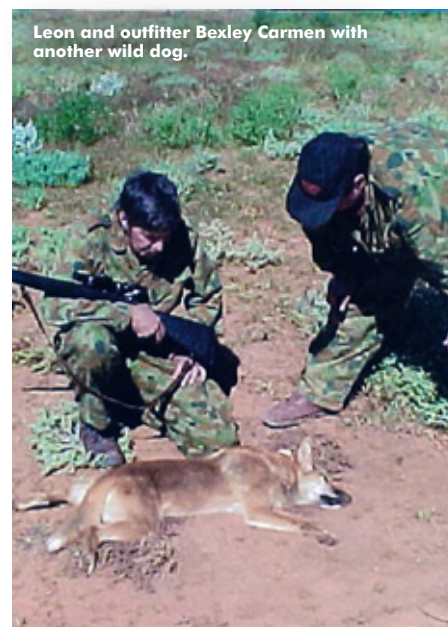
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Run out of steam



This wild dog fell to the Ruger .300 Winchester Magnum at 210m.



Leon and outfitter Bexley Carmen with another wild dog.

sample later for dinner.

By the time we reached the artisan springs a couple of days later we'd added more wild dogs to our tally and while we ate dinner around the campfire the other canines in the area serenaded us well into the night. Early next morning Jason and I, keen to get going, assured our guides we were safe to wander around without them so we grabbed the rifle and headed out after the wild dogs that were still howling a short distance away. We planned on letting the steam rising from the artisan spring act as a landmark to find our way back to camp but

that came close to being disastrous.

We spotted a couple of dogs moving along the opposite sand dune and when they wouldn't respond to the predator call I was working, I decided to put in a stalk on them. Leaving Jason to operate the video camera, I closed the gap and within a kilometre had one lined up as it snoozed in the morning sun atop the second dune. I shot the first one, killing it instantly, so quickly reloaded and bowled over the other.

Jason joined me a short time later and after taking a few photos we decided to head back to camp for breakfast. No matter



Leon took this wild dog after a long stalk.

Leon's left-handed Ruger .300 Winchester Magnum has accompanied him on numerous hunts.



how hard we tried we couldn't spot the rising steam we'd seen so easily an hour or so earlier. Then the penny dropped - there was no rising steam as the morning had warmed up and the sun had dissipated the haze we'd been depending on to lead us back to camp.

Unexpected situations such as this can prove disastrous to the unprepared. We could've been in trouble but I learned long ago not to take anything for granted when hunting over new territory and had taken the precaution of leaving a good track as we moved away from camp. Eventually we were able to make our way to where we'd parted company and, after finding our trail, followed it back to camp.

With our trip concluded I'd accomplished a long-held dream of hunting in the Simpson Desert and, being totally refreshed, was able to breeze through the airport check-in desk with no dramas for once. ●

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SSAA National President Lance Miller.



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Q & A with the President Lance Miller on the new SSAA Mutual Members Firearms Protection.



Q Is it true that insurance cover for shooting sports is getting harder to obtain and very expensive?

A That's absolutely true. Australia is experiencing the hardest insurance market in 20 years. Our insurance costs have increased by 186% over the last 5 years. Insurers are not interested in any sports where there is the slightest element of risk. Even though shooting is one of the safest sports, premiums, if obtainable, are rising at a ridiculous rate.

Q From April 1st will SSAA MUTUAL replace the old Members Firearms insurance?

A Yes, the new SSAA MUTUAL Members Firearms Protection will replace the old Members' Firearms Insurance which was placed through an insurance company and they set the annual premium paid by members, dictated price rises and conditions. From April 1, SSAA MUTUAL will now control the prices, terms and claims and that's a benefit to our members.

Q Now SSAA National has started SSAA Mutual Members Firearms Protection, how's that work?

A To cut a long story short... SSAA have formed a new company called SSAA MUTUAL and it's been set up to cover members firearms and fixed accessories just like the old firearms insurance. It's not an insurance company it's a MUTUAL and it's owned by the members. SSAA Mutual will collect the annual fees paid by members for cover and those funds will be used to pay members' claims promptly and efficiently as ever. The big member benefit is that SSAA MUTUAL now controls the cover. Future terms, premiums and conditions will not be dictated by an outside insurance company.

Q So how does this affect members?

A The SSAA MUTUAL Members Firearms Protection works as the old Firearms Insurance. For an annual cost of \$35 their firearms and fixed accessories will be covered for \$25,000 for 12 months. What's more with SSAA MUTUAL now in control, hopefully there will be no need for future price rises. So, in effect, it's business as usual with a name change.

Q Will it change the way claims are made and processed?

A No it won't. After the SSAA Insurance Brokers have processed and reviewed a claim it will be passed onto SSAA MUTUAL for finalising and not to an outside insurance company. Now the whole firearms cover process stays in-house.

Q Will there be a changeover period if members have the existing Firearms Insurance cover?

A Let's take last October for example. Yes, there will be a rolling 12-month changeover, so if a member renewed their membership and paid their insurance on October 1, 2021 their cover will be with the old insurance company until September 30, 2022. When the same member renews their membership on October 1, 2022 they will be covered by the new SSAA MUTUAL Firearms Protection Cover. It will be linked to membership renewals like it is now.

Q Does this mean SSAA MUTUAL might expand into more in-house cover?

A As I mentioned earlier, insurance costs have increased by 186% over the last 5 years and SSAA will definitely be keeping a close eye on future increases. For example, we would have to consider it if our public liability insurance became unobtainable or prohibitively expensive. But for now, SSAA MUTUAL Members Firearms Protection is a great start for protecting our members' firearms and keeping the annual cost under control.

Q Who do members call for more information?

A Nothing's changed there. Just call our friendly staff at the SSAA Membership office on (02) 8805 3900 or at SSAA General Insurance Brokers on (08) 8332 0281



MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION

Eyes front!



As Mark van den Boogaart discovered, the Steiner Predator 4 riflescope is worth a look

For the sake of transparency I'm a fan of Steiner optics as having reviewed their binoculars, thermal optics and scopes, I reckon they offer serious European performance for your hard-earned cash. With Steiner you also have products which deliver something a little different, sometimes proprietary features like lens coatings while at other times it's just smart thinking like clip points for binoculars rather than the old buckle and loop connectors which so many makers still prefer.

Yet Steiner have their detractors. Some think the gear is too heavy and, to be honest, their strong military connection means it can at times have a services look and feel. More recently things have changed though, for instance the HX series binoculars look much like hunting glass while several of their newer scopes also look right at home on a hunting rifle.

The thing is I'd never owned any Steiner until recently, my first purchase being a pair of HX binoculars in 10x42mm. Great glass, competitively priced, optically superior to a lot of competitors and tough as nails, which is just as well as I can be hard on

equipment. But it's my most recent buy that's the focus on this review - the Steiner Predator 4 riflescope in 2.5-10x42mm with E3 illuminated reticle. Based on the highly regarded Ranger platform, after being lucky enough to lay my hands on one of the first in the country, I bought it soon after.

While described as compact, the Predator 4 reflects the mix of typical European design with a large rear eyepiece and easily accessible focus ring combined with a more Australian orientated 42mm front objective. With a magnification range of 2.5-10 power, you can wind it down for use among heavy cover as well as stretch it out for shooting across open terrain or longer distances in hill country.

Sticking with optics, the Predator 4 makes use of HD glass that's undergone a Steiner process known as Predator Diamond Coating to generate superior light transmission, high contrast and high-definition imaging. For me, during initial testing the standout was field of view which really is quite impressive and allows you to quickly obtain a clean sight picture with excellent clarity levels when shouldering the rifle.

In fine-tuning the scope the Predator 4 makes use of traditional low-level and capped windage and elevation dials. While larger magnification scopes in the Predator 4 bracket are equipped with turret-style dials, I prefer a capped dial in hunting scopes, in fact one of the reasons I bought it was to replace a scope fitted with a ballistic turret system. The old scope was no slouch but the turret became a hindrance when hunting, often snagging when I carried the rifle over my shoulder.

As mentioned the Predator 4 makes use of an illuminated reticle, the pattern designated an E3 which makes use of a small cross-hair rather than a dot. Illumination is controlled via a dial on the left of the scope body and with 11 selectable brightness levels (5 day/6 night) you can adjust illumination intensity to suit changing light conditions. On the test bench the illuminated cross provided a fine aiming point while the wedge-shaped trajectory and windage lines seem to draw your attention to the centre.

The reticle also provides 100-yard gradients to 400 yards and crosswind indicators for 10 and 25 miles per hour wind at each gradient and to extract the most out of all

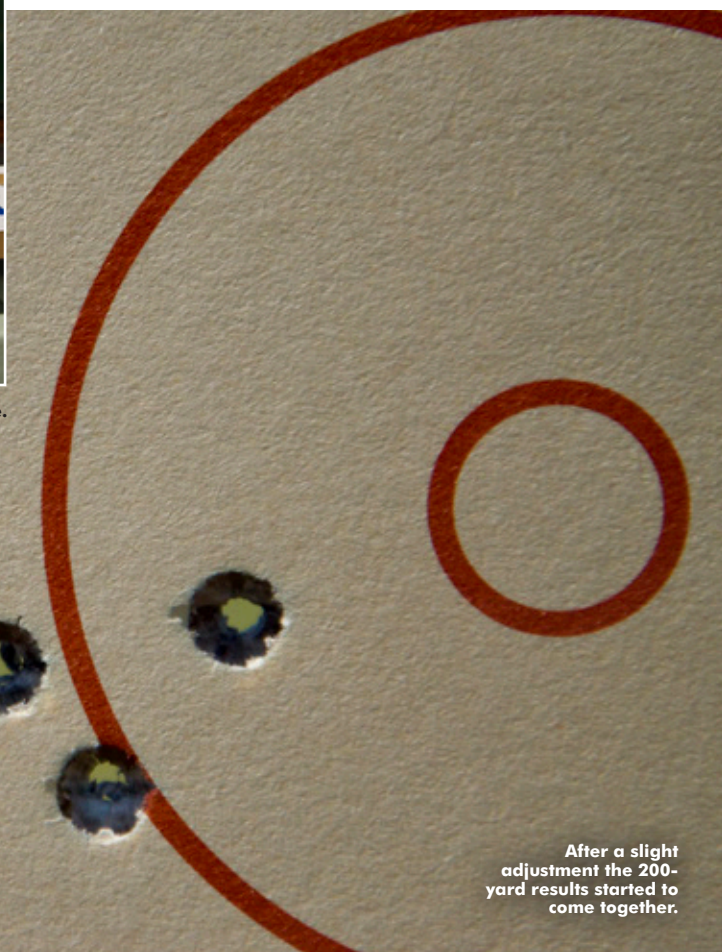


Putting the bench to good use.



In the field between storms.

9



After a slight adjustment the 200-yard results started to come together.

that detail, Steiner has a ballistic calculator to align calibre and projectile with the reticle.

I needed the rifle sighted in so hit the range early one morning. Now I'm not one of those guys who can zero a rifle in five shots - it usually takes me a box of ammo before I'm happy. With the Predator 4 it took 14 shots to have the small illuminated central cross-hair zeroed to 100 yards, three shots later (17) I had the windage right and on firing two more produced my first acceptable 3-shot group. I moved down to the 200 increment and initially the shots continued to group well though a little low but with a slight adjustment I had the beginnings of an acceptable 200-yard, 3-shot group.

Both 300 and 400-yard shots were on metal gongs and asking the Range Officer to sight the fall, I took aim using the corresponding 300-yard increment and heard a resounding ring when I hit the plate. Moving out to 400 yards I dropped the point of aim to the last increment and again heard the ring of the plate and was even able to see the mark from a 150-grain Sako Hammerhead on the newly-painted gong.

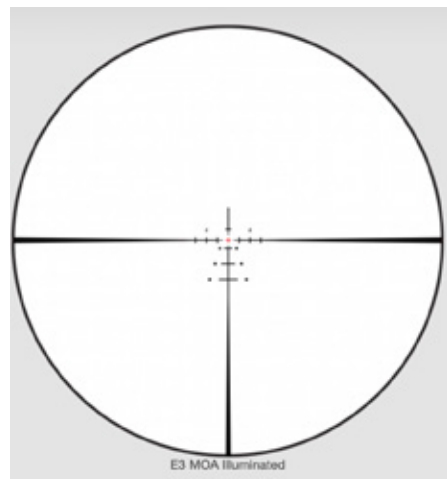
General consensus was a six-inch drop from point of aim with an acceptable amount of windage.

While not match perfect, on that first outing to the range the E3 reticle proved itself to be a good aiming system to help the hunter be on target and further refine their accuracy with practice. Speaking of which, after a few more shots, one or two slight adjustments and finally resetting the elevation and windage dials to zero, it was time to go hunting.

I have access to a small hunting block in the Brisbane Valley frequented by red deer, pigs, wild dogs and all sorts of other game. From experience, if you want deer the wind needs to be in your favour and you must start early so, leaving home at 3.30am, I was in position about 30 minutes before sunrise. Sadly the weather wasn't in my favour and the day was punctuated by a series of violent though thankfully short-lived storms. While optically the Steiner Predator 4 was excellent in those less than perfect conditions, I was unable to find any game.

Despite this, by bringing together new design thinking, top-notch build quality,

optimised HD glass, 2.5-10 zoom, huge field of view and the E3 reticle (all backed by a lifetime warranty) Steiner have really hit the mark with their Predator 4 hunting riflescope. When you add into the equation the competitive retail price across the whole Predator range, the Steiner Predator 4 is a superb option for Australian hunters. ●



The E3 reticle looks the part.



General rifle maintenance, as John Hill outlines, is a task within the capability of almost all shooters

On numerous occasions I've been asked to clean a rifle as the owner had nothing to do the job - no cleaning rod, not even a pull-through. Some shooters never touch their rifles apart from firing them, perhaps lacking confidence to clean the barrel or even adjust the sight but for those who want to give it a go, the following is a list of basic tools and equipment the average rifle owner needs for simple maintenance and low-level home gunsmithing.

If you're going to work on a rifle it's far more manageable if it's held in a cradle of some type, mine being homemade from scrap timber with pieces of carpet glued to the areas that touch the gun. Such a device holds the rifle off the bench in an upright position which makes it easier to work on, particularly when cleaning the barrel. If you're not handy with a wood saw then a commercially made plastic rifle cradle (or gun vice) can be bought at most gunshops. The cradle I made has built-in movement adjustments, vertically and horizontally, which is a great help

when bore-sighting a newly-scoped rifle. Cleaning rifle barrels requires a cleaning rod with suitable attachments as well as flannelette cleaning patches and a bottle of bore solvent. Cleaning rods should be the one-piece variety with ball-bearing handles so the rod can follow the twist of the rifling. Multi-piece cleaning rods while appearing compact and convenient may not assemble into a perfectly straight rod, the joints of which could rub against the bore and cause damage. The twist of the rifling could also undo a multi-piece rod unless it was screwed together tightly.

Most shooters should be able to fit a telescopic sight to their rifle but to do so requires a few special tools such as the cradle, Allen keys or a small Phillips screw-driver (often the necessary Allen key comes with the scope mounts). I buy, swap and change scopes on my rifles and those of other shooters quite often and a handy piece of equipment is a one-inch steel bar.

The purpose of the steel bar is to check alignment of the scope rings before fitting the scope and tightening the rings - if the

bar drops into the half-rings freely, the rings are in good alignment and should clamp up without springing the scope tube. The steel bar can also be used on those bridge mounts with a rotary dovetail under the front scope ring. Some are quite tight to turn and a steel bar is much stronger than a thin aluminium scope tube. Some gunsmiths prefer to use two checking bars, whereby the rings are done up tight and their alignment checked where the bars meet between the scope rings.

Another variation of a scope ring alignment test bar is one that's much longer and comes to a point extending out over the barrel, the idea behind this being if the rings are well aligned to the barrel, the pointy end of the bar will be over the centre of the barrel. All up that's three different types of test bars for checking scope ring alignment and it's unlikely your local gunshop will have any of them - it's often a case of make your own or go without. Incidentally, 30mm scope mounts require a 30mm test bar.

If a new scope has been fitted to a rifle it needs to be boresighted so the sight is close

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LH25PRO | LH19PRO | LH15PRO | LE15PRO | LE10PRO | LC06



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SPECIFICATIONS

	MODEL	SENSOR	FOCAL	MAG	FOV	RANGE	MEMORY	BATTERY	WEIGHT
LYNX	LH25	384×288, 12µm, NETD < 35mK	25mm, F1.0	2.45 - 19.6, x8	10.5° × 7.9°	1200m	8GB (220,000 Images)	Up to 7.5h	300g
	LH19		19mm, F1.0	1.86 - 14.88, x8	13.8° × 10.4°	900m			
	LH15*			1.47 - 11.76, x8	17.5° × 13.1°	700m			
	LE15*	256 ×192, 12µm, NETD < 35mK	15mm, F1.0	1.42 - 11.36, x8	11.6° × 8.7°	600m		Up to 8h	310g
	LE10*		10mm, F1.0	1.0- 8.0, x8	18.0° × 13.6°	450m			
	LC06*		6.2mm, F1.1	1.0- 8.0, x8	24.7° × 18.7°	220m		Up to 10h	

* No manual focus

FEATURES

Pixel interval: 12 -17 µm
Detector sensitivity: 35 mK
50HZ refresh rate
High Shock resistance 750 g/lms
Digital zoom: 1x, 2x, 4x, 8x
F1.0 Aperture
Capture Snapshots & store on thermal
Capture videos & store on thermal

Wi-Fi - Hotspot - real time sharing or transfer videos/images
IP67 protection
3 year warranty
Static target ranging system
Built-in memory: 8-16 GB
Battery runtime up to 7.5 hours
(Rechargeable Lithium Battery)

SLEEP MODE
Monocular supports sleep mode to enhance battery life and maximise runtime.

ADVANCED IMAGE SENSOR
The high sensitive 384×288 12 µm Vox image sensor offers high quality image performance with more details. With larger magnification, the detection range of a 1.7 m target can reach up to 1200 m.

WI-FI ENABLED
Supports WiFi Hotspot through the mobile app to have the same view as the camera itself. Users can also access digital zoom or video recording on their mobile or tablet.

ADJUSTABLE FLAT FIELD CALIBRATION MODE

Auto Mode: The device performs FFC automatically during running time.

Manual Mode: Only hold the mode button in live view to manually perform FFC.

Background Calibration: Cover the lens cap, then hold the mode button in live view to perform FFC by background calibration.

4 COLOR PALETTES
At the touch of a button you can quickly view the image with one of the four color palettes to suit the environment and make it easy to distinguish terrain, targets, fauna and ground conditions. This makes it easy to distinguish landscapes and features as well as unique animal attributes.



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to zero before firing (careful boresighting can save lots of ammunition when zeroing a scope). As my rifle cradle has adjustments, these make accurate boresighting extremely easy to align the target centrally in the bore and perhaps the best boresight I've ever done was with my CZ 17 Hornet which was just 90mm out at 100m. Careful boresighting always places your first shot on the target, which is a good starting point.

Another way to sight in a newly-fitted scope is to use a collimator, an optical instrument which attaches to the muzzle. I have a Bushnell magnetic collimator and believe that to use one puts a newly-fitted scope no nearer zero than a careful boresight, yet where a collimator is useful is after the scope has been zeroed.

By recording the zero reading of the scope (wherever that may be on the collimator grid), a riflescope can be checked for zero after a suspected knock without having to actually fire. If the scope has moved it'll show up on the grid pattern and can be returned to zero. When another scope is fitted to a rifle it can also be zeroed to within a couple of 'clicks' when the scope is adjusted to a previously recorded collimator grid position for that particular rifle and ammunition. A simple hand-drawn sketch is sufficient to record a rifle's zero position. If you have several rifles it can be clearly seen each one has a different zero position on the collimator grid, so to use a collimator to zero a scope without a pre-recorded zero reading will only put the first shot on paper at best. Nevertheless, a collimator is a worthwhile piece of equipment.

Next on our 'must-have' list is a selection of files and my collection goes from very large to very small (needle files) in various shapes and sizes. As far as rifles are concerned, the ones most used are large round files for enlarging barrel channels when floating barrels while rotary files used in a pistol drill are also handy for gouging out barrel channels. In the absence of a suitable file, a length of doweling and some sandpaper will usually do the job but lacks the cutting ability of a sharp file.

I once had to repair a damaged scope-mounting dovetail and scope mounts which were completely torn apart when the vehicle the rifle was in overturned, the unfortunate event happening in hot pursuit of a fox which did a sudden U-turn. The task was made easier by using a ball-peen hammer and a few small needle files of the right shape to suit the dovetail. The hammer was used to panel-beat some dovetail bulges back into shape and the needle files to smooth over the rough spots, the final touch being to apply a dab of cold blueing solution



Cleaning rod and attachments. Barrel cleaning requires specialised equipment.



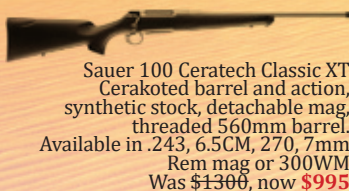
Scope mounts with test bar. The bar can also be used to lap in the mounts should there be any misalignment.



A collimator is a fine device when changing scope sights and clamps to the muzzle of the rifle by a strong magnet.

SAUER

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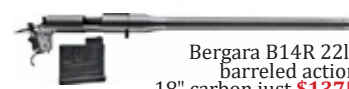


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on the repair site. Needle files are handy to have when there's some delicate fitting to be done.

A torque wrench is another useful tool, particularly if you're uncertain as to how tight various screws should be tensioned. Small diameter fine threads like those used in most scope mounts are easily stripped if over-tensioned, and this is more likely to happen with aluminium alloy mounts than those made of steel. Aluminium is a relatively soft metal compared to steel and soft metal threads must be tightened with care.

My torque wrench came with a list of suggested tensions for various scope mount threads as well as bedding screw tensions for rifles with either timber or synthetic stocks. If you're unsure how tight to tension various screw threads, a torque wrench would be a good tool to have as a thread that's over-tensioned can cause it to strip and an under-tensioned one may vibrate loose.

Shooters who handload will need a few extra tools apart from a reloading press and a set of dies. These include a case trimmer, powder scale, powder measure, neck deburring tool, case cleaner (tumbler) and an accurate measuring instrument because as your involvement with shooting increases, so does the rate of expenditure.

When it comes to measuring instruments you can use either a Vernier caliper, digital caliper or micrometers. Both Vernier and digital calipers have a wide measuring range of 150mm (6"), whereas a micrometer has only a 25mm (1") range and two or three will be required to fully cover a reloader's needs.

Both Vernier and digital calipers can measure lengths, internal and external diameters and depths. The digital caliper, in particular, is a versatile instrument and

A torque wrench can be used for correctly tensioning various screw threads.



Imperial and metric sets of Allen keys are handy.



capable of measuring to 0.01mm (one-hundredth of a millimetre) and what's more, you don't have to learn how to read it (as is the case with micrometers and Verniers) as the digital display is in either decimal millimetres or inches with both available at the flick of a switch. Yet despite the digital caliper's versatility I prefer micrometers, mainly as I have them due to my trade background and they're also slightly more accurate and don't require batteries.

Other items such as pliers (small, large, long-nosed, locking), numerous types of screwdrivers, a vice with soft jaws, small gas bottle and burner (for case neck annealing), an oil can and pot of grease are all useful for general rifle maintenance and the shooter who reloads. The list could go on and my personal 'must-haves' extends further to include a chronograph for testing bullet velocity of various handloads as, without one, a handloader can only guess as to how his reloads are performing.

Having a lathe in my workshop is also a great advantage and it's often used to recrown damaged or suspect rifle muzzles. It can also alter Simplex neck resizing and bullet seating dies from one calibre to another, make head-spacing washers, shotgun firing pins, cleaning rod attachments such as jags and other items.

Today's gunsmiths are few and far between and the nearest one to me is more than an hour's drive away. He had plenty of work last time I called and the waiting times were weeks, if not months, depending on the nature of the repair. So it makes sense to work on your own rifles as you not only gain satisfaction and experience, you save time and money too. ●

A digital caliper is a useful measuring tool.





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Arrival of the Rival

A rival is someone who competes against others, so Canik built a new competition pistol to give shooters the edge. But as Senior Correspondent Rod Pascoe found, the new SFX Rival is in a race of its own - to top the fastest-growing sector of the handgun market



Turkish manufacturer Canik has been a major player in the aerospace industry with its reputation for precision engineering in that country. After years of hard work some of the largest aerospace corporations turned to this relatively new company and began setting up contracts to produce aircraft parts and today, giants including Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Airbus continue to use Canik parts.

In 2009 the company spread its wings and added firearms to its portfolio with early models catering to home defence and personal protection applications inspired by market success of the Glock with its polymer frame, striker-fired mechanism and multiple inbuilt safeties. Over time, Canik kept up with industry trends and has expanded its products to now offer more options for customers with differing requirements and budgets.

While still a major supplier to one of the largest segments of the firearms industry - the concealed-carry market in the US - the new SFX Rival gives Canik an entrée into the sporting gun market. But their task

as a relatively new entrant is to persuade customers their product is better than the rest - the Rival is just one in an array of handguns in Canik's line-up but is the one with the *look* of a competition pistol.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies (OSA) in Melbourne is Australian distributor for Canik and gave *Australian Shooter* the chance to put the Rival through its paces. This will be the sixth pistol in OSA's Canik catalogue and is Australian pistol club friendly in terms of calibre, barrel length and magazine capacity.

What's in the box?

The plastic case is full of goodies to get a new shooter started, each accessory item having its own spot in the foam-lined lid. These include a nylon cleaning brush and rod, two extra grip backstraps (choice of small, medium or large), a punch to remove the pins for taking out the backstraps and accessing other parts and finally a miniature Canik which, with buttplate detached, reveals some other bits and pieces such as spare yellow and red fibres for the front sight, a medium and large magazine release



What's in the box? Chances are they're grey.

button plus assortment of screws, washers and Torx bits that fit into the 'muzzle' of the little pistol which itself acts as a hex wrench - neat!

To complete the accessories in the lid is a short bar which screws into one of four reflex sight adaptor plates and acts as a cocking lever to give the shooter something other than the sight itself with which to rack the slide (the adaptor plates accommodate most current reflex dot sights on today's market).

In the main section of the carry case is



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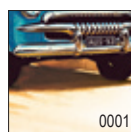
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Arrival of the Rival

the pistol itself in a grey plastic holster with basket weave texture. The competition-style holster is a new addition with the Rival - earlier Canik models came with a flat paddle that sits on a belt close to the body, which suited more the self-protection role. With its locking system which grips the triggerguard, the Rival holster may well meet the requirements for most competitions. Two extra 10-shot magazines, a cartridge loader and instruction manual are also included.

First impressions

A feature of the Rival is the coating colour, Canik Rival Grey, created by Cerakote. This, combined with the H122 gold bling on the trigger safety, magazine release, mag-well and slide stop levers separates the Rival from Canik's earlier models. In fact everything is grey, right down to the holster and cleaning rod but apart from the colour combination the Rival doesn't *look* like anything else in Canik's ranks.

This full-sized fibre-reinforced polymer-framed pistol has a number of new design features from earlier Canik models different slide and frame shape, particularly in the grip, triggerguard, backstraps and beavertail and, in keeping with modern trends, it's optics-ready.

The front texture of the grip has been updated and backstrap pattern made more aggressive to further increase grip on the pistol, though I'd have preferred some textured bulk on the sides of the grip to fill the hand rather than its flat side plates. There's a Picatinny accessory rail under the frame which is becoming fairly standard on polymer-framed pistols these days.

The take-down process for removing the slide is a little different to some and instructions for stripping are in the manual. The



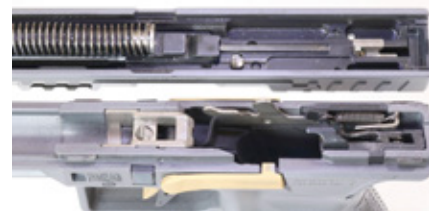
The five-inch barrel is fluted with what looks like rifling but on the outside.

five-inch barrel is fluted with what looks like rifling, but on the outside, my guess being this reduces the amount of contact between barrel and slide. The breech end of the barrel also has serrations to match those on the front and rear of the slide, the flat recoil spring captive on a steel guide rod that's square rather than round.

Canik borrowed design and engineering features from some well-established gunmakers and one of their earlier models, the TP9, takes its inspiration from the Walther P99 of the 1990s and the Rival also carries features seen on the Walther PPQ Q5 match pistol.

Deep serrations extend around the front of the slide with a long cut on top and a short one on each side helping with weight distribution and/or appearance. I prefer to rack the slides of pistols from in front of the ejection port, a habit that comes from not wanting to rub the carbide sight-black from the rear sight. Along with the step in the slide just behind the front sight, these serrations give plenty of opportunity for a firm hold. At the back of the slide is an adjustable rear sight mounted on the optical sight cover plate and once removed, one of four supplied adaptor plates accommodate most popular brands of reflex red dot sights.

This is the first Canik model to sport an adjustable sight and shows the designers of the Rival have sports shooters in mind. The back of the slide exposes the back of



The internal workings include a flat wire recoil spring on a square steel guide.



Fully adjustable rear sight.

the firing pin and, coloured red, alerts the shooter to the striker being cocked. One item not normally included with pistols is the Canik punch for disassembly of parts with ease, Canik's way of letting the shooter fix or make changes to the pistol that might otherwise need the services of a gunsmith. The long slide stop lever is again a borrowed design and is duplicated on the right of the frame, the gold magazine release catch can be repositioned to the other side and the accessory box gives you a choice of three magazine release button lengths.

The gold mag-well helps with faster reload but can be removed if the rulebook dictates for certain categories or divisions of competitions. With the mag-well removed the end of the butt incorporates a 'self mag-well' internally shaped to accommodate mag loading.

Canik, along with dozens of manufacturers worldwide, have benefited from almost 40 years of improvement on the revolutionary Glock system and as such, trigger mechanisms have been top of the R&D list. The Canik triggers I've tried have all been vast improvements on the original Glocks and Rival's diamond-cut aluminium flat trigger is another good



Changing to reflex dot sight is straightforward.

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Arrival of the Rival

touch. According to advertising material the trigger mechanism is an upgraded version of the flat aluminium trigger found on the TP9 Elite Combat model. The diamond cut surface helps prevent slippage and increase trigger control, while weight reduction in the trigger and a shorter reset felt pretty smooth when dry firing. Before heading to the range I cleaned and lubricated the Rival as per instructions.

At the range

I chose factory-loaded ammunition across four brands - Geco, PPU, Federal and Sellier & Bellot. Some were 115-grain weight, some 124gr, some were lead round-nose, some jacketed either hollow-point or FMJ and one was copper-coated lead. All functioned in the handgun without a fault - feeding, firing, extracting and ejecting at a high rate of fire without missing a beat.

Most ammunition printed around three inches high on paper even after winding the sights to their lowest setting though a higher front sight would solve that. There was plenty of adjustment available in the rear sight to cover any windage variations. Apart from being higher, I'd have preferred the dovetail-mounted front sight to be the traditional Patridge-style rather than red fibre but that's personal preference and an easy fix with Warren sights, available from Canik as an accessory.

The grip was quite comfortable and stable despite the full-house factory loads and a pistol weighing a mere 835 grams. As mentioned, I'd have preferred some roundness or fullness of the grip rather than the flat sides and Talon Grips in the US offer an aftermarket alternative.

Accuracy was respectable with all types tested and comparable to other pistols of the same design and firing mechanism, although the standout was PPU 124gr jacketed hollow-point with a group size of 70mm shot offhand at 25 yards (with some load development, shooters will quickly settle on a home-load that suits them and the gun). Groups were marginally smaller with a reflex dot sight fitted, the trigger smoother than I expected and although it

weighed almost 5lb it didn't feel like it.

Summary

I mentioned Canik's in a race of its own, a new player in the firearms industry attempting to beat off competition in an ever-growing 9mm, striker-fired, polymer-framed handgun market. Every time I review such a firearm, I'll repeat there's a limit to how much manufacturers can make cuts to the costs of producing a gun without compromising function, reliability, accuracy, safety and integrity of their brand.

So in order to be competitive in this market they have to value-add somehow, all of which makes it even more difficult for potential buyers to differentiate between brands and even models within each brand. So incentives for customers might include improving the trigger, making the gun optics-ready, including an extra magazine, bottle of oil, holster, padlock or extending the warranty. In the case of the Rival, Canik has value-added with all the accessories and attachments mentioned and have also practical and cosmetic embellishments and improved performance to add to the appeal.

On top of that Canik added an adjustable rear sight indicating the Rival is targeted at a specific segment of the market - sporting shooters. Canik designers read the rule books of a number of shooting disciplines both with and without optic divisions such as IPSC for example, to make sure the Rival met requirements of the match.

Canik stock a wide assortment of accessories and spare parts and independent aftermarket suppliers have begun producing a number of enhancements such as grips, sights, compensators, thumb rests, steel recoil spring guides, extended magazines and so on to enhance the Rival and turn other Canik models into competition guns.

The Canik SFx Rival will appeal to those after a functional, polymer-framed, striker-fired handgun that's affordable yet has enough attributes for competition shooting - it's ready to shoot right out of the box. At time of writing, OSA expect the Rival to land on our shores early in 2022 with a recommended retail price of \$1585. I didn't



The Canik punch is used for changing backstraps.



Mag-well removal using miniature Canik tool.



Extendable magazine release buttons are included.

test the Rival to the point it failed or became unreliable but I'm sure that, as firearm supplier to the Turkish Police Force, Canik will have made sure it didn't. ●

Specifications

Canik SFx Rival self-loading pistol

Calibre: 9x19mm (9mm Luger)

Magazines: 3 x 10-round

Barrel length: 127mm

Overall length: 205mm

Height: 145mm

Width: 36mm

Weight: 835g including empty magazine

Operating system: Short recoil, locked breech, striker fired

Safety system: Trigger safety lever, firing pin block

Mag release: reversible and extendable (small, medium, large)

Distributor: OSA Melbourne, Victoria.

RRP: \$1585 (at time of writing)



A long cut on top of the slide and a short one either side help with weight distribution and appearance.



Cocked striker indicator.

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Squeaky clean

The Lyman 2500 Pro Magnum Turbo Tumbler is just the ticket, says Thomas Tabor



Everyone who handloads their own ammunition will eventually need a way to clean their cartridge cases. Nowadays there are lots of methods to choose from and at one time or another I've tried most, if not all of them. Decades ago when I first started handloading my own cartridges, I had little money to devote to the job of cleaning my brass and as a result wound up polishing each individual case with a substantial amount of elbow grease and a can of metal polish. Obviously I don't miss those days of drudgery and have since moved on to less strenuous ways of getting the job done.

Like most things in life, each case-cleaning process comes with its advantages and disadvantages so it's important to make your selection carefully. But I've often found the time-proven routine of doing things ends up being the most practical and in this case I believe dry tumbling cleaners fit that definition perfectly. These systems are simple to use and even though it may take a few hours to achieve your desired results, you'll usually be rewarded with pristine-looking cases. But possibly best of

all tumblers are not expensive to buy, nor is the cleaning media.

Lyman's 2500 Series Tumblers

After many decades of use my trusty tumbler finally stopped working. I attempted repairs but my efforts ultimately ended in failure. At the time I also owned one of the new sonic cleaning systems and while I appreciate the benefits associated with that method, I don't like the fact the cases have to be thoroughly dried before you can reload them.

So after shopping around for a replacement tumbler I eventually decided to try one of Lyman's new 2500 Series Pro Magnum Turbo models. The 2500 tumblers are large units with capacity to hold up to about 2.7kg of polishing media and potential for cleaning up to 315 .30-06 or 1000 rounds of .38 Special cases at a time.

I particularly liked that large capacity but Lyman also produces several smaller similarly constructed units in their Turbo Series which may be more practical for some shooters. In addition, they also sell what they refer to as their Auto-Flo

versions which have the capability to more easily and quickly separate cleaning media from cleaned cases. The 2500 Pro Magnum Turbo Tumbler is available in either a 230 or 115-volt model, is extremely easy to assemble and in just a few minutes I had mine put together and running without the need for tools.

Putting the Pro Magnum to work

After many cycles the cleaning media will eventually become so contaminated and blinded that its performance will begin to wane. Mine was quickly approaching that stage so, along with the purchase of my new tumbler, I added a container each of Lyman's Corncob Plus and Tufnut Plus (processed walnut) which both come from the factory already impregnated with a polishing agent. Having never tried Corncob media I thought by buying both products it would give me a chance to compare the two.

From previous experience I've found it sometimes takes about three hours of tumbling to do an acceptable job on most brass but when cases are particularly dirty

Once cleaning media has been added to the drum, cases can be put in and the lid replaced.



Thomas' .223 cases were clearly due for cleaning.

or heavily tarnished, or if your polishing media has lost some of its effectiveness, it can take a bit longer to achieve the best results. To get an idea of the capabilities of the two Lyman cleaning medias I ran a batch of about 120 .223 cases using Tufnut Plus and in a separate bunch about 135 .22-250 cases using Corncob Plus.

While both batches were clearly due for a cleaning they weren't excessively tarnished. The necks of the cases had all been recently annealed, which results in some substantial neck discolouration. After two hours of tumbling I found the cases were fairly well cleaned but decided to let them run an additional hour in order to return them to a pristine, almost new appearance.

My initial thought was the walnut-based Tufnut Plus media would likely do a better and quicker job - but I was wrong as both the Corncob Plus and Tufnut Plus produced similar results. Assuming the Corncob material may be slightly softer than the walnut, you could presume it would have a tendency to break down a little quicker. Overall, both media produced great results

and operation of the Lyman 2500 Pro Magnum Turbo Tumbler was flawless throughout its testing and use. In a nutshell I couldn't have asked for better all-round performance. More at lymanproducts.com

Polishing tips

- All tumbling operations are a bit noisy so, in order to keep peace in the family and protect your sanity, I recommend you isolate these operations in some secluded place away from unwelcoming ears.
- Despite the 2500 Series tumblers being designed for large capacity units, they can still be used for smaller batches, as I've done here with the .223 and .22-250 cases.
- Over time all media will begin to lose its cleaning effectiveness. When that happens you can sometimes restore vitality by adding some form of polish and Lyman produces a couple of products specifically for that. Their Turbo Brite Brass Polish and Turbo Charger Media Reactivator is a great way to get the most life out of your media. But eventually all media reaches a point when it's best to discard it and start afresh.
- Annealing cartridge case necks will



Lyman Tufnut Plus media gave these .223 cases a pristine look.

typically leave them discoloured and this black and blue colouration can be difficult to completely remove. However, after three hours in the Lyman 2500 Pro Magnum Turbo Tumbler most of that colouration was gone.

- There are essentially two trains of thought over when in the handloading process cases should be polished. Some people say brass should be de-primed and resized prior to tumbling and believe that by doing so the primer pockets will also be cleaned. But in reality that seldom happens as the knurls of media frequently become stuck in those areas and remains there throughout. In this instance the handloader must be diligent in clearing that blockage before the actual reloading practice can take place. On the other hand, if tumbling takes place prior to resizing it may result in less wear on your dies by removing any dirt, grit or other contamination before cases are further treated. ●



Hunting as cruelty? NO WAY!

This is the third in a series of articles in which David Hughes discusses the philosophy of hunting and the views of its detractors

One of the comments often directed at hunting is it's a cruel sport, critics seeming to think that taking the lives of animals means wilfully causing unnecessary suffering, which betrays a total lack of understanding of the hunting ethics followed by the overwhelming majority of our fraternity. In fact, the notion that hunting involves deliberately inflicting suffering is totally contrary to the intent of hunters. All ethical hunters aim for a one-shot kill, not only to avoid unnecessary suffering but for practical purposes including recovery of tender meat, unaffected by stress hormones. The risk of losing a keenly sought-after trophy is another practical consideration when seeking a quick and efficient harvest.

Now to examine the motivations of animal libbers in more detail. Their core belief is animals are like humans and share the same feelings and awareness and anything which causes suffering to a

human is interpreted as causing similar suffering in animals. Yet it's a scientific fact that animals and humans don't experience the world in the same way as the structure and capability of our respective brains are fundamentally different.

The prefrontal cortex is the part of our brain that deals with judgment, emotion and behaviour control, it's where our ability to perceive and assess ourselves arises, the ability to evaluate our own thoughts and feelings. The prefrontal cortex is vastly more developed in humans than in animals (although there is a spectrum of capability over the animal kingdom). If 'human-ness' arises from the prefrontal cortex, then lack of this structure logically means animals don't possess the mental attributes of what it is to be human. Only humans and a tiny handful of animals are consciously aware of their own existence.

Yet perversely we all tend to apply our human emotions and experiences to animals - a phenomenon called

anthropomorphism - and this tendency increases with the cuteness of the animal in our eyes. The phrase 'too cute to cull' is used to describe situations in which pest feral animals or population excess of native animals leads to public resistance to reduction of numbers.

Regardless of the recommendations of research reports by reputable ecologists, political decisions are made pandering to emotively driven anti-culling groups, the problems with culling feral horses in our Alpine regions and over-population of grey kangaroos in urban areas just two examples. Put another way, nice and simply, anyone should be able to tell when their emotions are getting the better of them and use reason to rein in impulsive actions. Emotional thinking has its place - music, art and literature depend on it - but it's best kept out of the sphere of practical management of resources.

Animal libbers claim killing or hurting animals is wrong because it's akin to doing

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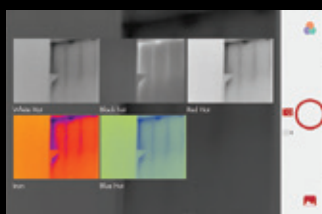
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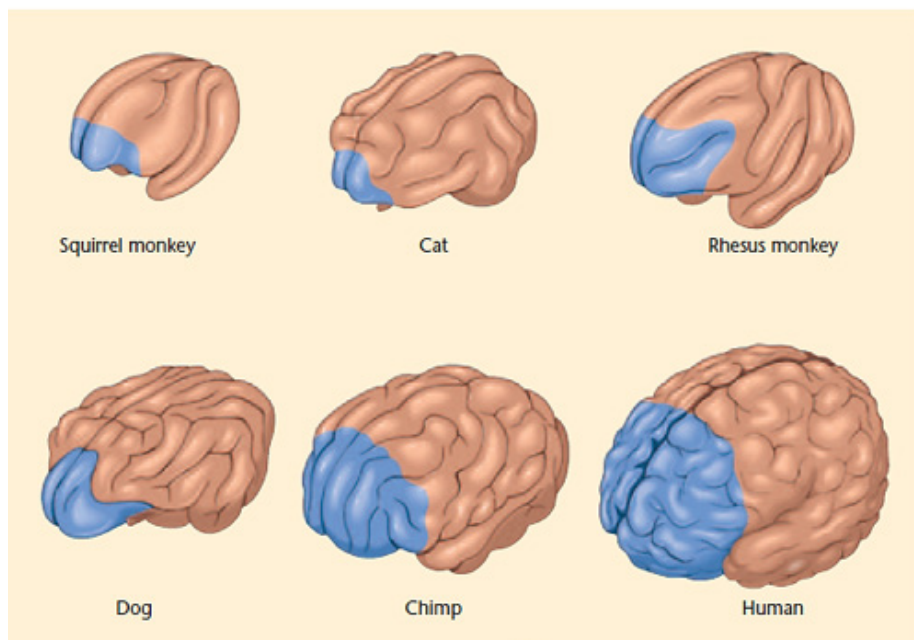
Hunting as cruelty? No way!

the same to humans. To highlight the parallel, animal rights protesters cover themselves in fake blood, lock themselves in cages or package themselves up to resemble supermarket meat trays. But jumping to the conclusion that killing a sentient creature is like killing a person is quite illogical and there are two problems in logic here. One is the idea that being sentient creates a particular class of creature which is deserving of special treatment and the other problem is it suggests humans have some sort of *prima facie* responsibility to any sentient creature to alleviate its pain or prevent its demise.

Sentient means having sensory consciousness or, put another way, having a capability to sense the surrounding world. A sensory response that might be called 'pain' is a natural phenomenon shared by all creatures with a nervous system. Jellyfish have a primitive nervous system and by this definition earthworms and insects are also sentient, along with fish and lizards. But considering the differences in brain structure and function, any suggestion that all these sentient creatures have the same consciousness of pain as humans is far-fetched.

The question then turns to whether humans have an inherent responsibility to any sentient creature to alleviate its pain. To put the discussion in context, reflect on nature's most fundamental law: animals can survive only by eating some other lifeforms. Observation of ecosystems leads to the inevitable conclusion that pain and suffering are part of the way nature operates.

To this extent suffering is normal and cannot therefore be inherently bad unless humans see themselves operating outside



the laws of nature. Sure, we can bend the laws of nature to suit ourselves but we cannot exist outside those laws. The ethics of suffering exist only in the minds of humans - there's no scientific law which says pain is intrinsically bad. The 18th century philosopher Immanuel Kant apparently formulated the idea that while pointless suffering should be avoided, inflicting discomfort or killing could be justified on the basis of the benefit to humans. According to this philosophy, using animals for food or other products justifies their use as resources.

Keep in mind that cats, dogs and livestock were bred specifically as resources for humans and their sub-species wouldn't exist except for the whim of humankind. We

The human brain is fundamentally different to that of animals. The prefrontal cortex is what makes us aware of who we are so humans and animals have a radically different experience of the world.

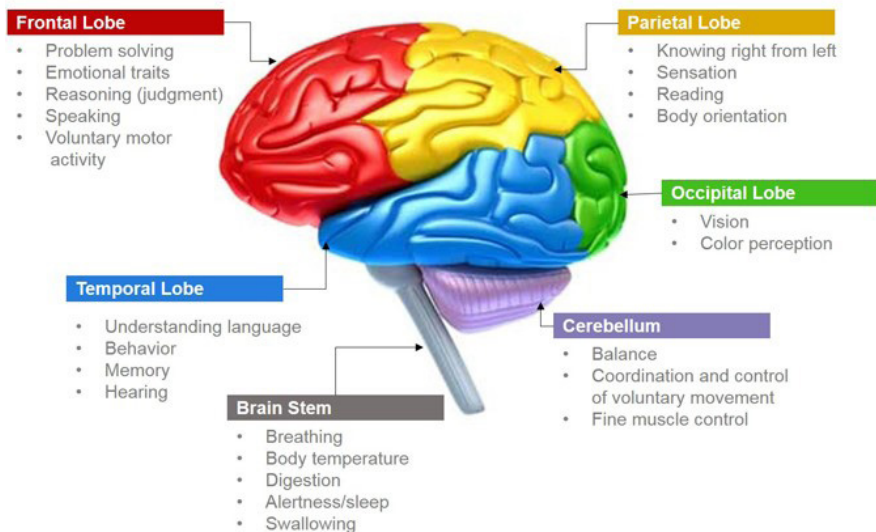
created them for the perceived benefits to us. They were formed to act in our service, whether by sacrificing their lives for food or by acting as our companions.

Not so long ago the only source of insulin for diabetics was by extracting it from the pancreas of pigs, dentistry routinely uses bovine bone for jawbone grafts, we use rats, dogs and primates during clinical development of new drug products. Only through such testing (all of which must be approved by independent ethics committees) can the efficacy and safety of new drugs in humans be predicted.

Presumably animal libbers want to enjoy the benefits of safe and effective drugs? Well there's a consequence. No amount of wishful thinking about other types of *in vitro* tests which might substitute for a complex living organism can make the need for animal testing go away. In all these cases the balancing act is weighing the benefit to humans versus the actual or potential harm to the animals involved.

Let's not forget we also apply the same cost versus benefit equation to our fellow humans. We send young people off to war to kill other humans when there's a perceived justification, we lock people up and inflict pain (hopefully limited to the mental variety

The human brain has been extensively mapped. The prefrontal cortex houses the exclusively human powers of self-awareness, judgment and control and creative thought.





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Hunting as cruelty? No way!

in our Australian prisons) as punishment. Our legal system decides the benefit to society outweighs the right to freedom by the offender.

Even today there are plenty of countries which retain physical punishments as part of the cost versus benefit. Are those jurisdictions wrong or do they simply work to a different code? Regardless, the point of the discussion is to highlight the subjectivity of opinions regarding inflicting pain and death on other creatures. This is not a binary situation - shades of grey prevail.

To further illustrate the subjective element to what is 'cruelty', we see it depends on culture and especially on the affluence of a culture. Moral standards depend on the particular cultural group as demonstrated by this excerpt from Peter Capstick's *The Last Ivory Hunter*, a biographical yarn recounting the life and times of an African hunter called Wally Johnson.

Wally relates the following in relation to his native workers: *I remember once coming*

around a bend in the road, near camp, and seeing a dead dog in the road. It had obviously been hit by a vehicle. The six or seven men I had with me broke up into uncontrollable laughter, so I asked them what was funny. "We're laughing about the dead dog, Baas. Did you never see anything funnier in your life." Now I don't think the bush African is purposefully more cruel than anybody else but he seems to be . . . unthinking about somebody's pain, never mind the suffering of animals. An animal had to have a function - food, a labor tool . . . the idea of animals serving as objects of affection and companionship is alien.

Human consciousness in survival mode is so focused on securing the basic necessities of life that esoteric considerations such as that of the quality of life of animals become irrelevant. The tendency to apply human emotions and principles to animals not only creates unreasonable prejudice against hunters but is also a major impediment to practical conservation of wild animals.



There's no logical basis for endowing human attributes to domestic animals. These animals are the product of human intervention in nature and bred for a singular purpose in the service of humans.



This one-shot kill meant instant death as well as tender venison - no cruelty whatsoever.

Conservation is underpinned by the ecological principle that the life of any particular individual is insignificant but the survival of the species is paramount.

What this means in practice is it's okay to harvest the surplus population created by nature because it doesn't impact the long-term survival of the species. This principle is used routinely in the sustainable management of fisheries, wildfowl, kangaroos and African plains game like kudu and elands. Indeed, African game ranching has been responsible for major increases in native species which otherwise would have been doomed to extinction through poaching by locals for bush meat.

It's understandable that many city-bred folk, far removed from the realities of nature, may be uncomfortable with killing and eating other creatures. It's also understandable that a child's emotional attachment to family pets can be extrapolated later in life to other beasts and for these reasons hunters must be well versed in the arguments supporting their recreation. Given that urban folk vastly outnumber the hunting fraternity, the need for each and every one of us to convincingly argue our case is greater than ever before. Our very freedoms depend on it.

• Readers may also refer to the first two articles in this series which appeared in the September 2021 and February 2022 issues of *Australian Shooter*. ●

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The Du Ha Tote works on a rail system on your ute.

Hit the road with peace of mind

Matthew Bolzon

On receiving the Du Ha Tote portable all-purpose storage device for review, I was immediately impressed by its size and strength along with its low weight and the fact it's fitted with wheels, which makes it easy to handle either on the ground or the tray of my ute.

The Du Ha Tote comes complete with all attachments, trays and accessories including the rollout unit and all installation instructions which make it quick and easy to assemble the box-and-rail system. The box itself is of sturdy plastic construction and large enough to store three or four longarms along with numerous other items like fishing rods, clothes and tools (check your state legislation for firearm and ammunition storage).

There are three tough spring-loaded steel carry handles - one on top and one either side - which sit flush with the box as well as three locking clasps with provision for padlocks. The top storage trays sit neatly on top of the inside of the box and feature easy-to-install dividers to keep tools and components separate and easy to access.

The internal firearms holders and dividers are also a cinch to install and will hold four rifles or shotguns horizontally and safely. Importantly these holders are padded to protect gun stocks and prevent movement, a further plus point being Velcro straps which help secure firearms and other items to the holders, though my advice would be to add some padding in the form of old rags or blankets to avoid movement on rough terrain. My disassembled fishing rod also fitted nicely as I headed up the River Murray to clean up some carp I'd spotted on my previous trip.

Among the things I like are properly padded holders for firearms and useful top trays for tools and accessories; sturdy clasps which are lockable and turn the Du



Rifles can be stored with scopes attached.



The slide and rail system makes it easy to operate even when heavy.

Four longarms can be securely stored.

Ha Tote into a secure storage box; solid wheels help it slide on to your ute tray and make it easy to move around the garage or camp site; rubber seal to protect the contents in dusty or wet conditions.

The only disadvantages are it's not a permitted firearms safe-box for long-term storage (must still be locked inside a vehicle when not in transit) and it's not insulated so you can't turn the Du Ha Tote into a makeshift esky.

The roll-out system is easily installed to a ute or storage drawers with either self-tapping screws or bolts if easy removal is

preferred. With this installed the Du Ha is both secured to the tray, pulls out for easy access and also assists in retrieving the box from the tray even when loaded and heavy.

All up I appreciated the convenience of having a lightweight and secure firearms storage box I can use for travelling to, from and around my hunting sites while still having enough room to store clothes, tools and snacks. And I can also use it as a tool box or lockable travel storage when not transporting firearms. The Du Ha Tote is distributed in Australia by Upfitter. More at upfitter.com.au ●

Serving three armies in two World Wars

Ivo Dimitrov



I think it would be difficult to find a veteran service rifle with more history than this example of an imperial Russian M91 Mosin-Nagant built in 1903 by the Izhevsk Arsenal. The rifle went on to serve the Russian Tsarist Army in World War One and was captured, refurbished and reissued by the Austro-Hungarian Army in that war then subsequently sold to Finland in the inter-war period where it was revamped once more and used by the Finnish Army during World War Two.

The French Army was the first to adopt a smokeless powder rifle cartridge in the form of the 8mm Lebel in 1886, followed two years later by Germany which adopted the 8x57mm smokeless cartridge. In 1890 the Austro-Hungarian Army introduced the 8x50mmR Mannlicher smokeless round and a year later Russia followed suit with the introduction of the 7.62x54R smokeless round for their newly-adopted Mosin M91

rifle, designed by Captain Sergei Ivanovich Mosin, which replaced the single-shot Berdan rifles in use by the Tsarist Army.

The Russian round was created by using the Austro-Hungarian 8x50R case and having it necked down to the British .303" or 7.62mm diameter, the British having introduced their .303 round at the same time. So the same projectiles can be used for reloading both 303 British and 7.62x54R, while 7.62x54R cases can be used to reload for 8x50R Mannlicher. In Russia the rifle is referred to as the three-line M91, a line being 1/10 of an inch (.30cal 7.62mm) and the 7.62x54R has the distinction of being the longest-serving military rifle cartridge in continuous use, being favoured by the Russian and Soviet Army from 1891 until the present.

Like the Gewehr 98, the 1891 Mosin uses two front-locking lugs to fasten-up the action, though the Mosin's lugs lock in the horizontal position while the Mauser locks

vertically (the Mosin bolt body is multi-piece whereas the Mauser is one-piece). The Mosin uses interchangeable bolt heads like the Lee-Enfield and unlike the Mauser which has a controlled feed bolt head in which the cartridge base snaps up under the fixed extractor as the cartridge is fed from the magazine, the Mosin has a push feed recessed bolt head in which the spring-loaded extractor snaps over the cartridge base as the bolt is finally closed, similar to the Gewehr 1888 and M91 Carcano. Like the Mauser, the Mosin uses a blade ejector



Crossed out old Russian Arshin graduations.

Tula Arsenal marking and 1903 as well as AZF Austrian refurb mark.



New Finnish markings (which correspond to old Arshin graduations).

Serving three armies in two World Wars

mounted in the receiver and the Mosin bolt is removed by simply pulling it fully to the rear of the receiver and squeezing the trigger, while the Mauser has a bolt stop lever separate from the trigger.

Production of the Model 1891 began in 1892 at the ordnance factories of Tula Arsenal, Izhevsk Arsenal and at Sestroryetsk Arsenal with an order for an additional 500,000 rifles placed with the French arms factory Manufacture Nationale d'Armes de Châtellerauld. During World War One, starting from 1915 both Remington and Westinghouse manufactured M91s for the Tsarist Army as well.

The M91 was Russia's service rifle during World War One and large quantities of M91s were captured by both the German and Austro-Hungarian troops who reissued them to their own ranks. The rifle in question here bears the stamp 'AZF' on the receiver which stands for Artillerie Zeug Fabrik (Artillery Workshop in Vienna) where the rifle went through inspection and possible rework in Austria during World War One. Some of the captured M91 Mosins were rebarrelled for 8x50R Mannlicher since that was the parent case for 7.62x54 and the work didn't require modification of the bolt.

Finland, for most of its history, was part of Sweden until in 1809 it was annexed by Russia as a result of the Russo-Swedish Wars and became a semi-autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire. On gaining full independence in 1917,



Two-piece stock.

Finland didn't have large financial resources to spend on its military, so opted to arm its troops with 100,000 Imperial M91 Mosins they inherited from Russia. In the 1920s Finland went on to secure an additional 100,000-plus M91s from various European countries, mainly former Central Powers (Germany, Austria and Bulgaria) who captured large quantities of them during the war.

This rifle bears the boxed SA (Suomen Armeija Finnish Army) property stamp on the barrel. Finland then embarked on a large program to refurbish and bring up



Finnish Army SA property mark.



New Finnish stepped front sight.

to spec these rifles, a lot of which were in fairly poor condition, and went on to develop its own additional five superb models based on the Mosin action. However, the M91s remained in Finnish service until the end of World War Two and saw use against their former Russian owners in both the Winter and Continuation Wars from 1939-44.

The most obvious Finnish refurbishment is the replacement the two-piece finger joint spliced stock, a hallmark of all Finnish rifles. The two-piece stock allows more efficient use of wood blanks as well as being resistant to warping in low temperatures.

The Finns crossed out the Russian Arshin (about 690mm) graduations on the rear sight and renumbered it while the front sight blade was replaced with an improved stepped front sight which is better for lowlight conditions. Finally, the muzzle was counter-bored and the chamber reamed to accommodate the Finnish D46 and D166 projectiles, thus putting the D stamp on the barrel. ●



Kilo 1400 BDX 6x20 laser rangefinder and Sierra 3 BDX 4.5-14x50 riflescope as reviewed.

Double act

Sig Sauer on a winner with rangefinder and scope combo, says Con Kapralos

Sig Sauer's Ballistic Data Xchange (BDX) concept in its electro-optics bracket of laser rangefinders and riflescopes has revolutionised the way outdoor sportsmen and women use these two pieces of essential equipment. While the idea of programming ballistic data isn't new in optics such as riflescopes, binoculars and laser rangefinders, this has until recently relied on micro-data storage cards being loaded with ballistic info. These cards are then inserted into the optic to make the data available for ballistic compensation when assessing shooting opportunities.

This changed quite comprehensively with the arrival of Bluetooth connectivity technology which makes it possible for programming data to be transferred between android devices (smartphones, tablets) to the optics devices themselves - no need to save data on storage cards as everything is now done at the push of a button.

The Sig Sauer BDX stable encompasses several models of the Kilo laser rangefinder

(LRF) as well as Sierra 3 riflescopes. Sig Sauer's patent-pending BDX technology uses low-energy Bluetooth with embedded Applied Ballistics Ultralight and the free BDX app to sync custom gun profiles and environmental conditions to the Kilo rangefinder and pair the Kilo unit to any BDX-enabled riflescope for shots out to 800 yards. Call that hi-tech? Call it Sig Sauer brilliance!

The Kilo LRFs and Sierra 3 scopes can also be used normally without ballistic holdover data calculations being generated - it's up to the user if they need to access ballistic holdover calculations or use the optics the good-old fashioned way. In reality the technology is at your fingertips and is a breeze to set up. Outdoor Sporting Agencies, Sig Sauer distributor in Australia, sent *Australian Shooter* two BDX optics for review - the Kilo 1400 BDX 6x20mm laser rangefinder and a Sierra 3 BDX riflescope in 4.5-14x50.

Kilo 1400 BDX 6x20 LRF

This rangefinder in 6x20 specification is

a compact unit measuring 76mm x 95mm x 35mm and comes supplied with a single CR2 battery, premium padded ballistic nylon case, lanyard and quick-start guide. The item comprises two external buttons 'power/range' atop the unit and 'mode' on the left. The only other external feature is the eyecup with diopter focus adjustment with all function and programming operations done by 'power/range' and 'mode'.

The quick-start guide is a good way in but the Sig Sauer website carries an excellent owner's manual which can be downloaded and printed off for ease of use when setting up. For this review the rangefinder was programmed for the .308 Winchester calibre, specifically the Hornady Superformance load with 150-grain SST bullets.

The list of calibres and factory loads is comprehensive with handloaders also able to create custom ballistic curves with ease using the Sig BDX app on a tablet or smartphone. The user can either choose the Kilo 1400 BDX laser rangefinder with full complement of functions associated with

Double act

the BDX application or as a rangefinder without any ballistic data functionality.

Sierra 3 BDX 4.5-14x50 riflescope

The appearance and build-quality are immediately evident. Formed around a 30mm main-tube it's made from a single piece of aircraft-grade aluminium which is standard these days. The scope measures 325mm and weighs 700g with a lovely matte black finish on all surfaces and at the centre of the body the turret housing contains dials for elevation, windage, parallax and illumination. The capped elevation and windage turrets are excellent with aluminium caps covering the dials themselves and removing these caps exposes the dials which are beautifully crafted hunter-style with one click equalling 0.25 MOA adjustment, clicks audible and easy to feel.

Left of the elevation turret is the combined parallax and illumination cluster which is two independent dials, the parallax dial permitting adjustment and focusing of the reticle from 50m to infinity with distances clearly marked up to 500m. The 10-setting illumination dial sits next to the parallax dial and serves as the 'on/off' switch for the BDX and electronic componentry as well as housing two CR2032 batteries.

Moving to the ocular housing, it comprises the main body with the power magnification ring at the front. This is made entirely from aluminium and is easy to grip and move through the 4.5x-14x range thanks to a series of ridges around the circumference of the ring. Internally is where the action is and the Sierra 3 BDX 4.5-14x50 is certainly to the fore when it comes to electro-optics design. The BDX feature aside, the review scope had superb glass with crystal clear images, clarity and contrast out to any practical hunting distance - remember this is a hunting optic, not a long-range one.

The reticle with its digital focal plane combines the second focal plane reticle with an illuminated OLED ballistic holdover dot which is part of the BDX application in tandem with the Kilo BDX laser rangefinders. Added to this the LevelPlex indicators, which show if the scope is at a cant or dead-level, is a neat feature as is the Motac motion activated illumination which helps conserve battery life if the rifle or scope is not moved for a period by temporarily turning off the power.

The BDX application is why the buyer opts for this range. For it to function correctly it needs to be paired with the Kilo BDX laser rangefinder through the Sig Sauer BDX app loaded on to an android

Features

Kilo 1400 BDX 6x20 laser rangefinder

6x20mm monocular with Spectracoat anti-reflection coatings for superior light transmission and optical clarity.

Revolutionary Lightwave DSP Technology for fastest and longest distance rangefinder engine.

HyperScan provides four range updates per second in scan mode while RangeLock reports the last range result when ranging distant targets.

Features line of sight or angle modified range. Units in yards or metres to a tenth yard/metre resolution.

High transmittance LCD display for superior low-light performance.

Compact, lightweight polymer housing with eyecup and diopter adjustment.

Simplified user interface with range and mode buttons only.

Rangefinder configuration can now be done via the free Sig BDX app.

Displays windage and elevation within the Kilo app for every target scanned.

Maximum range - reflective targets up to 1550m, animate targets up to 685m.

Sierra 3 BDX 4.5-14x50 riflescope

Motac Motion Activated Illumination.

Digital Focal Plane, combining Second Focal Plane stadias with an OLED illuminated ballistic holdover dot that automatically scales with zoom to subtend on target at any magnification level.

Spectracoat ultra-wide broadband, anti-reflection lens coatings.

Kinethic energy transfer indicates when energy on target drops below a threshold that can be set by the hunter using the Sig BDX app.

LevelPlex digital anti-cant system.

Covered by Sig Sauer's infinite guarantee and electronics limited warranty.



The 'power/range' button is easy to reach with the index finger, the eyecup with adjustable dioptre ring also evident.



Front of the rangefinder with laser aperture (centre).

device with Bluetooth capability. As was the case with the Kilo 1400 BDX with the ballistic profiles required (in our case the .308 Winchester factory Hornady load) the Sierra 3 BDX riflescope is paired to the rangefinder. This in effect relays holdover information generated in the rangefinder to the riflescope and gives a 'holdover' on the OLED reticle stadia below the illuminated centre-dot. It may sound daunting but, once

again, Sig Sauer come to the rescue with an excellent owner's manual which outlines all features and operation of the Sierra 3 riflescope and BDX capability.

At the range

Testing the Kilo 1400 BDX laser rangefinder and Sierra 3 BDX riflescope was carried out in tandem on a private property. The scope was initially fitted to the

new Howa M1500 H-S Precision SHB rifle in .308 Winchester and range tested, being sighted in to a zero point-of-impact (POI) at 100m. All data in this regard - POI and ammunition used - was already programmed.

Targets were set up (balloons 30cm in diameter) at 50m apart out to 500m and once the riflescope was turned on, they were sorted one at a time with the Kilo 1400 BDX. The holdover point would immediately be indicated on the reticle OLED display and the shot taken. In all but two cases the balloons were popped, the exceptions being user error in pulling the shot at longer distances. The pairing of rangefinder to riflescope worked a treat and would make a perfect combination for a hunter who wants to embrace technology and take the guesswork out of holding over a target at extended ranges.

Overview

I'm quite sure in the years ahead we'll see more and more sport optics such as laser rangefinders (both monocular and binocular) and riflescopes embrace ballistic data electronics and software packages to assist in achieving correct hold-over for a target at any range they wish to address.

The Sig Sauer Kilo BDX and Sierra 3

Ocular on the Sierra 3 BDX with adjustable dioptre ring and aluminium power magnification ring.

BDX series of laser rangefinders and riflescopes embrace such technologies and, when paired together, work brilliantly. The Kilo BDX laser rangefinder is offered in five different models and the Sierra 3 BDX riflescope in three. They're also available in three BDX Combo kits which consist of a Kilo BDX laser rangefinder and Sierra 3 BDX riflescope. The review laser rangefinder retails for around \$518 and riflescope for \$1310. More at osaaustralia.com.au ●



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Misfires, malfunctions and mishaps

There can be a whole host of reasons for ammunition failures, says Senior Correspondent Rod Pascoe

Every now and then a shooter will experience a malfunction which could be something as simple as the round not going off (a misfire), a fired case becoming jammed or something more unfortunate like a burst case or, even worse, a burst barrel. More often than not we'd put this down to a failure of the ammunition but we need to look at the firearm as well as the ammunition to determine what's at fault.

Factory-produced ammunition goes through many control measures to ensure quality and consistency, not just in the individual components but the loading process and equipment used to produce the finished round. Having said that there's always an exception to the rule and just occasionally there will be failures of factory ammunition. In most cases the price of ammunition can be a guide to the level of quality control on the production line - are samples tested

once every 100 rounds or once every 100,000?

In the following series of photographs, malfunctions of firearm and/or ammunition are depicted with some discussion about probable cause and remedy. I say probable because in some cases there could be other factors at play. Apart from the frustration of missing the intended target and whether home or factory loaded, the safety aspect of dealing with ammunition must be respected.

1 A problem which can lead to a complete failure is commonly seen in rimmed cases such as .30/30 Winchester and .303 British where the brass case stretches in the chamber after repeated reloading and firing, something which will eventually lead to the head separating just in front of the reinforced web at



the base of the case. Use a home-made tool fashioned from the bent and sharpened end of a paper clip to 'feel' inside the case for the roughened section that's begun to stretch. In this example a fine bright line on the outside of the case also indicates the beginning of a potential separation.

2 Another example of case failure is in this .38 Special round where it has split in half at the point level with the base of the 148gr wadcutter projectile it fired and again, constant case stretching at the same point has led to this situation. In most instances of case separation the front section of the cartridge case will remain stuck in the chamber.



3 Slam-fires are more likely to be a firearm problem - or even a user problem - depending on the situation. In this example the firing pin has struck the primer and discharged the round before the cartridge was fully in the chamber and before the slide and barrel were fully locked into battery. In this instance the brass has ruptured around the head of the cartridge and some interesting shapes have formed under the heat and pressure on firing.



3



4



5



4

A possible cause may be the bullet was seated too long or there was a build-up of lead in the throat preventing the round from being fully supported in the chamber. A similar situation occurred with this .22 LR round where it discharged with the action partially closed. In both these cases, attention to cleaning could be the solution.

5

The owner of this revolver experienced a problem when the cylinder wouldn't rotate after firing a couple of rounds. If projectiles aren't crimped into place sufficiently to overcome the powerful inertia generated when the revolver is fired, it causes the bullets to move forward from the case and protrude from the neighbouring chambers. I've seen the same thing in rifle cartridges where the round has 'grown' in the magazine under inertia, causing feeding hang-ups.

6

In another reloading oversight, the primer in this .30/30 case hasn't been seated all the way in. Again this causes particular problems in revolvers when the cylinder fails to rotate as the exposed primer becomes caught up on the recoil plate. In a bolt or lever-action rifle the shooter may not be aware of this situation and, while not ideal, the primer becomes seated into place when the bolt is closed.

7

But whether home or factory-loaded, the ammunition may not be the right match for the firearm. A fairly common malfunction which is neither just the fault of the ammo or the firearm is where a case becomes stuck in the ejection port of a pistol as it cycles after firing. The slide doesn't retract fully to cleanly eject the case and consequently it won't be able

to pick up a new round from the magazine either.

This wasn't just a one-off light load that wasn't able to overcome the power of the recoil spring, it was part of an experiment by the shooter to find a reduced load for a match that didn't require a minimum power factor. Both recoil spring and load should be balanced, meaning the spring weight should be reduced to compensate for the lighter load. Aftermarket recoil springs are available for most brands of pistols for such purposes.

8

Earlier I said commercially produced factory ammo is usually in good condition and not prone to malfunctioning as it conforms to specifications laid down by the various regulatory bodies which standardise ammunition dimensions and performance. But the same thing can't

6



7



8



Misfires, malfunctions and mishaps

be said for some individual factory-made components sold to handloaders. Here's a rare example of a faulty component which missed quality control inspection - the flash hole hasn't been punched through and discharging a primer in the confines of the primer pocket may have serious consequences for the shooter. Fortunately there was only one example in a bag of 100.

9 There are more situations where malfunctions have resulted from faulty ammunition and a common one is having too much or not enough powder in the cartridge. It looks like a very hot load has melted the primer to the point it has flowed back between the case head and the breech face. A consequence of not enough powder may result in a bullet becoming stuck part way up the barrel and if another

full load is fired behind it the barrel could split, a potentially serious situation. Check each case for the presence of powder before seating the bullet, at the same time being aware of double loads.

10 Cases can become deformed when reloading dies aren't set up correctly. Here, the seating die tries to push the bullet further into the case mouth after the neck has been tightly crimped to the bullet, crushing the case. Consider using one die to seat the projectile to the correct depth then crimp the case mouth in a separate operation.

11 In my experience many ammunition failures have been the result of poor reloading practices. Using brass of known origin, inspecting and cleaning

brass, tracking the number of firings/reloads, being consistent with type and weight of projectile and powder charges and keeping loading equipment clean and well maintained will make for more reliable and consistent loads.

Measuring, recording and photographing results of load development sessions is a good record-keeping practice. Make up a dummy round without primer and powder for each type of ammunition you load as this is a useful reference for setting up your press and checking cartridge overall length. Reloading does require concentration and attention to detail and while we've only covered a handful of examples, I hope shooters new to this aspect of the shooting sports can take note of some simple techniques to make their reloading and shooting experience more enjoyable. ●



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STEADY as she goes

Chris Redlich road tests the latest Javelin bipods and accessories from Spartan Precision

A common topic repeated many times is the importance of maintaining a steady rest. Whether target shooting or hunting, the method of rest may invariably differ but the same principle of support applies to both. By definition a rifle bipod is a basic design of using two supporting legs, relieving the shooter of all forward weight from the firearm and enabling a steady rest.

While many have had a go at modifying the original concept, Spartan Precision Equipment can arguably lay claim to perfecting it. I accepted an invite to review a collection of lightweight hunting bipods including the Javelin Pro-Hunt Tac (long), Pro-Hunt (standard), Javelin Lite, Sucker

Mount, 80cm and 160cm Super Pro Leg Extensions from distributor Raytrade Australia.

Spartan Precision Equipment is a British firm based in Sussex and are dedicated to producing high-quality hunting accessories, including bipods, and have partnered with some of the world's finest brands in the shooting industry such as Blaser, Sauer and First Lite.

I'm no bipod novice and have used the same spring-loaded model for more than 25 years. I confess to having mixed feelings when it comes to lugging sticks and accessories on a hunt, including bipods, and limit their use to controlled environments only. I often choose to leave mine behind, relying

on my pack or surrounding foliage instead, yet Spartan Precision's array of supports has challenged my thinking and prejudices.

Javelin bipods differ somewhat to my old one and apart from having two legs the similarities appear to end there. The advertising blurb boldly states 'Lightweight, Modular and Functional' so I thought the best way to approach the review was by using these categories and explaining each to provide the hunter/shooter with more detail.

Lightweight

Unlike the standard all-aluminium and steel construction of other makes, carbon fibre is a big contributor to Javelin bipods,



The Javelin Pro Hunt Tac (long) as supplied with assorted mounts, spacers and fasteners.

Steady as she goes

making them super strong while dramatically reducing weight. Carbon fibre is made by interweaving micro-thin yet strong crystalline filaments of carbon, used to replace some metal components due to its low weight-to-strength ratio, high tensile stiffness and tolerance to extreme weather conditions and temperatures.

These capabilities have seen the dramatic rise of carbon fibre use in conjunction with aluminium components in the aircraft industry and likewise, Spartan Precision Equipment have combined the two. The outer bipod legs are of carbon fibre wrap and all other main metallic constituents made from CNC-machined, hard anodised aluminium. The only steel parts are the fasteners, including screws and retaining pins of negligible size and weight. Weighing just two-thirds that of my old bipod, Javelin's lightweight and compact design enables them to be conveniently carried in a pants pocket or on the belt.

Modular

Modular by my own definition is 'something which can be added to or deducted conveniently in order to carry out a task with minimal fuss'. Reinforcing the modular credentials of Javelin bipods is their unique attachment style and fitment design and their patented Magnetic Attachment System is pivotal. Strong and reliable, this system uses rare neodymium earth magnets to attach the bipod to the rifle in seconds, enabling the shooter to follow live targets and stay level on uneven surfaces. The magnet is positioned to a swivelling, centre male spigot atop the bipod which mates with a supplied female steel receiver mount attached separately to the stock fore-end.

Supplied with each Javelin bipod are multiple screws of differing lengths with thread options for fastening to many rifles of varying stock designs and shapes. After removing the front sling stud on the stock fore-end, simply screw the supplied female receiver in its place. Also provided are three rubber spacers of alternate profile and thickness for sandwiching between the female receiver and stock (a sling stud attachment is integral to the new female receiver). Rounding out the modular category is the ability to interchange different models of Javelin bipods and rests with easy attachment to the female receiver and the availability of optional carbon fibre leg extensions.

Functional

Most importantly, the ability of any reliable hunting aid can be measured by its



The Javelin Lite Bipod used effectively at the range.

functionality and I was impressed the moment I fitted the first of a few supplied Javelin bipods, a positive snap of the magnetic spigot to female receiver instilling confidence of a robust fit. Secondly, the bipod leg is spread and snapped securely by a magnet and retained with a quick release locking clip, height of the legs rapidly adjusted by sliding the carbon fibre outer legs to the desired length.

Javelin Pro-Hunt Tac (long) can slide to length and is locked via a ratchet-type method on the inner leg and freed again by pressing the quick-release locking clip on the outer legs. The Pro-Hunt (standard) differs by using turn collars of the outer legs to lock and release from the inner legs, both methods of adjustment quick and a breeze to manage.

The Javelin Lite is the baby of the three supplied bipods and has non-adjustable legs though it shares the same pivot adjustment as its big brothers. Javelin bipods are designed to enable cant adjustment on uneven surfaces by way of pivoting the centre spigot within the leg housing and the pivot feature can be secured to a desired cant by the spring-loaded locking lever on the housing. By comparison, the lock release lever is similar to those of QD scope rings. The versatility of being able to rapidly adjust the bipods' length for a level sight picture on uneven ground reinforces Spartan Precision Equipment's claim of 'Functional'.

Rounding off the features of the bipod legs are the rubber bases which grip wet or hard surfaces and the rubber caps can be removed in seconds to reveal sharp, concave-tipped spikes for positive grip on soft ground in slippery conditions. Lightweight, Modular, Functional has been extended to other products which I had the pleasure of testing including their Sucker Mount, Super Pro-Leg 80cm and 160cm.



The female receiver fastened with sling attached.



The male spigot housing the laterally adjustable and powerful Neodymium magnet pivotal to the Javelin Bipod design.

Sucker Mount

Rather basic by design the Sucker Mount is simply one of the best rests for vehicle mounting I've come across. Have you ever taken a hasty shot from across your car bonnet and wished you had a better support as you stare forlornly at the fleeing mob of pigs in a cloud of dust? The rubber

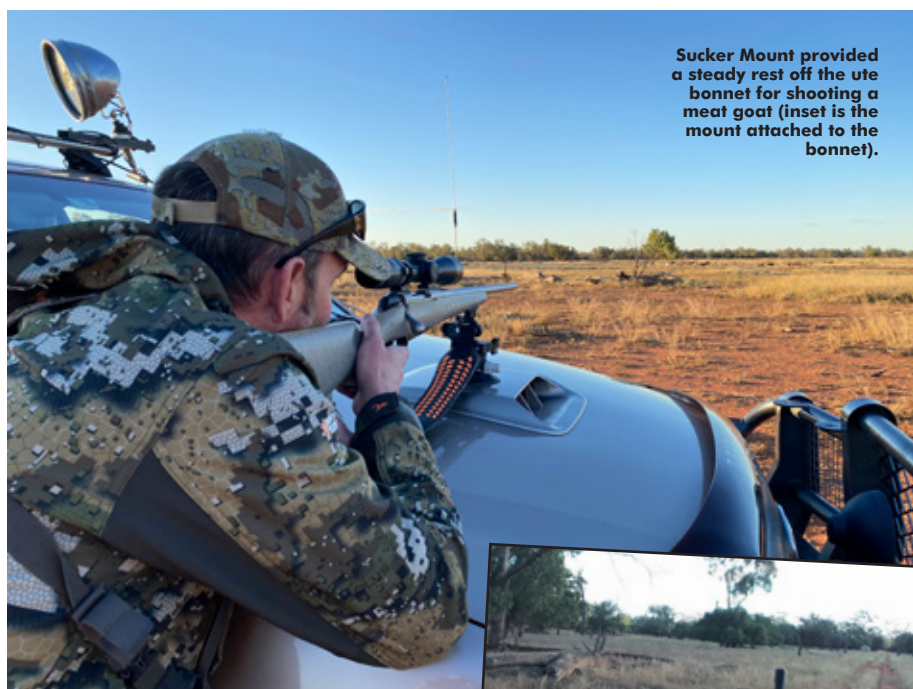
base attaches to a smooth surface by way of pumping the suction button. Extremely strong, this method is similar to a glazier's suction mount for the safe carriage of glass.

A series of lockable pivot points allow the geometry of the mount to be altered to suit varying angles and heights. The patented magnetic spigot fastens the shooter's rifle rapidly to the fitted female receiver (the same used for Javelin bipods), this system enabling fast and accurate shot placement on ferals at extended ranges when the need arises.

While field testing on a property, I adhered the Sucker Mount to my ute bonnet and as it turned out it came in handy for my hunting buddy, Josh, to cleanly take a long-range shot at a meat goat. Earlier that afternoon while hunting on foot he'd been using the bipod attachment and this scenario reinforces the absolute practicality and flexible design of the spigot system and the speed at which the options can be used.

Super Pro Leg Extensions

Included in the swag of gear supplied were two pairs of Bipod Leg Extensions, one measuring 80cm and the other 160cm (extended), the 80cm suitable for sitting and 160cm for standing. I must disclose that while I use bipods occasionally, I'm not a fan of shooting sticks or setting up scaffold (as I like to call it) prior to taking a trophy shot but the Super Pro Leg Extensions are a welcome addition which improve versatility of the bipods when the shooter has time to spare prior to the shot.



Sucker Mount provided a steady rest off the ute bonnet for shooting a meat goat (inset is the mount attached to the bonnet).

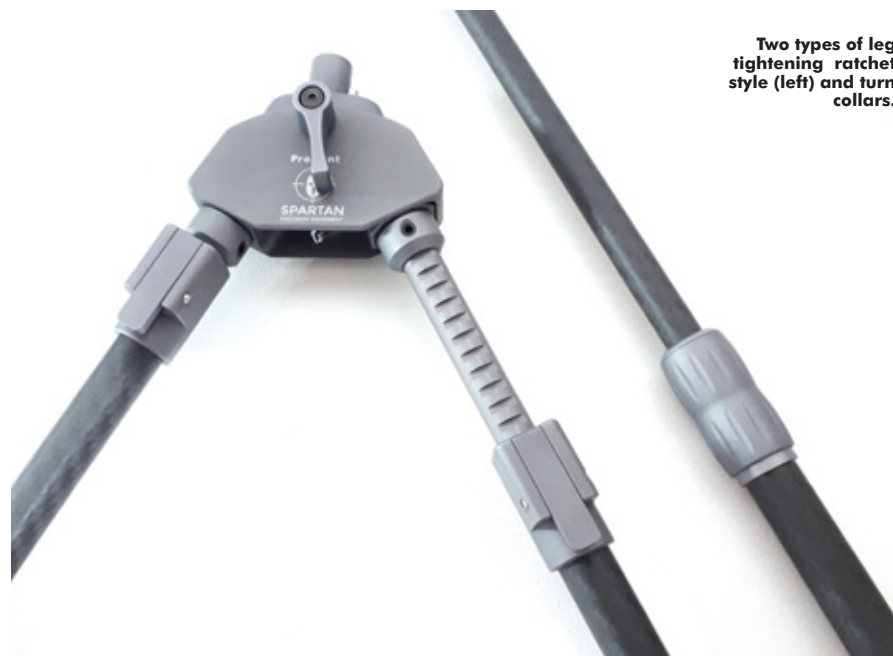
Made from the same carbon fibre design as the bipod legs, it reinforces the Lightweight credentials and can be packed discretely in a mountain hunter's day pack. The leg extensions share the same thread as the standard bipod legs and retro fit to the female thread in place of the original. A simple twist of the telescopic carbon fibre leg enables the legs to be extended and fastened to length. While field testing I took advantage of both from the kneeling and standing positions and found the design



to be ultra-steady, quashing any bias I had previously with this kind of arrangement.

Conclusion

The Javelin bipods and attachments proved practical in various scenarios and are a credit to Spartan Precision Equipment engineers who've refined a decades-old concept for the modern hunter. Lightweight carbon fibre kit isn't cheap but Javelin bipods are competitively and realistically priced for such quality, meticulous shooting aids. Back-up is via a standard one-year warranty (two-year with warranty card registration). More at raytrade.com.au or javelinbipod.com ●



Two types of leg tightening: ratchet style (left) and turn collars.

Spartan Precision Equipment

Javelin Pro-Hunt Tac (long) bipod: \$575
Javelin Pro-Hunt (standard) bipod: \$575
Javelin Lite bipod: \$225
Sucker Mount: \$195
Super Pro Leg (80cm): \$150
Super Pro Leg (160cm): \$220

Handgun regulation

an enduringly tangled web

John Maxwell

Two decades ago the Coalition Federal Government's plans to control handgun imports ran into a major problem as, before they'd even been in place for a year, they risked driving small firearms dealers out of business. And with a federal election looming and polls consistently indicating the Coalition was facing defeat, the last thing the government needed was more enemies.

Cabinet documents from 2001 - released in January by the National Archives of Australia under the 20-year rule - show in considerable detail that the problem came about because the government had taken action without consulting those directly impacted. The Coalition Government under John Howard had no great record of listening to the gun community, as demonstrated when it implemented the National Firearms Agreement following the 1996 Port Arthur tragedy.

Five years on, shooter dissatisfaction remained and had manifested in support for minor parties, especially One Nation, with

the prospect that more votes going their way in states such as Queensland could see the Coalition replaced by Labor. And that wasn't all. Polls showed the Coalition consistently trailing Labor into the election year, mostly because of unhappiness with GST which had come into effect on July 1, 2000.

Most unhappy were small business owners due to the complexities of the GST reporting system. Soaring fuel costs, a flow-on from rising global oil prices, hurt just about everyone and many blamed the Coalition, so why make more enemies of small firearms dealers by forcing them out of business?

In August 2000 the government had responded to a rising diversion of handguns to the criminal fraternity - and an increase in handgun crime - by banning dealers from retaining any newly imported handguns as stock for sale. Dealers were allowed to hold up to 10 handguns for demonstration purposes but they couldn't be sold and handguns were stored by Customs until

released to a genuine end user.

"This has led to a distortion of the industry and significant hardship for many law-abiding smaller and medium-sized dealers as the opportunities for prospective purchasers to handle and examine the items is in the premises of the major importers," said Justice Minister Chris Ellison in his submission to Cabinet in March 2001.

The consequence was declining sales. Imports of non-official handguns (for civilian sale rather than police or military use) totalled 8000 in the period January 1 to July 21, 2000 and for the period August 18, 2000 (when the new restrictions started) to January 15, 2001 imports totalled just 1897. "There's considerable dissatisfaction among both firearms dealers and the shooting community," the Minister said. "Industry has indicated that unless changes are introduced quickly, a significant proportion of firearms dealers will go out of business."

After consulting with representatives of the firearms industry and the SSAA, the government agreed to fix this problem by

creating a 'certified stock limit' for dealers as determined by the Australian Customs Service. That was typically up to 10 newly imported handguns which could be sold, regarded as providing for the legitimate needs of dealers while eliminating unwarranted stockpiling. This was actually a straightforward change - a simple amendment of Customs regulations - with minimal cost.

And there were a few other changes. Handgun frames and receivers were now to be treated the same as complete handguns and the requirement for pre-1900 antique handguns to be stored with Customs rather than go straight to dealers was removed. Ellison's submission said there was general satisfaction with the agreed approach among some key elements of the firearms industry, although some would prefer a return to the earlier regime which was clearly not an option.

However, the Minister said the anti-gun lobby was likely to argue the proposed changes amounted to a watering down of the previous position "and is unlikely to be sympathetic to the legitimate concerns of firearms dealers". Although a blunt instrument, the tougher restrictions on handgun imports were imposed in response to a genuine problem, namely rising handgun crime coupled with a few dealers importing large numbers of low quality (Chinese) handguns which were deactivated and sold.

That particularly related to Queensland which didn't require registration of deactivated handguns. Further, those deactivated guns could be sold to anyone with no licence required. And if that wasn't enough, the required standard of deactivation was lax and such guns could be readily restored to full function. Many were as the 2016 Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission report on Illicit Firearms in Australia noted as many as 5000 handguns entered the illicit market in this way and, two decades on, they apparently continue to turn up in criminal hands.

Two Queensland dealers did face court and in 2003 both were acquitted, the court accepting their standard of deactivation actually exceeded what the law required. That has now changed with all jurisdictions adopting rigorous requirements for deactivation, making re-activation nigh on impossible. For example, here are just some of the South Australian police requirements for deactivating a pistol. The barrel must be blocked with a close-fitting rod welded at breech and muzzle, the slide must be welded to the frame on both sides for at least hand length and the top of the magazine well must be filled with weld. The

From the National Handgun Control Agreement came more rigorous licensing requirements and restrictions...



trigger must be welded and a hole drilled into the chamber.

Back in 2001, criminal acquisition of reactivated handguns wasn't the only concern as many dealers held large stocks of handguns which made them inviting targets, thieves managing to steal more than 300 handguns and parts from one South Australian rural dealer.

Ellison's submission is accompanied by a report from the Australasian Police Ministers' Council (APMC) of its meeting in December 2000 at which the issue was discussed. That followed a number of meetings of the APMC working group on handgun crime. So how much crime? In 1999, handguns were involved in 42 per cent of all firearm homicides with most perpetrators not holding a firearms licence.

Self-obviously, the APMC working group said illicit firearms trafficking was directed at putting guns in the hands of criminals to engage in violence in the community. Both the Minister and APMC noted the National Firearms Agreement didn't touch on regulation of handguns, Ellison saying at that time it was believed Australian controls on handguns were sufficiently stringent. "The working group considered that any attempt to further regulate individual handgun acquisition based on the type of handgun would be extremely difficult and fraught with a high risk of community backlash," the APMC said.

But not for long. On October 21, 2002 international commerce student Huan Yun 'Allen' Xiang stood up in a lecture at Melbourne's Monash University, shot dead two fellow students and wounded five others. The 36-year-old was armed with six legally owned handguns, all of

them loaded. He subsequently pleaded not guilty on grounds of mental impairment and was diagnosed with a paranoid delusional disorder and ordered to spend a minimum of 25 years in a psychiatric hospital.

The case raised the obvious question of how Xiang, a foreigner with profound mental health issues, was able to acquire a handgun licence and six handguns. Prime Minister John Howard ordered a review of handgun laws from which emerged the 2002 National Handgun Control Agreement. Technically that was part two of the NFA which continues to regulate firearms ownership.

From the National Handgun Control Agreement came more rigorous licensing requirements and restrictions on calibre, barrel length and magazine capacity. In 2003 there was another buyback for those in possession of now banned guns which cost more than \$100 million, the abiding image of this being John Howard, his face set in obvious distaste, tentatively holding a surrendered pistol.

From all of this it's now undoubtedly more difficult to acquire an H-class licence, with more hoops to jump through than before and gone are 1911 pattern handguns and others in .45 calibre. Has this made Australia safer? That's not at all clear though it's certainly harder and more time consuming to obtain an H-class licence, although shortcomings in the NSW system allowed a man with a history of domestic abuse to acquire a licence and the handguns he used to murder his two children then shoot himself. ●

Labour OF LOVE

Custom-fitting a recoil pad is not a job to be taken lightly, as Ben Unten discovered



Welcome to the somewhat painful 'evolution' of my Remington 7600 pump-action rifle. Having managed to install the sling swivel mounts myself, requiring nerve to drill into the timber stock, I wanted to further improve the rapid, follow-up shot capabilities of this rifle by fitting a recoil pad in the hope of reducing the loss of sight picture after firing.

I'd chosen the .243 calibre on purpose because of its lower recoil as the less a rifle moves after firing, the quicker the reacquisition of the next target (in theory at least). I mistakenly thought fitting a recoil pad would be a cinch and ordered a Remington R3 pad through my local gunshop, picking it up en route to a hunting trip.

Once settled at camp I carefully removed the recoil pad from its packaging, being mindful not to damage the wrapping, this based on years of discovering that despite salespeople's and manufacturer's claims, not everything is a 'quick and simple' task. It wasn't until I held the pad against the butt I realised there's no way it would fit.

On reading the instructions I learned this recoil pad wasn't meant for a timber stock but for the synthetic stocked version. After uttering a few unmentionables I eventually

returned it to the gunshop and, after further investigation by the staff member, was told at that time Remington didn't make a recoil pad for the timber stock on the 7600, a statement which seemed to defy logic. Why would they make one for the synthetic stock and not the timber? Regardless, I was left with no choice but to buy a generic recoil pad which had to be 'ground down' to fit.

I ended up buying the Pachmayr XLT 'Ultra Soft' Magnum Trap and on contacting a local gunsmith, was quoted \$180 to grind and install the pad and told it would take six to eight weeks. After overcoming my shock I called a mate who runs a small timber machining factory from his well-equipped garage and explained the problem. He agreed to help so I took the stock to his workshop.

The first thing required was to mark a line on the stock perpendicular to the butt of the rifle. The butt was then belt-sanded 'flat' to allow the recoil pad to mount flush. Although fitting a recoil pad does extend the length of pull, it was still within my comfort limit and it was decided to wait until after a proper field test to determine if a little more needed to be taken off the bottom of the stock.

Next the distances between the screw holes on both stock and pad were measured with a calliper where it transpired the top hole could be reused but a new one would have to be drilled between the two existing lower holes in the stock. The next challenge was the screws originally supplied with the rifle to hold the buttplates in place were a larger gauge than the new ones provided with the pad.

Because the screws have to be physically pushed through the exterior soft surface of the pad, the larger screws with bigger diameter heads were at risk of damaging this soft surface, so the screw heads had to be ground down then buffed smooth to reduce friction. Once this was done the pad could be mounted, with a double layer of masking tape wrapped around the stock to offer some protection and act as a 'you're getting very close' indicator.

Finally the pad grinding could begin. This was done using an orbital sander with 80 grit paper as per the manufacturer's recommendations and this process can best be described as death by a thousand kamikaze ants, as about a million tiny pieces of black rubber hurl themselves at you and everything else within a 10m radius. Eventually we knew we were getting close and finally



A line is marked perpendicular to the butt.



Taking the curve out the butt.



Grinding down the screw heads.

the pad took on the profile of the stock.

To complete the set-up of my rifle I wanted a 10-shot magazine and contacted a Wild Dog supplier in Queensland, raising concerns regarding the mag's ability to reliably feed. He promised an exchange unit if the magazine didn't function flawlessly so I bought it. Upon inspection the magazines appear to have been repurposed as some additional welds are fairly obvious, but they're blued and certainly look strong enough.

One feature of the new magazine is the lugs used to secure it to the rifle are huge in comparison to the original Remington magazine and to be honest I found the original mag a little fiddly to insert but the Wild Dog was easy. The follower spring on the 10-shot mag is quite stiff as you'd expect yet still loads fairly easily and I assume this will soften over time.

To the manufacturer's credit the action cycled and fired flawlessly. If I was allowed one small criticism it might be there's a little bit of side-to-side play once the magazine is inserted into the action and this movement produces a slightly audible rattle. I solved the problem by having a mate braise a couple of slim rods on either side of the magazine which significantly reduced the snag, though it should be stressed this movement and associated minor rattle may not worry everybody and even those it does concern could probably manage by wrapping a little electrical tape around the mag.

It's been something of a journey but I'm delighted with the end result. The rifle

made its debut on a trip to South-Western Queensland and, to cut a long story short, I travelled 17 hours each way and the only pig I saw was the one my mate downed on the last morning. To add insult to injury, when I arrived back at camp on that final day I noticed the 10-shot mag was no longer in the rifle as I'd failed to seat it properly after making the rifle safe before we hopped on the bikes to ride back to camp. We didn't have enough time left to retrieve it and there it remains, so if anyone comes across a 10-shot mag in Queensland's Channel Country, please get in touch. ●



Tape is used to protect the walnut stock.



Checking holes for alignment.

History in your hands

Thomas Tabor's guide to collecting side-by-side shotguns



Savage Arms bought the rights to make Fox shotguns in 1929 and has reintroduced a reproduction of those originals in A Grade in either 20 or 12g.

I've always been a collector. As a boy I gathered rocks, marbles, stamps, coins (pennies only) and even bottle caps along with virtually anything else I took a fancy to as long as they came with no real monetary value. We lived on a tiny dairy farm and after the usual essentials to sustain our family's existence had been bought there was little money left for frivolous and non-essential things so the one prerequisite to what I collected was the fact it cost nothing.

As I reached adulthood the desire to amass things continued but shifted from valueless items to firearms and, in particular, older double barrels. I became infatuated by the workmanship of these old pieces and was drawn to the nicely figured walnut, the often expertly produced engraving and chequering as well as the sometimes gold accents found on many guns from the past. Even the sound as the actions are closed and made ready for firing was impressive, particularly when those shotguns came with names like Parker Brothers, L.C. Smith and A.H. Fox.

So if you share my passion to hold on to a piece of the historic craftsmanship common in our past and possess an admiration for side-by-side shotguns as I do, here are a few tips I've picked up during decades of collecting which may help you to get the most for your money.

Damascus v fluid steel

Most shotguns prior to the early to mid-1900s had barrels made of Damascus steel. To produce Damascus is a time-consuming and labour-intensive process involving twisting and welding small pieces of rods (sometimes alternating between iron and steel) into bundles, which are then coiled around a mandrel and forge-welded in a spiral with thousands of individual welds needed to produce a barrel. The result is a pleasing collage of delicate swirling patterns of light and dark metal with many people believing the finer the swirls the higher quality the Damascus.

The evolution into fluid/carbon steel barrels ushered in superior strength to the metal and lower production costs but in the beginning, shooters dramatically resisted this new material. In fact that resistance was so strong, some manufacturers tried

to mislead the public by imprinting a swirl pattern on the outside of their fluid/carbon barrels in a bid to replicate Damascus.

Even now there's a chance you'll encounter one of these decades-old fakes and, in that case, there's a couple of ways to expose the true material. One I've used is to select an area of the barrel normally unexposed, maybe under the wood of the forearm stock. Using a small piece of fine grit sandpaper I sand a tiny area, keeping it as small as possible to limit any perceived damage to the finish and, if the barrel has been imprinted with a fake Damascus pattern, the sandpaper will quickly wear through that imprint to expose a smooth surface. Another way is instead of using sandpaper, a drop of acid is applied to produce the same result.

While Damascus is attractive to the eye, it's not as strong as the typical fluid/carbon barrels and for that reason any shotgun with this type of barrel shouldn't be shot with modern day ammunition loaded with smokeless powder, as Damascus is often unable to withstand those higher pressures. Even if the barrels came from the factory strong enough to hold up under those pressures initially, that integrity may have weakened with time as welded seams inherent in Damascus steel are a perfect harbour for corrosion and rust that can further weaken the integrity of the metal.

Largely due to the assumption Damascus steel may not hold up under those smokeless powder pressures, the value of Damascus barrelled shotguns has historically fallen well behind those with fluid/carbon steel barrels. Nevertheless I've always believed someday those values would equalise, as I can't imagine a firearm equipped with such artisanship as the Damascus wouldn't eventually be considered at least as valuable as shotguns with fluid steel barrels.

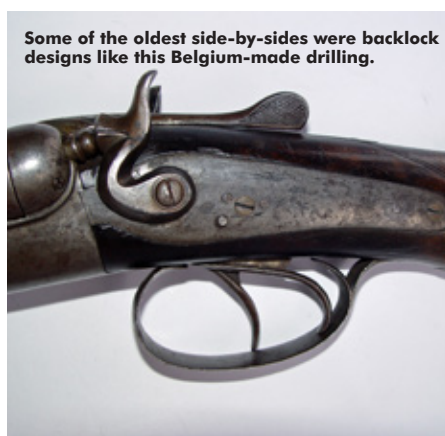
To a certain degree that has happened but only if those shotguns are viewed as collectable rather than for hunting or other modern-day shooting. Even though you'll likely still find some differences in value and cost today the gap is closing and, as a collector, that lesser price is something you can take advantage of.

Refinished firearms

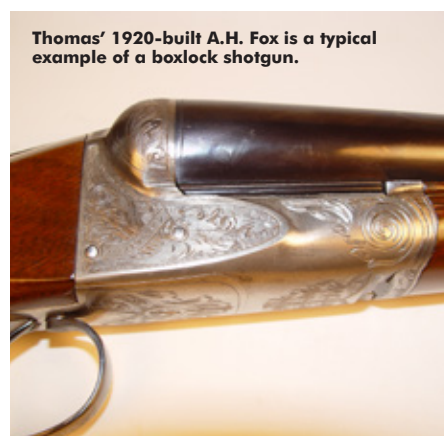
We like firearms to look pristine and for that reason there's an urge to refinish the stock or even replace it, re-blue the metal or make other modifications to improve appearance. Doing so on a collectable firearm can severely reduce its value though it's always desirable to have them in working order and, if necessary, it's



The L.C. Smith was an US-made sidelock, this one a Damascus barrelled Grade 2 from 1920.



Some of the oldest side-by-sides were backlock designs like this Belgium-made drilling.



Thomas' 1920-built A.H. Fox is a typical example of a boxlock shotgun.



The majority of engraving on US-made shotguns like this A.H. Fox was deep and well-pronounced.

generally acceptable to replace parts as needed but whenever possible with authentic and original replacements.

A common problem with many older shotguns is the original buttplate has been replaced with a recoil pad or non-original buttplate. Usually a rubber recoil pad is thicker than the buttplate which frequently encourages a shortening of the stock to compensate. If so there's not much you can

do to restore the stock to original length but if it hasn't shortened there's always the chance an online search will find an original replacement buttplate.

Bores

Smokeless powder was first produced in the mid-to-late 1800s though black powder continued to be the propellant of choice for decades. One of the major problems

History in your hands

associated with shooting black powder is it's extremely corrosive to metal which frequently results in irreparable damage, particularly to the bores of a firearm. This makes it imperative careful attention is always given to that area of any older firearm and, if the bores are dirty, they must be cleaned prior to a thorough evaluation. If the bores are free of corrosive damage this will add value to the firearm.

Features mean value

Like most things in life the rarer they are the more valuable those things typically are, particularly to a collector. Ejectors (as opposed to extractors) are a great example of additional value to a historic double barrel and these began to appear on the shotgun scene early in the 20th century, but were not commonly found until around the middle of that century and even then the number of shotguns with extractors has always far exceeded those with ejectors.

An older double equipped with ejectors is a considerable asset and adds significant value to the piece. That value will vary depending on the manufacturer, the gauge and grade of the firearm but a rough rule of thumb is ejectors in some instances could add as much as 25 per cent to the base value. Single triggers as opposed to the more common double triggers can also add substantial worth but are usually even rarer than ejectors on older doubles.

An original buttplate or factory-installed recoil pad is always a valuable characteristic as are original beads which in past years were frequently made of real ivory. And obviously metal engraving and gold inlays produced at time of manufacture can also be precious, though similar work by an outside source or aftermarket producer can sharply reduce the collectable potential of a gun.

Barrel length and choke constriction are also a consideration when it comes to assessment of the inherent regard of a firearm and again the rarer those characteristics the better for a collector. Barrels of 30" and 32" (76cm and 82cm) were the most common on older double barrel shotguns, with some shooters erroneously believing longer barrels produced tighter shot patterns and it's only been in recent years the advantages of shorter barrel lengths have been recognised. So any earlier-made shorter barrelled shotguns could fetch more money.

But be careful the barrel hasn't been cut to shorten it. Possibly the best way to make sure that's not the case is to measure the choke constriction with a micrometer - if the barrel has been cut there'll be no choke present. Another way to check is to look



Skelton buttplates are attractive and a great find.

carefully for any tell-tale saw or tool marks where the muzzle of the barrel joins the rib.

The majority of older shotguns came from the factory heavily choked, most often with one barrel constricted full and the other modified. Heavy choking was necessary back then mainly because the felt-wadding used in shotshells didn't protect the shot from damage as it travelled down the bore, which had a tendency to produce more open patterns and because more open chokes are rarer, that too is a feature of notable worth.

Actions

There are primarily three types of double-barrel shotgun actions: backlock, sidelock and boxlock. Backlock designs are often the oldest with most dating to pre-18th century. Boxlocks far outnumbered the others and were commonly produced throughout the 18th century to present day. Sidelock shotguns are less common and more labour-intensive to build and that being so, this design is usually found on more expensive shotguns today. Here the hammers may be exposed or internal but in both examples the springs are generally inside the sidelock panels, whereas in boxlock designs the firing mechanism including hammers, springs and firing pins are always inside the receiver.

Gauges

While the 10-gauge once enjoyed some popularity, nowadays the 12-gauge rules



Original factory buttplates are a desirable feature on any collectable firearm. This L.C. Smith's factory original is adorned with the company name.



Pistol grip caps are less likely to have been removed and replaced than buttplates and recoil pads.

supreme in most shotgunning circles and that hasn't changed much in a century. Consequently this equates to far more 12s being available than any other gauge so very rare gauges like 2, 4, 8, 24 and 32 and even the more common 28s and 20s always command a higher price.

In recent years the 16-gauge has been shunned to a degree, largely because it's believed shooting it holds no inherent advantage over the 12. But collectors of historic shotguns typically view the 16-gauge differently and one in good condition is usually worth slightly more than an equivalent 12-gauge. ●

National

National Junior Rimfire Rifle Metallic Silhouette Postal Championships

March 1-July 31, 2022

All clubs and branches

Program: 40-shot match under current SSAA National rule book. No nominations fees apply. See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

Handgun Metallic Silhouette National Postal Shoot

March 1-May 31, 2022

All SSAA HMS ranges

Program: Small Bore, Field Pistol, Big Bore. Prizes: SSAA merchandise vouchers to the value of \$300. Entry is free. Contact: Russell Mowles 0418 819 945.

SSAA Benchrest Rimfire National Championships

April 7-10, 2022 (practice April 5-6)

SSAA Springsure branch, Qld

Program: April 7 light rimfire; April 8 heavy rimfire; April 9-10 IRB. Nominations: LR \$60, HR \$60, IRB \$60 a day (juniors half-price). Facilities: Clubhouse, toilets, showers, BBQ, camping on range. Contact: Gavin Marshall 0438 759 162 or David McKillop 0409 724 053 david.mckillop@ymail.com

Benchrest Group National Championships

April 14-18, 2022

Springsure Sporting Shooters' Club, Springsure, Qld

Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Gavin Marshall 0438 759 162.

SSAA Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge National Championships

April 15-18, 2022

SSAA Para, Rifle Range Road, Greenwith, SA

Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Frank Verdini 0431 975 425.

SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

April 15-19, 2022

SSAA Snowy River Branch, Berridale, NSW

Program - April 15: Practice; 16: Centrefire; 17: Rimfire; 18: Rimfire Hunting; 19: Air Rifle. Facilities: Canteen on competition days, camping. Contact: riflesilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au or Tim 0419 405 696.

Lever Action Silhouette National Championships

April 21-24, 2022

SSAA Majura Range, Majura, ACT

Program - April 21: Practice; 22: Lever Action Rifle; 23: Pistol Cartridge Lever Action; 24: Smallbore Lever Action. Facilities: Canteen available, camping with water and showers. Contact: riflesilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au or Tim 0419 405 696.

Black Powder Cartridge Rifle Silhouette National Championships

April 25, 2022

SSAA Majura Range, Majura, ACT

Program: 11am-12 noon Practice; 12.30 Black Powder Cartridge Rifle match. Contact: riflesilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au or Tim 0419 405 696.

National Junior Rimfire Rifle Metallic Silhouette Postal Championships

1-October 31, 2022

All clubs and branches

Program: 40-shot match under current SSAA National rule book. No nominations fees apply. See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

National Junior Rimfire Rifle Metallic Silhouette Postal Championships

June 1-October 31, 2022

All clubs and branches

Program: 40-shot match under current SSAA National rule book. No nominations fees apply. See National website for full event details. Contact: juniorsports@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

SSAA Air Rifle Field Target National Championships

June 3-5, 2022

SSAA (ACT) Majura

Program: June 3 Practice; 4 Open Air Rifle FT; 5 Open Springer Air Rifle FT. Prizes: National medals in each grade. Facilities: Camping. Contact: Darius Krivanek 0418 103 360 or Chris Dale 0418 255 874.

SSAA Gallery National Championships

July 23-24, 2022

Para Branch, Greenwith, SA

Program: Events will include Multi-Target I, Timed and Precision I, 1020 Match in Standard and Classic rifles and 1500 Match. Nominations will be received up to the start of events. Facilities: Canteen for snacks and drinks. Contact: Don Robinson 0428 986 070 or Dave McCarthy 0414 880 333.

SSAA IMHSA National Championships

Sept. 30-Oct. 7, 2022

SSAA (ACT) Majura

Program: Sept. 30 Practice; Oct. 1-3 Small Bore and Field Pistol; Oct. 4 Practice; Oct. 5-7 Big Bore. Contact: Russell Mowles handgunssilhouette@disciplines.ssaa.org.au or Cheyne Fischer ihmssa.act@gmail.com

NSW

SSAA (NSW) Rimfire and IRB Benchrest State Championships

June 10-13, 2022

Seaham Range, Seaham, NSW

Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Kim Cosstick 0429 335 389 or kimcosstick@hotmail.com

SSAA (NSW) Benchrest State Championships

June 30-July 3, 2022

Dairyville Range, Coffs Harbour, NSW

Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: Ian Thompson: 0499 212 260 or isp_projectiles@yahoo.com.au

Qld

SSAA (Qld) Long Range Precision State Championships

May 27-29, 2022

Captains Mountain Complex, Qld

Program: See National website for full event details. Contact: luna@ssaaqld.org.au

Queensland NRA Pistol Metallic Silhouette Postal Shoots

All (SSAA) Qld branches with approval to shoot Postal Metallic Silhouette Program: Shoot 1: February 1-May 31; Shoot 2: April 1-July 31; Shoot 3: May 1-August 31; Shoot 4: August 1-November 30. See National website for full event details. Contact: Hazel Bozic (07)4128 0467 or pms@ssaaqld.org.au

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Combined Services State Championships

April 7-10, 2022

Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic

Program - April 7: Practice; 8: F1, F2, TD and Deliberate; 9: Deliberate B and H, 3P Core, Rapid Fire B, Snap C; 10: Cadet/Trainer comp, Mad minute any B rifle. Facilities: Camping. Contact: frank@vicmrccpresident.com

WA

SSAA (WA) NRA & Air Rifle State Championships

June 11-12, 2022

Port Bouvard Smallbore Rifle & Pistol Club, Dawesville, WA

Program: June 11: Scoped 10m Air Rifle Precision; Scoped 3-P 10m Air Rifle. June 12: NRA 3x40 Smallbore. Prizes: Medals for first three, certificates for top score. Facilities: Barbecue, canteen, toilets, showers. Contact: fieldrifle@ssaawa.org.au

ACT

SSAA (ACT) Field Target State Championships

June 3, 2022

SSAA (ACT) Majura

Program: June 3: 2 x 30-shot Open Air Rifle Field Target. Facilities: Camping with water, power, showers (\$10 a night), limited canteen. Contact: Darius Krivanek 0418 103 360 dariuskrivanek@gmail.com or Erwin Rebolledo 0402 848 056 erwin61@hotmail.com

SA

SSAA (SA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

June 18-19, 2022

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA

Program: Saturday 80 shots rimfire and 40 shots air rifle; Sunday: 80 shots centrefire. Range open 8.30am for 10am start. Facilities: Barbecue, showers, toilets, cooking facilities. Event contact: mmsrsecretary@gmail.com

SSAA (SA) Fly Shoot State Championships

July 16-18, 2022

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA

Program: July 16 Practice; 17 200yd rimfire fly, target competition; 18 centrefire 500m fly. Facilities: Barbecue, showers, toilets, cooking, camping (\$5 per night). Contact: Pat Kitschke 0455 280 024, (08) 8349 6544 or whytiger49@hotmail.com

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Harry's first cookbook, *Adventure Cooking - Fire To Fork* combines everything he knows about cooking over an open flame with over 60 of his favourite bush recipes, desserts and cocktails.

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The SICUT Fishing Knife Pack is designed in Australia for use in Australia's harsh conditions. The SICUT Fishing Knife Pack comes with a heavy-duty, four-pocket canvas wrap and contains:

- Pull sharpener, which is ergonomically designed to keep your knives sharp
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See full details online

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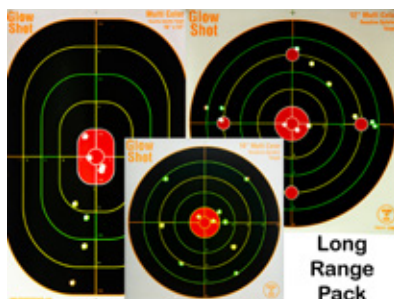


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Much to enjoy about new-age mornings

Much has changed since we moved into town. Especially the mornings. There was a time when the dog and I would go for a ramble along the creek, making the most of our freedom to roam and enjoy whatever we found along the way. Now we occasionally take a walk around the block . . . but it just ain't the same. Where Dixie once roamed free, town rules dictate she must now be on a lead which she doesn't care for much. It cramps her curiosity and pulling me along behind her when she strikes an interesting scent isn't her idea of fun - and it doesn't do much for me either.

Our passage is marked by the clamour of dogs confined to the yard. Some promise dire consequences if they could find a way out while others seem more inclined to join us. Either way they're just being dogs but I sometimes wonder how their owners feel about being woken early when an old bloke and a brown dog saunter past as daylight's just breaking.

Being a socially responsible sort, I've been taking the dog, ball-thrower and the day's first mug of tea to the vacant block next door. While Dixie's doing her rounds to sniff out what's been prowling overnight, I park my mug atop a star picket and watch the sun rise over the hills and, as twee as that may seem to some, it's a pleasantly peaceful way to start the day.

It's never quiet or still. The koels are invariably calling from somewhere - duosyllabic, monotonous and endlessly repetitive but a hallmark of summer just the same.



Along the creek, birds are tracking back and forth against the morning sky - black ducks and woodies, teal and ibis, blue cranes, cormorants and the omnipresent crows. A myriad of other species contribute to the gentle cacophony too and while we may not live out of town any more, the familiar sounds of a country morning are never far away.

With her security check completed the dog dances a circle in front of me, a signal she's ready to run. I'm not sure how far she runs on any given morning, I'm just glad it's her and not me. With the thrower I can pitch the ball a good 35 metres or more and ignoring over-runs at the far end, that makes at least 70 metres a throw. Fifty throws in a morning is not uncommon - yes

I've counted them - which means she does around 3.5km a session, bobbing back to me with her tail sweeping, ears flopping, head held up to keep grass seeds out of her eyes.

The only diversions she'll acknowledge are early morning walkers passing by on the road. Some of them obviously see walking as a serious business, breathing rhythmically with arms pumping, perhaps to drive their reluctant legs while for others it's a stroll to be enjoyed for what it is as they bid her good morning. A few ignore her, too busy talking on the phone or to their walking partner to acknowledge a friendly brown dog rolling up to the fence with a ball in her mouth. Like me she takes them as she finds them, enjoying the contact if they reach out to her, happy to be chasing the ball if they don't.

Sometimes I end our session by telling her it's the last throw, other times she decides for herself. Either way when she comes past me, spits the ball out and flops panting in the shade of the shed we both know we're done. Exhausted though she may seem, she's never too tired to accept the stick of kangaroo jerky she's come to expect as a reward for her efforts.

After that we can get on with our respective days - me in the workshop, Dixie in whatever shade she can find, resting up so she'll have the energy to do it all again in the afternoon. Our circumstances may have changed but the dog's life goes on . . . and neither of us is complaining.





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