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John Dunn wraps up his epic Cobourg adventure

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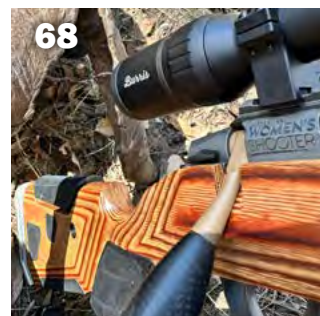
For all its modern features and challenge to traditional design, the Sako S20 rifle upholds that company's well-deserved legacy of building some of the best practical rifles on the market and if long range is your thing, be that hunting, precision shooting or both, the S20 is well worth a look. There are also several factory accessories available including a dedicated scope mount, larger capability magazines, muzzle brakes and extra length of pull spacers.

Defence company Thales, which manufactures the Steyr rifle and Minimi light machinegun for the Australian Defence Force, has developed a pair of rifles for when Australia follows the US and adopts the new 6.8 calibre cartridge and John Maxwell has been given access to the all details.

The Stellar SQ50 thermal scope by Hikmicro, from its traditional-looking styling to technical features, provides the user with loads of functionality in an easy-to-use package, the peace of mind warranty extending 10 years for the sensor, three years for the body and 12 months for the battery.



Our June cover - see page 68



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In celebration of 75 years of the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia, we're taking this chance to celebrate with the 213,000-plus members of our state and territory associations in a huge giveaway from the SSAA Online Shop. We have 12 prizes to be won this month as we mark this prestigious milestone with the people who make the SSAA the No.1 sports shooting body in Australia.

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## Carbine copy

A LETTER FROM Heath Guest appeared in the October 2022 issue of *Australian Shooter* asking for information on the 150th anniversary Parker Hale P61 Carbine. This rifle and its custom wooden case with accessories made the front cover of *Australian Shooters' Journal* in February 1986 and within that issue was the subject of an article by Frank Garie. I've attached a scan of my tattered cop of this edition.

Ben Gregory, via email



## Thanks for the memories

I'VE JUST RECEIVED my copy of *Australian Shooter* (November 2022) and read the article by John Frankham on his memories to warm the soul. I'd like to thank John for telling his story and as a father who's starting to share the joys of shooting with my son, I thoroughly enjoyed reading those memories and hope one day I'll be able to share mine with others.

E.J. Sainz, NSW

## So long, Jumbunna

I'M SURE THIS will be just one of many emails lamenting the end of the Jumbunna column by John Dunn. And, yes, I too admit to turning to the back page and reading it first. John wrote well about topics not mentioned on a daily basis in our busy city lives and brought the bush into our living rooms. Thank you John for giving me years of reading pleasure, good luck and good shooting. I look forward to your (hopefully plentiful) future contributions to the magazine whatever they may be.

Gerald Thurnwald, via email

*You're not wrong Gerald and we'd need more than a few pages to print the many*

*emails mourning the loss of Jumbunna. John's hugely popular column struck a chord with most of our readers and fortunately his books The Jumbunna Collection, In the Footsteps of my Father and The Jumbunna Collection Volume II are still available to buy via email from footsteps5350@gmail.com*

## Alternative Cadet

IN THE TOP Shots query by Ben Talman (*Shooter*, November 2022) he asks about loads for a .310 Martini Cadet. In addition to the powder recommendations by Barry Wilmot (none of which are currently available), I suggest he tries ADI 2207 which is very effective with 120gr cast/lubed or powder-coated bullets so long as a grease wad under the base is used to avoid leading. It needs 9.5-9.8 grains to burn and the chronograph says this is safe.

We're shooting 1" groups at 50-75 metres with this powder and bullet size should be .320", not .318" for best accuracy. I use small pistol primers instead of small rifle primers and seat the bullets no deeper than the 'heel' (best choice of dies are those made by Simplex). Please pass this on to Ben as 2207 with 9.5gr will do the job for him.

Con Grund, WA

## Insurance Q&A

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**Q** We're planning to buy a block and build on the riverfront in New South Wales. Recent flooding events have shown how important it is to do this properly, so we're obviously concerned with making sure we build in the right spot and have the appropriate insurance in case something happens. What would you advise?

**A** In light of those flooding events it's going to be harder than ever to find an insurer willing to quote for cover in some cases, while in other situations there may not be an affordable option for new-builds.

Historically, someone buying in a flood-prone area postcode could have issues with insuring property, regardless of whether it was low-lying or on high ground. Buyers in a postcode prone to flooding must arm themselves with information if they're going to seek insurance options themselves. Check the policy wording and talk to the insurer if you don't understand what you're covered for.

Having a broker such as SSAA General Insurance means you have someone on your team to have an informed conversation with an insurer. A broker can advocate

on your behalf, especially if you're caught up on a technicality and an insurer is more inclined to listen to a broker presenting the right information. The open channel between broker and insurer can be very valuable. If you'd like to discuss this further call us on 08 8332 0281. More information on member benefits and our other insurance products is at [ssaib.com.au](http://ssaib.com.au)



## Feral pigs more destructive than we thought

A new study by the University of Queensland has revealed the environmental threat from wild pigs is much greater than previously thought. Normally when we talk about damage caused by wild/feral pigs in Australia it's put in dollar value, though this study has expressed the threat in different terms. When wild pigs across the globe use their snouts to turn over the ground, they're uprooting carbon trapped in the soil. With more carbon in the soil than in the atmosphere, herein lies a major problem which could accelerate climate change.

This study has suggested a staggering amount of carbon dioxide is released during these activities. An estimated 4.9 million metric tonnes of carbon dioxide is released annually, equivalent to the emissions of 1.1 million cars, while the area wild pigs are uprooting worldwide is also staggering with an estimate between 36,000 to 124,000 square kilometres.

In Australia, especially in North Queensland's sugar areas, the ABC reports the feral pig problem is getting worse. The animals like sugar cane because it's sweet and farmers say they come through regularly to graze, damaging large areas of crops. This has led to calls to introduce a bounty system across the country to entice more professional and recreational hunters to cull more feral pigs. It has been sug-

gested local councils in areas impacted by the marauders should receive funding to introduce bounty programs and encourage more people to become involved in on-ground control.

The main reason reported behind the push is the feral pig population is sizeable (estimated at more than 24 million) which



is causing hundreds of millions of dollars in crop damage, impacting native flora and fauna including endangered species as they feed on cassowary and turtle eggs in North Queensland.

Shane Knuth, a Queensland state politician and avid hunter, is supportive of a bounty and believes such a program where hunters are paid for feral pigs they cull is one way the problem can be addressed. With limited funds for expensive aerial

shooting or to provide farmer support, a bounty would encourage recreational hunters to increase efforts on top of what they currently do with the money they're out on fuel and hunting expenses. Mr Knuth also suggests councils should have a shooter registration system with an induction process and permit system for hunters to access national parks to help bring the numbers down.

The Gympie Regional Council already has a bounty scheme and for the past four years have paid recreational hunters \$10 for each feral pig or dog culled. They've paid roughly \$20,000 annually under the program. Bounties have been a controversial topic in the past, with many people in favour and others against.

As pest problems continue to increase, perhaps it's time for governments to think outside the square and empower recreational hunters to do more. A simple mechanism which reduces some of the costs involved in pest management should be part of the toolbox, while promoting and supporting programs like SSAA Farmer Assist to put more boots on the ground where needed would be another positive step.

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## Knife sharpening: You can't cut corners

Riddle me this: What does your favourite knife have in common with origami, the Japanese art of paper-folding? I'll get to the answer shortly but while you mull it over, let's talk about knives which will help reveal the answer. We use knives a lot. Around the house we reach for them to butter toast in the morning, open parcels, peel fruit and cut steak. In the garden they're handy for pruning, harvesting or even grafting and whether you're cleaning your fingernails or splicing the pins on your trailer plug, you'll want one close at hand. And that's before you've even start thinking about their essential role in butchering such as boning, carving, chopping, slicing, gutting and skinning to name a few.

Knives are so versatile they're one of the three most important things to have when you're out scrub. In addition to a knife, a cup and cord are also essential as they're the hardest things to improvise or create in a 'fit hits the shan' scenario. Ask any old bushie and I bet he'll tell you the same thing.

Now everyone has their preferred way of sharpening knives, some are traditionalists who favour a whetstone of either natural stone or synthetic material while others use a steel, perhaps a slow-moving grinding wheel or even a paper-sharpening wheel ingrained with sand. Some are seduced by benchtop sharpeners they see on infomercials while others swear by 'professional'

knife-sharpening kits with 15 different grindstones of various grains. In reality there are many ways to achieve a sharp blade and if push comes to shove, you can even use the spine of another knife. Indeed, in skilled hands a broken piece of China



teacup can achieve the same outcome.

Regardless of the method, ultimately the art of knife-sharpening boils down to the 'angle of dangle'. What we usually do wrong when trying to sharpen blades is make the angle too shallow as we think we're trying to achieve a razor edge like a Japanese Maguro Kiri tuna knife. Yet just as there are 'horses for courses', knives come in various shapes, sizes and bevels for different purposes which means there are specific edges to tackle specific jobs.

As an overriding principle the sharper the blade, the less durability the edge will have. Use a super-sharp knife for the wrong task and you'll dull the edge or even chip it. The following angles are a good guide for sharpening blades of different types:

35-40 degrees for a general chopping edge (think cleaver), 25-30 for general purpose (carver), 15-20 for fine slicing (fish fillet) and 10-15 for a razor (shaving).

If you can't visualise these angles, pick up a sheet of paper. The corner is a 90-degree angle . . . and now it's time for some origami (told you I'd answer the riddle). Fold the 90-degree angle in half and, not surprisingly, you're looking at 45 degrees, right? Fold it again and that takes you to 22.5 degrees which is the angle required to sharpen most knives. Now you can use the piece of paper as a template.

The best way to get the hang of all this is talk to a bladesmith and if you're lucky, there'll be someone nearby who does knife-sharpening lessons. Courses typically take about two hours but in that short time you'll learn more about the art of blade-sharpening than you would in a lifetime of tinkering in the shed. Better still, track down a knife-making course where you'll not only learn about sharpening but gain a wealth of information on blade geometry and different bevels and grinds.

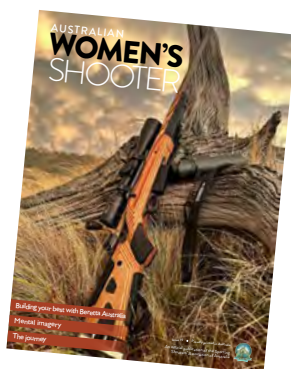
However you 'slice' it the important thing to remember is competent knife-sharpening takes practice and happily it's one of those traditional skills which still need perseverance (rather than a few YouTube videos) to master.



### What's in Issue 19

## AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

Gemma Dunn wraps up her series on a special Beretta-build rifle with an account of how it went in the field.



### The Journey

Nicole Jordan reflects on how her shooting life began and where she is today

### Mental Imagery

Mind over matter the focus for Commonwealth and Olympic Games gold medallist Suzy Balogh OAM

Issue 19 inside members' Australian Shooter this month and online at [ssaa.org.au/women](http://ssaa.org.au/women)





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**Q** What are your views on the new type of 'ergonomic' shotgun stocks I see appearing more and more at shooting ranges? I checked the price of one and was amazed to see they're around \$3000. What am I missing here as I think you'd agree they look ugly but my question is do you think they're worth trying?

**Peter French, Vic.**

**A** If you're a 'purist' then I agree these stocks aren't for you. I was given one to try when they first appeared on the market about 15 years ago. I was in Europe at the time and had only been using the new ergo stock for a few months when I turned up at the Beretta factory in Italy to have my gun serviced. It was actually Beretta's gun and not mine (I was using it on their behalf).

They took one look at the stock, duplicated it in walnut and handed the gun back to me minus the 'ugly' skeleton attached to the mechanism, as they certainly weren't keen to see one of their beautiful firearms 'defaced' in this way. I never saw that ergo stock again but they assured me if I put it back on their shotgun I'd wake up with a horse's head in my bed, reminiscent of that scene from *The Godfather*!

Times have changed and the ergonomic stock has certainly made an impact on the market with multiple Olympic and World Champions adopting the new technology. In essence, the ergonomic stock is a glorified 'try gun' stock which has been used by the world's leading firearm companies for a very long time. Today, many of them come with the option of a custom-made grip or variety of 'glove grip' sizes to choose from,

while virtually every dimension of the stock can be adjusted and even the balance can be personalised.

It's fairly easy to adjust the stock to achieve a perfect fit, though the challenge then becomes a battle of resistance to avoid making tiny changes to the shotgun's set-up every time you miss a target. My experience tells me many people are losing this challenge. The ease with the pitch, cast, drop, length and balance can be changed is just too much for many to resist and instead of correcting the mental and technical problem which caused the poor shot, they see the solution in a set of Allen keys.

Ninety-nine times out of 100, providing the stock was set correctly to begin with, changing it is not the answer. This is exactly why 15 years ago Beretta duplicated the ergo stock I took to the factory, so this temptation to adjust it every time I missed was removed. Of course \$3000 seems a lot of money, but if you have two quality walnut stocks made it won't be far short of that figure. Not too many competition shooters who've been in the sport for a few years have only had two stocks made so I guess this is the price argument.

In saying all that I'm still in favour of the ergonomic stock for many people as it can be adjusted so much it can turn almost any shotgun into an 'all-round' firearm capable of being used from the competition arena all the way down to recreational hunting. Once you know the stock set-up required for each shotgun discipline you're using it for, in no time you have the perfect set-up.

I admit I cringe a little when I see these stocks on some of the higher grade shotguns as they certainly look ugly, though I've

noticed many ergo stocks on the competition circuit painted in national colours and flags. Yet to my eye they'll never replace the beauty of a stunning piece of walnut with a lengthy grain running through it. Sadly they don't award points at the Olympic Games based on how your shotgun looks, as they only pay on how accurately you can point it and for that reason alone the ergo stock is here to stay.

Questions to:  
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# Got a question - ask our **TOP SHOTS?**

• John Dunn • Paul Miller • Greg Riemer • Geoff Smith • Barry Wilmot • Rod Pascoe

email: [edit@ssaa.org.au](mailto:edit@ssaa.org.au)



loaded with black powder, they changed to using smokeless powder when it became available. Both firearms have actions strong enough to use the smokeless AR 2208 powder in question, providing of course the powder load being used is taken from the manufacturer's guide or a reliable reloading guide.

**Barry Wilmot**

**Q** I own a much-loved Baikal 12g Hammerless coach gun with fixed Modified chokes in both barrels and ejectors. I bought it second-hand years ago and for the first year or so it worked perfectly with slugs, buck and smaller shot but now is intermittent in ejecting shells after firing, working perhaps 10 per cent of the time.

When I say it doesn't eject, it doesn't extract either as the rims of spent cases and ejectors stay flush with the chamber and have to be pushed out with a rod. It seems fine all the time ejecting target loads and some light No.4 handloads I have. I recently tried Aguila mini-slugs which varied between full eject (40 per cent), extract (50 per cent) and plain stuck (10 per cent). I also tried some NSI low-recoil 00 buck which reliably extracted but didn't eject.

I'm at a loss as to what's going on but it seems to be something to do with load pressure and often gets progressively worse as I shoot. I've taken the ejectors apart, cleaned them thoroughly, lightly polished with fine steel wool and nothing appeared bent, worn or out of alignment. Likewise I gave the chambers a good clean and polish after which it did extract but not eject some heavier loads (Eley 32gr AAA and a Rio Bala slug), yet after a couple of shots it returned to sticking, other than with the lighter loads mentioned. I don't really care if it ejects, I'd be happy if I could just get it to extract reliably on all loads.

**Nick Rigby, via email**

**A** I almost feel you've answered the question with your thoughts that ejection/extraction problems may be pressure-

**Q** I've been loving the magazine and letters page since I joined the Association as a young adult but never thought I'd be writing to tap into this wealth of shooting knowledge. I hope you can help. My 85-year-old father was given an Oscar Zanano hammer-action shotgun as payment for covering the fare for his brother's wife-to-be coming from Sicily in 1960. I've searched the web and found nothing but have included some photos for your convenience and look forward to seeing what you can come up with.

**Tony, via email**

**A** Thanks for your query Tony. The date code XVI reveals your dad's shotgun was made in 1960 by a gunsmith named Luigi Belleri (possibly Livio Belleri) in the village of Ponte Zanano in the Province of Brescia, Lombardy, a few kilometres south of the famous gunmaking and proofing centre of Gardone Val Trompia.

There were apparently several members of the Belleri family from this region working for the Beretta factory (also located in Gardone Val Trompia) who made guns under their own names as well, which is where your dad's originated. The inscription 'Acciaic Compresso Vickers' translated to 'Vickers Compressed Steel' though I haven't been able to "decode" the acronym 'O.S.C.A.R.' so if any readers can help this would be appreciated. The BL in an oval I



suspect is Luigi Belleri's mark while 'PSF' refers to smokeless powder proof (Polvere Senza Fumare equates to 'powder without smoke').

Elsewhere on the gun, apart from the '12' signifying gauge there should be marks to indicate chamber length (typically 70mm) and perhaps choking. As to value I'd suggest it's a nice family heirloom but not especially valuable to collectors.

**Geoff Smith**

**Q** A friend of mine has offered to sell me his single-shot Enfield .303 which was built in 1878. At the moment he's using ADI 2208 powder which I found a bit surprising when he told me. Do you think the action is strong enough to handle modern powders, bearing in mind the rifle is 145 years old?

**Name and address supplied**

**A** I'm not sure if you're talking about the early Martini-actioned Enfield single-shot .303 or the Lee Enfield .303 bolt-actioned rifle. Either way, while both of these rifles originally used cartridges

related. Your diligent cleaning and analysis of the loads which stick and those that don't is very useful and certainly leads me to think those higher pressure factory hunting loads are a large part of the problem. A little like overloaded centrefire rifle cartridges which can stick in the chamber, the brass bases on your very heavy hunting loads may be expanding in the chamber and doing something similar.

Extractor guns are usually best at pulling out 'sticky' cases, however the extractor in an ejector gun like yours works the same way as in an extractor gun, until the gun is fired. When you fire a double gun it trips the spring-loaded ejector mechanism inside the gun's forearm, so that when you open the gun it ejects the empties. The extractors are designed to only eject on the fired barrel and extract on the unfired barrel which stops the possibility of ejecting live cartridges.

Your gun is a normally reliable classic but sounds as though it's pretty old and has seen a fair amount of use with heavy shells. Visit your local gunsmith and see what they say as it may be as simple as replacing the springs if they can get their hands on some. Keep giving those pigs or whatever hell!

**Paul Miller**

**Q** A friend of mine recently gave me these old reloading tools his father used to own. The single cavity bullet mould is stamped '.25-20 W.C.F.' and has wooden handles, the reloading tool stamped on one arm 'Manufactured by the Winchester Rep. Arms Co. New Haven Conn. USA' over three lines. The other arm is stamped '.25-20 W.C.F. Pat Oct. 20 1874 Nov.7.82' over two lines. What calibre is .25-20 W.C.F. and can you give me any information about the tools and what they're worth, as both are in quite reasonable (useable) condition?

**Robert Frost, via email**

**A** The .25-20 W.C.F. is more commonly known as the .25-20. The W.C.F. stands for Winchester Centre Fire, an early designation for most centrefire cartridges made



by Winchester. The bullet mould is a fifth model and at one stage was available in a wide range of sizes. The most common moulds encountered in Australia are for the .25-20, .32 -20, .38-40 and .44-40 cartridges, all of which were chambered in the Model 1892 Winchester rifle.

The reloading tool is a model 1882 First Variation Small Frame. It's an improvement on the model of 1880 and probably the most common of the Winchester reloading tools found today. Yours still has the de-capping pin intact which makes it a little more valuable. Interestingly, the introduction of smokeless powders eventually saw Winchester withdraw from the reloading tool market. Their Catalogue No.80 didn't list any reloading tools and carried the warning: "Winchester Repeating Arms Co. cautions its patrons against loading or reloading smokeless powder rifle ammunition and wishes to do its utmost to discourage this practice."

This was because many reloaders of the time didn't understand that the (then) new smokeless powder had to be carefully measured and the days of filling a case with (black) powder were over. In good condition your mould and reloading tool are worth around \$125-\$150 each.

**John Dunn**

**Q** I've just re-read the 'Firing blanks' article by Rod Pascoe about blank ammunition (*Shooter*, February 2021) and in it he mentions the special cartridges used in movies and Western TV shows of the 1950s and '60s. I remember years ago

seeing someone firing .22 rimfire blanks from a Colt 45 revolver using a special steel tube in the chambers. I don't know if it was meant specifically for movie work or just scaring birds so can anyone tell me something about what I saw?

**Dan, via email**

**A** You're right Dan, apart from blank ammunition specifically to chamber in movie rifles and pistols, several adaptors were made to allow certain cartridges to be fired in firearms of larger calibres. They were used mainly as a way of shooting cheaper rimfire ammunition in centrefire firearms for practice or training purposes. The instance you're referring to is a chamber adaptor or chamber reducer designed to fire .22 rimfire ammunition from a revolver chambered for the .45 Colt cartridge and yes, they could be used in movie-making too.

The accompanying photo depicts such an adaptor and you can just make out the rifling on the top end (I'd estimate there's about 20mm of rifled barrel in the adaptor, enough for very short-range shooting). You'll also notice the hole in the adaptor holding the .22 cartridge is off-set so the firing pin of the centrefire revolver hits the rim of the rimfire cartridge. I have a similar one in my collection but it's for firing blanks only as there's no 'barrel' to support or stabilise a bullet beyond the end of the case mouth. Blanks were useful in quick-draw competitions where only the sound of the blank firing was needed to activate the timing device and could be shot in relative safety.

**Rod Pascoe**





This is the fifth in a series on The Hunter's Mancave in which some of our regular contributors look back on treasured mementoes



## More than just mounts and memories

Senior correspondent John Dunn reflects on a lifetime in the field

In their younger years my grandkids used to call the room at the top of the hall 'Poppy John's dead animal room'. There was no point in correcting them as with the candour of youth they were calling it as they saw it. They liked to pat and feel the mounts and it became something of a challenge to poke a hand into the open mouth of the croaking fallow buck in the corner . . . and walk away unbiten. Apart from a few wild dog skins none of the trophies in my room are native species.

As they grew I used the trophies as reference points to talk to them about introduced species, how they affected our native wildlife and the impact they could have on the efforts and livelihoods of farmers and landholders who produced the bulk of the food we eat. They also learned that most of the animals I hunted were used in some way – as meat for the table, a source of skins for mats or leather or as trophies on the wall that documented my development as

a hunter. Looking back I'm still not sure how much they absorbed of what I taught them, but they're all growing up aware that responsible hunters like me aren't the conservation threat the anti-hunting lobby would have their minions believe.

These days my trophy room (it has *never* been a den or mancave) is a dedicated space in my shed. In it are trophy animals from Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia and North America, all taken legally under fair chase conditions over a period of almost 50 years. At times I think it would be nice to have all the money they've cost me as a lump sum sitting in the back of my safe though even if I did, I doubt I'd want to spend it any other way.

As I'm sure it is for other hunters, my room is much more than a repository for the trophy animals I've hunted and collected over the years. It's also full of memories. It's about places and people, successes and failures, solo adventures and

shared experiences, some of those with kindred souls who are no longer with us. More importantly it's the direct result of setting personal goals and working hard to make them happen, even if that sometimes takes years.

Among the shoulder and pedestal mounts are examples of all the deer species living a wild and free existence in Australia along with three buffaloes, a scrub bull and a banteng from the NT. There's also a good rusa stag from New Caledonia, a sika, chamois and thar from New Zealand and six North American species: white-tailed and mule deer, pronghorn antelope, elk, moose and a Dall sheep ram.

I'm often asked by first-time visitors to my room which is my favourite mount and to be honest, I'm not really sure. They're all important in their own way, otherwise they wouldn't be there though that said, some stand out more than others for all sorts of reasons. As the largest animal I ever



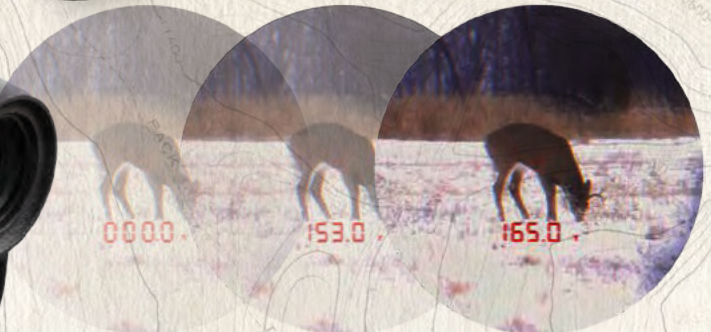
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## Hunter's mancave

hunted, my Alaskan moose dominates the room and apart from his size, he was the realisation of a hunting dream I'd held since I was a boy in short pants. The Dall sheep beside him was the icing on the cake and I'll always remember that hunt as probably the hardest and most satisfying I've ever undertaken.

At the other end of the scale the oldest trophy in my collection is also important - a set of goat horns I shot near Cobar in New South Wales way back in 1972. All these years later I've never taken a better head fair chase, though I must admit goats haven't been a priority species for me for a long time. Some of the less usual trophy heads include the mount of a 'handlebar' sambar stag whose antlers go back along the length of his neck. I'd known of him for about seven years before I eventually managed to take him and he always draws curious questions from visitors.

There's also a small sambar head with velvet antlers I took with a .54 round ball flintlock rifle, something those who knew better told me would never happen. With the same rifle and load I also took a scrappy fallow buck in South Australia and to reach him I crawled and slithered across well over 150m of open country to a small patch of scrub. When one of the does he was trying to hold broke past him and ran my way the buck followed, grunting, croaking and trying hard to turn her around. They came trotting past at about 10m for a storybook ending to an exciting hunt. Then there's the skull of a fallow buck with just

I crawled and slithered across well over 150m of open country



Mostly sambar. The small shield-mounted skull is the first sambar deer John ever shot while the handlebar head always raises questions.



Obsidian knives, arrow and spear heads are among some of the bits and pieces.

one good antler while the other is stunted and undersized, a mere half a trophy according to my hunting mate though I think it's wonderful. There are also a couple of really ugly red deer heads, the skull

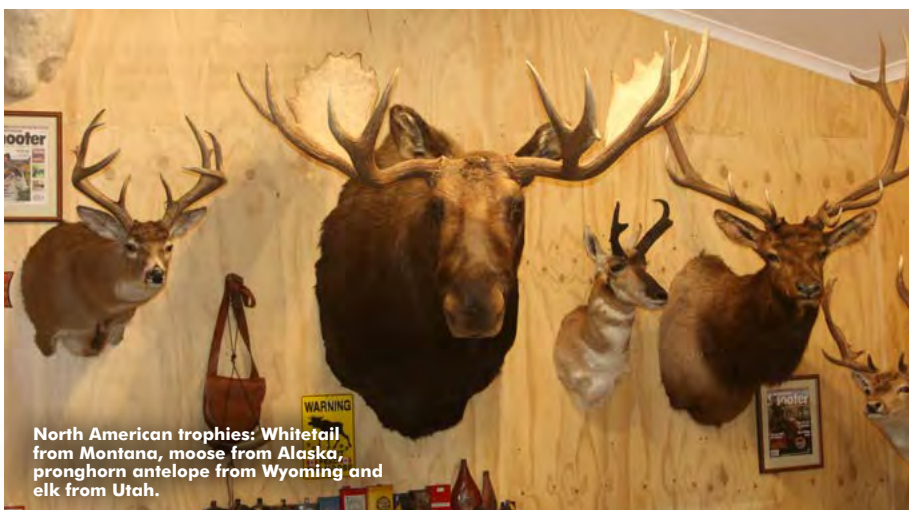


Back corner of John's room.

and horns of a cow buffalo with a tip-to-tip spread of 176cm and an old but undersized buffalo bull with the left horn broken clean off his skull. The horn was hanging down alongside his face when I shot him and you have to wonder how much impact energy it would have taken to achieve that end. No wonder buffaloes have a reputation as tough customers.

Early in my hunting career I decided I was never going to become involved in the sometimes murky, mine's-bigger-than-yours world of trophy scoring. While I've been fortunate enough to hunt and collect just about all the species that ever interested me, none have ever been officially scored. They're my trophies, taken on hunts that I made for me and I truly don't care how they compare to anyone else's.

Around two walls of my room are glass display cases holding a trove of interesting bits and pieces I've accumulated over the years. Some, though not all, are hunting related. In one cabinet there's an array of reloading tools, some of them older than I am. When I was collecting single-shot rifles I tried to find a reloading tool for the



North American trophies: Whitetail from Montana, moose from Alaska, pronghorn antelope from Wyoming and elk from Utah.



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## Hunter's mancave

various centrefire rifles I had and though the rifles are now gone, the tools remain. Some of the ideal tools are multi-purpose with a bullet mould included in their construction, others require a separate mould, but all are reminders of another time when owning and using firearms was much more popular and readily accepted than it is today.

A hangover from my cartridge collecting period, there's also a selection of powder tins which begins in the black powder days, continues through the semi-smokeless era and on to the recent past when powder came in proper tins, not plastic containers as it does now. There are also a couple of old powder horns and English-made powder flasks which link me to an interest in muzzleloading shooting that began in the late 1960s.

Though I'm a long-retired smoker I also have quite a collection of tobacco tins, a few of them courtesy of my father when he passed away, others from my gun dealing days when there were often tins containing all manner of treasures from deceased estates. By default I became a tobacco tin collector and have brought back a few from overseas in the past decade or so.

There's also a collection of blades including various Dewey knives, an assortment of fishing reels and a couple of a split cane fishing rods, one a fly rod and the other a bait caster. In another cabinet sit a handful of Aboriginal stone artefacts including knives, thumbnail scrapers and a nicely ground axe I picked up at a country tip many years ago.

In various other drawers and boxes are lots of bits and pieces which don't mean a lot individually but nonetheless contribute to my memorabilia, things like a hunting licence from my one trip to Finland, a



A selection of trophy stags.

mixture of small Euro coins and name tags from industry events I've attended over the years. There are badges advertising shooting products, knives, cartridges, cameras and a selection of tiny silver lapel pins of game animals including trout, ducks, deer and rabbits.

All are tangible records of my interests down the years. Hunting has obviously been a significant constant throughout but as those who know me will tell you, there has always been more to this old dog than meets the eye. You ought to see my library. ●



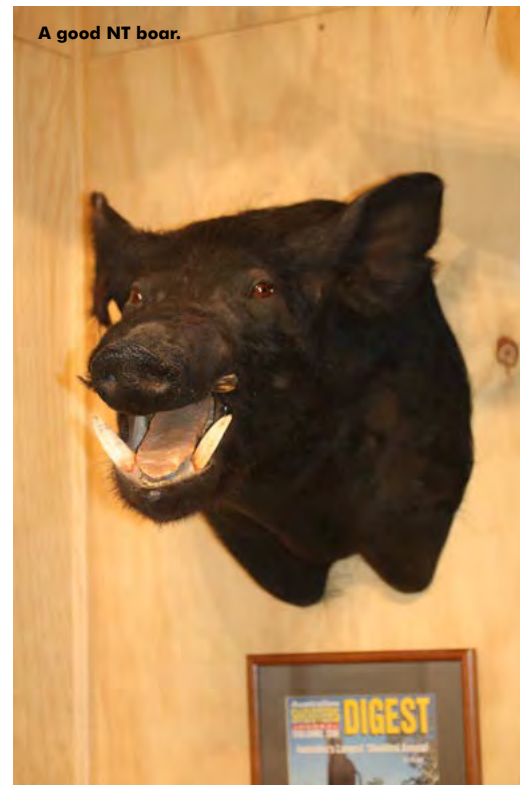
A cabinet of tobacco tins with an assortment of other bits on the top.



Amberite tins from the early smokeless powder days.



John's handlebar sambar.



A good NT boar.



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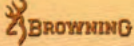
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## Chris Redlich accounts for some wild boar with the Tikka T3x Wild Boar

**A**dditional to Tikka's 2022 midyear line-up is the Australia-inspired Wild Boar rifle. Based on the ever-popular T3x platform this is a lightweight stalking rifle designed purely with Australian pig hunters in mind, providing a fast-handling, slick-cycling firearm with 10-shot capacity, conducive to follow-up shooting. Although there was a fair amount of 'hush' around its release in June of last year, I turned up the volume on my reply when *Australian Shooter* accepted an invitation from Beretta Australia for a comprehensive review.

Only .223 Rem and .308 Win chamberings are available but they're arguably the two most popular cartridges here for pig hunting due to their reputation and reliability. It's no secret I'm a fan of Tikka rifles and after a frustrating delay with my Permit to Acquire, the day arrived three months later to pick up the rifle in .308 Win. Additionally, Beretta sent an Aimpoint red dot sight and assortment of Sako factory ammunition to assist with testing.

### Out of the box

What immediately stood out was the bright orange fore-end and pistol grip and while I'm sure the colour may appeal to some, I personally prefer a low-key affair. Thankfully the Wild Boar's stock is modular like all other T3x synthetic models with interchangeable black grips supplied. Colour aside, by all appearances the Wild Boar design has been drawn from a combination of Tikka's successful Superlite and CTR (Compact Tactical Rifle) platforms and weighing 3.2kg (unscoped) with empty mag fitted is where you really appreciate the genetics.

The fluted and blued chrome moly barrel has a Superlite profile measuring just 16mm at the muzzle and 570mm (22.4") in length. The .308 barrel has a twist rate of one-in-11" and will stabilise many projectile weights from 150 to 180-grain, suitable for pig control. The muzzle crown is recessed to improve accuracy but disappointingly not threaded for accessories such as a muzzle brake. Tikka advertising originally specified a threaded barrel as standard but my test rifle contradicts this, though muzzle

threading is available on request from Beretta. Importantly, Tikka barrels are manufactured in Finland by parent company Sako, so rest assured accuracy is guaranteed to sub-MOA with a three-shot group from their factory ammo.

At the heart of the Wild Boar is Tikka's unmistakable CTR-inspired blued receiver which includes a full-length Picatinny rail for universal mounting of many sight options. The 17mm integral dovetail on the T3x receiver is still evident but while the Picatinny rail is fastened by cap screws, the user manual warns against removal. I assume by the caution that Tikka have tightened the rail using a high-strength Loctite compound on the screw threads.

The stainless steel bolt is spiral fluted and looks smart, shaves off excess weight and combined with the enlarged polymer knob handle provides a firm grip to aid fast, repeating bolt-action. As with all T3xs the silky-slick action is a push feed design with twin locking lugs, machined to provide a low profile 70-degree bolt throw, while the claw extractor and plunge ejector combined with the widened ejection port promote clear extraction of fired cases.

A two-position safety sits to the rear right of the receiver, enabling easy manipulation by the shooter's master thumb, back for 'safe' and forward for 'fire' marked by a red dot on the receiver and like every T3x I've used, their safety catches are easily among the quietest and smoothest available. Bolt closure is clearly identified by a cocking piece indicator (red dot) exposed at the rear of the bolt shroud when the trigger sears are engaged and ready for firing, the single-stage blade trigger fully adjustable from an approximate 4lb maximum down to 2.5lb minimum.

Since I was using the rifle for pig hunting I left the trigger at the factory-set pressure of 3lb and although I found it a touch heavy for my style of hunting, it was acceptable for testing. Unlike deer hunting where usually a single well-placed round is required, the Wild Boar comes equipped with two dual-stack 10-shot steel magazines which allow for fast follow-up shots on a mob of feral pigs.



The magazine has a synthetic base with rubber inlay designed for noise reduction. Although feeling marginally loose once clipped, it fits flush with the alloy triggerguard and is removed easily by grasping with the non-master hand and pushing forward the ambidextrous release button with the tip of your trigger finger. All steel metallic parts except for the bolt are finished in a non-reflective deep matte blueing.

Front and rear action screws securely fasten the receiver recess on the underside to a steel recoil lug on the synthetic stock, mating the two components precisely to leave the barrel completely free-floating from the fore-end. Ultralight by design, the synthetic stock is made from a tough glass-fibre reinforced copolymer.

Although the supplied rifle is a right-hand action the entire stock and its ancillaries are completely ambidextrous, allowing for comfortable left or right shouldering. Varying slightly from my own Superlite, the buttstock has a CTR-inspired removable cheekpiece to accommodate alternate

## Tikka T3x Wild Boar

sighting options and the two removable spacers behind the rubber recoil pad allow the hunter to personalise length-of-pull.

The generous palm swell of the pistol grip and the rifle's overall balance promotes positive sighting when shouldered, adding to the appeal of a fast-handling authentic pig-hunting rifle. If I was to have one minor complaint of the synthetic stock it would be the hollow sound of the buttstock when bumped. I'm sure this could be rectified easily with a high-density Styrofoam filling but possibly at an additional weight trade-off. As per standard, sling swivel studs are included on the fore-end and buttstock for those who carry their rifle long distances.

### Set-up

I mounted the Aimpoint red dot sight forwardmost on the Picatinny rail and opted to remove the orange foregrip, which revealed the same slim fore-end as the T3x Superlite I'm familiar with for fast-pointing, close-range shooting. For testing later with the Burris Eliminator scope my intentions would be to refit the supplied black fore-end grip to provide a more suitable long-range platform.

### Range and field testing

As with other T3xs I've used the Wild Boar produced outstanding 'out of the box' accuracy to reinforce Tikka's three-shot MOA guarantee. Both supplied scopes sighted-in perfectly with the Burris Eliminator first up, pinpoint for 100m then removed and the Aimpoint sight dead-on at 50m.

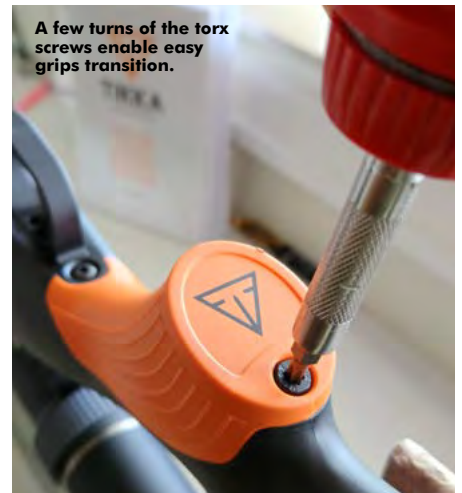
Typically my efforts in the early stages to support the Wild Boar review with a real wild boar proved frustratingly uneventful. Literally thousands of kilometres and months had passed and it's not that I hadn't shot any pigs during this time, I just never had the T3x Wild Boar with me when we stumbled across them. In fact on two occasions while hunting for deer and target shooting, rather ironically I ended up taking pigs with my own Tikka rifles.

And just like that there they were. "Pigs", my wife Sue-Ann said as we meandered through the property, spotlighting for varmints with smaller calibre rifles. I came prepared this time by bringing the T3x Wild Boar and while partially covered by thick grass, pigs presented for a clear shot and with Sue-Ann operating my Makita work lamp, I took aim at the biggest of the mob. The 150-grain Sako ammo made light work

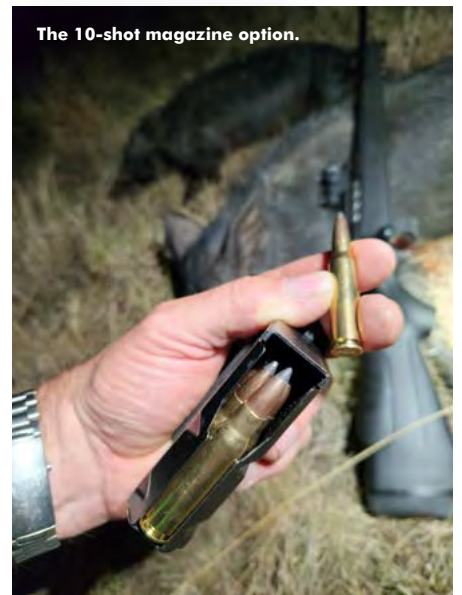
**Note the CTR-inspired ambidextrous cheekpiece and inclusion of spacers on the recoil pad.**



**A few turns of the torx screws enable easy grips transition.**



**The 10-shot magazine option.**



**Sighting-in the T3x Wild Boar after the wide foregrip was removed in preparation for hunting. Photo taken by remote means.**



# HEYM SR21 / SR30

BOLT ACTION

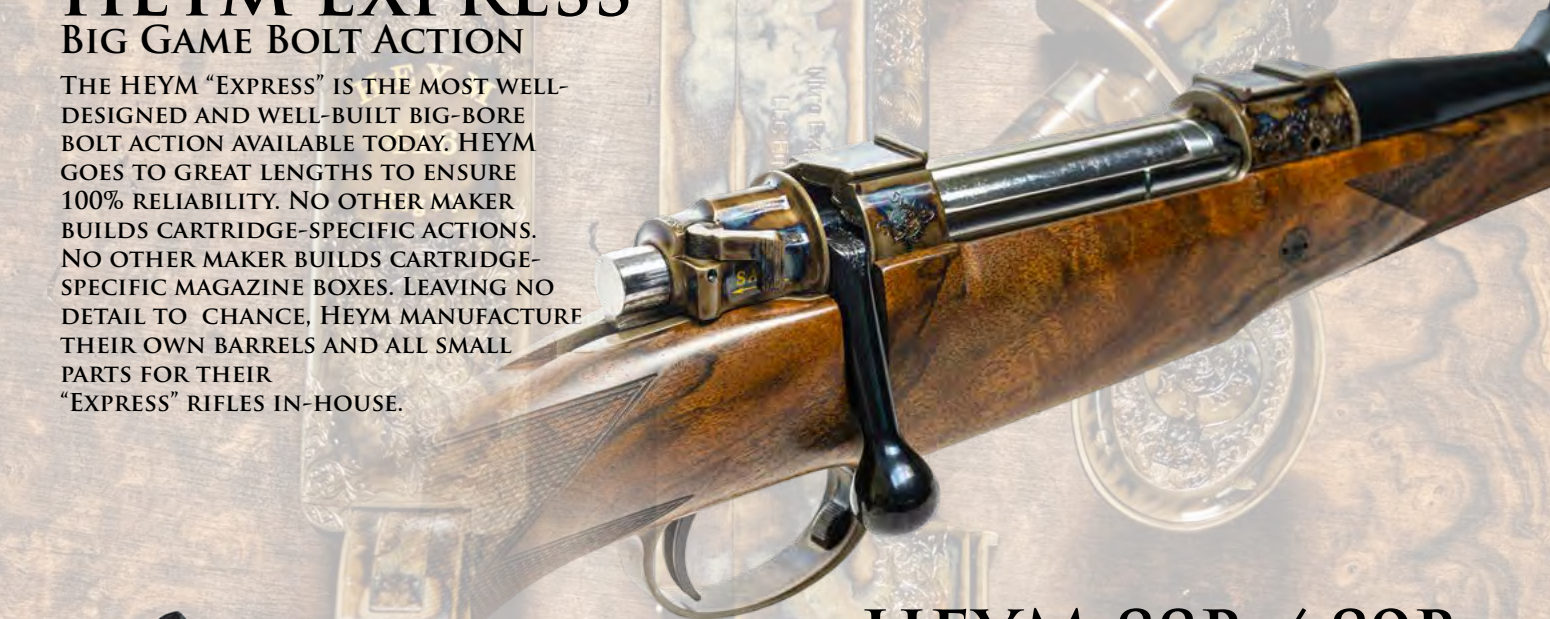


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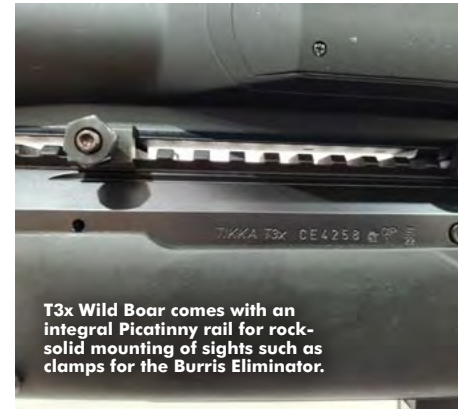


## Tikka T3x Wild Boar

of the first boar as confusion reigned within their ranks and the others fled. Shooting offhand I'd no trouble dropping a second 'on the run' and another as it disappeared into the grass. We followed them into thicker scrub but with a clear sight picture now unachievable decided to call it quits.

Finally I had my first porker with the T3x Wild Boar and to say I was relieved would be an understatement. During the unfolding action the rifle shouldered and cycled beautifully and at no stage did I feel uncomfortable with the shot. Having the advantage of a 10-shot magazine provided peace of mind and if things had played out differently in daylight, we'd probably have had more pigs on the ground.

Priced at \$2879 (RRP at time of writing) for both calibre options of .223 Rem and .308 Win, the Tikka T3x Wild Boar is perfect for accurate delivery of fast feral pig control and is a welcome addition to a stable of quality rifles proudly made in Finland by Tikka. More at [berettaaustralia.com.au](http://berettaaustralia.com.au) ●



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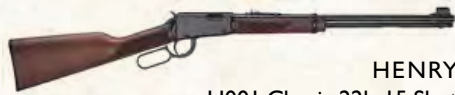
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During warmer months foxes respond eagerly to a properly worked game call, even a cheap tin whistle.

# Call of nature

Seasoned hunter Leon Wright keeps a few tricks up his sleeve

**T**he ducks were flying too fast as they rounded the bend of the billabong and I wasn't surprised in the slightest as they passed my decoy spread with hardly a dip of their wings, and by the time I had the call working they'd reached the end of the billabong. An inexperienced duck hunter would've written them off as a lost opportunity but I knew better and a quick rendition of the comeback call had them bank as one, turn in mid-flight and come winging back.

This time they came in on cupped wings and dropped noisily among my decoys, giving me the chance of singling out a fat blackie and dropping it with a load of No.2 shot while the rest headed off. Once again, like so many times over the years, a call had put game in the bag for me.

When I started hunting, albeit a long time ago, game calls were relatively new to the scene. We mostly made our own fox whistles from some bent tin or a couple of brass ends of shotgun shells with the plastic casing melted off and dead primers knocked out, then they were squeezed together. Even sucking on the back of your

hand with pursed lips produced the goods. For the outlay of two bob (20c) you could buy a button-type tin whistle which worked a treat and, even with the proliferation of fox calls on the market today, they're still extremely popular.

Yet in my early days these fox whistles, duck calls and the odd quail call were the only ones available but that's no longer the case - which is a good thing - and I rarely go hunting without some sort of game call whether I'm after foxes or even sambar deer. Bear with me and I'll take you through my annual hunting calendar to show you how important I consider game calls to be.

Along with numerous mouth-operated calls come an equally confusing selection of electronic ones but being old school I stick with the tried and tested tin whistle and Scotch Predator call. They all have their good and bad days and I know from experience it's a wise hunter who carries a number of calls.

I remember my son and I doing a bit of fox calling early one morning. We were hunting around the edge of a large reed-covered dry swamp when we spotted a

fox sniffing a dead roo carcass a couple of hundred metres away so, hiding ourselves near some thick reeds, I started blowing the tin whistle. The fox looked up, stared in our direction for a minute or two but that was all. It didn't appear interested until a couple of loud squeaks on the Scotch Predator produced an immediate result and the fox came bolting in. So you're bound to find there'll be times when one call will work better than another and that's why the smart hunter carries a couple of options.

When hunting rabbits with a shotgun (and without the dogs) I make sure I have a tin whistle round my neck as it comes in handy when rabbits are more nervous than usual due to hunting pressure. At the first hint of danger they dash for the nearest clump of thick bracken though often squat just inside the edge of the bracken thicket, feeling safe enough from impending danger. So I move within shotgun range, start blowing the tin whistle and on hearing the distressing wail, rabbits start moving about to give me the chance of a shot.

With the opening of duck season I start off shooting over decoys on a quiet little

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## Call of nature



Properly used calls will always produce the goods over a well set block of decoys.

all. Not only is it necessary to know how to work one, you need to be aware of the different calls and when to use them.

Calls like the important 'come back', 'feed', 'chatter', 'lonesome duck' and 'maniacal teal' combined with a well set-out pattern of decoys are almost certain to enhance your success, not forgetting to throw in a couple of 'confidence' decoys to add even more appeal. And keep that fox whistle round your neck as you'll be surprised how many times you'll encounter a fox while wandering around hunting ducks.

During the season just past, quail were really thick in our area and my younger hunting partner was constantly telling

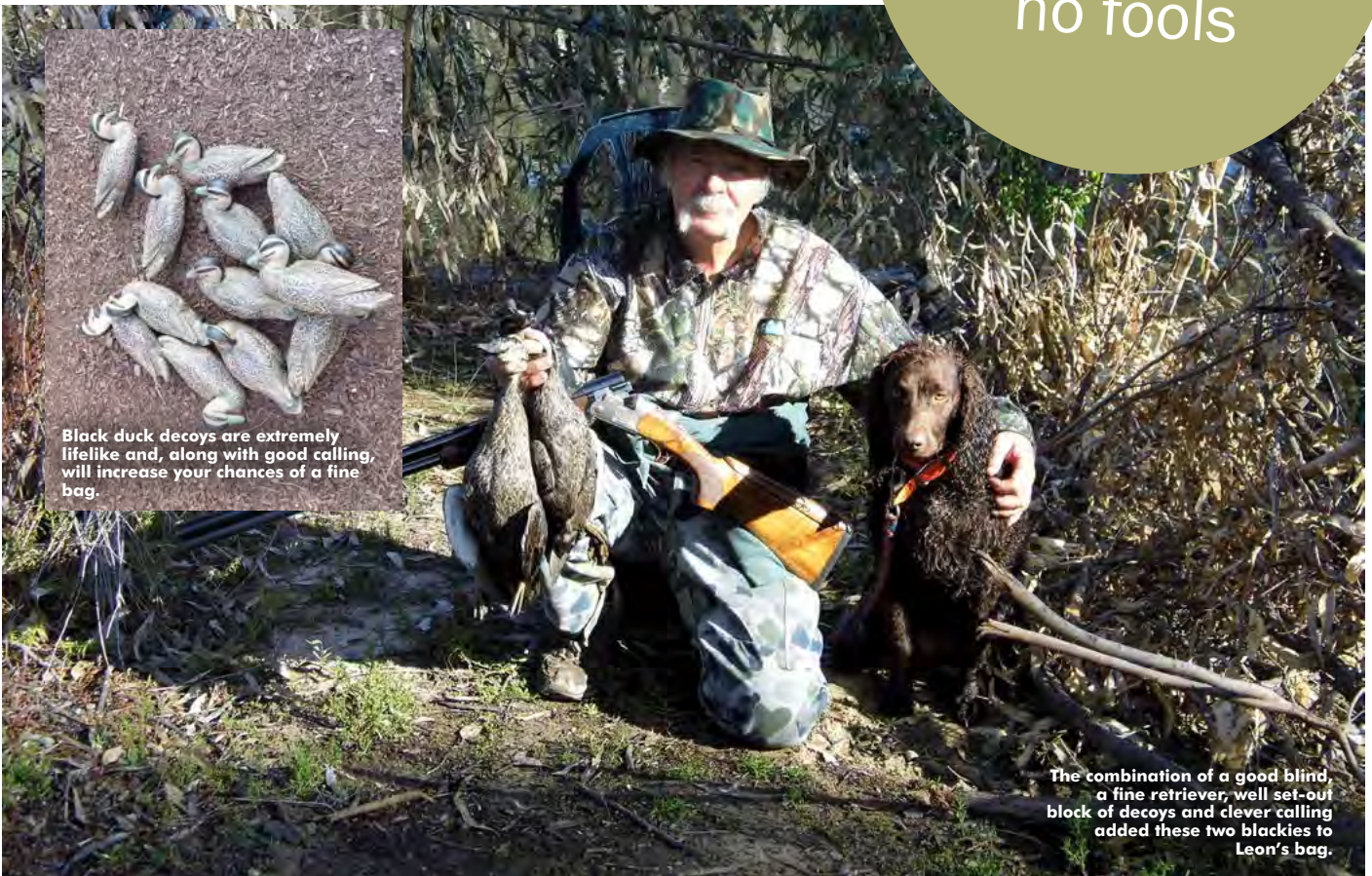
A good-quality call is an asset as ducks are no fools

billabong I know. There are few better ways of bagging a feed of ducks than spending time sitting over a spread of decoys and working a call when a flock is spotted. A good-quality call is an asset as ducks are no

fools and an out of tune or worse, a badly worked call, will quickly turn them away. It's a line often heard and it couldn't be truer: If you can't blow the call properly then don't blow it at



Black duck decoys are extremely lifelike and, along with good calling, will increase your chances of a fine bag.



The combination of a good blind, a fine retriever, well set-out block of decoys and clever calling added these two blackies to Leon's bag.





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## Call of nature

me he could hear them calling in stubble paddocks. Just before the season opened I was talking to a fellow quail hunter who told me how his success ratio improved greatly when he bought an electronic quail call. I almost bought one but don't consider them sporting and the price tag of a couple of hundred dollars shook me. But if other hunters want to use them that's fine by me. Luckily I made the right decision as the Game Management Authority (Victoria) banned them prior to the season.

In the early months of the year we're heavily involved in spotlighting foxes for local farmers, the deal being we help take care of the predators and the farmers let us hunt ducks and quail during the season. On one occasion we'd just entered the paddock and were in the process of loading the rifle and checking the spotlight as I took a moment to enjoy the night. With the moon on the wax, thunder, lightning and the odd light rain I happened to mention to Blake: "On a night like this we might just come across those deer the farmer wants gone."

Sure enough we were only just under way when we spotted a red stag sticking out like a sore thumb in the crop stubble. Half an hour later with the stag cut up and neatly stacked in the back of the ute, we were off chasing foxes in the hilly paddock. The spotlight soon picked out a small herd of fallow deer but we already had our venison for this trip, though a quick count showed 28 fallow with a couple of good bucks among them.

We decided to come back in a couple of weeks and try to croak up a stag and as we



Two excellent deer calls, one a sambar option and the other a fallow stag.



This fallow stag was taken with a Marlin 30-30 after being croaked into easy shooting range.

were in the middle of the rut our chances were good. A couple of Saturdays later, early one morning with Marlin 30-30 in hand, we were sneaking around the stubble paddock looking for a spot to croak from. With our backs to a handy tree I started croaking and on only the second attempt a stag came trotting in from our right. I don't know what he was planning as his antlers were all but trashed though overall he was in good condition. The farmer

wanting rid of it spelt its demise and it collapsed after being hit in the lower neck. We field dressed it and took all usable meat.

Fast-forward a few months and a friend approached me with a request to take him out after a sambar which led to us camping on my favourite property. Over the winter months we'd done a fair bit of sambar hunting using the night vision mounted on my Ruger .300 Win Mag, so the deer were becoming a bit nervous. Yet it wasn't long before we had the first one on the ground and, as we were running hot, thought we'd try the back paddock which was always good for a deer or two.

On slipping into the paddock we couldn't see any deer which had me reaching for the sambar call and, within a matter of minutes, we had two of them 'on the hook', one cautious and the second approaching at pace. On realising the mistake it turned and bolted for the bush so we concentrated on the first one that was still approaching, albeit far more warily. Then a single shot from the .303 had the deer on the deck in an ideal spot for full retrieval.

So I hope I've assured you most of the successful hunting I've enjoyed has been centred around a game call of one sort or another. If you're a new hunter looking to improve your chances then think seriously about game calls, as once you've learned how to operate one correctly your success rate will quickly improve. ●



A selection of fox calls used by Leon are among some of the numerous types available.

Leon's favourite combination, a Predator call and mouse squeaker, have lured foxes in on numerous hunts.





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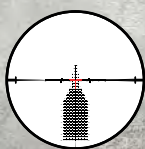
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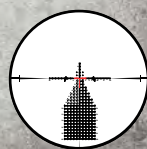
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# Classy chassis

Hera H7 the perfect fit, says Con Kapralos

**H**era Arms is probably a name quite unfamiliar to many Australian shooters and hunters. Based in Triefenstein, Germany their research, development and manufacturing facilities cater to the production of cutting-edge self-loading rifles and accessories to suit such rifle platforms as the AR-15, Ruger 10-22 and similar.

With logistics facilities in the US most of their products would be destined for that market, with Australian shooters having virtually no access to such firearms or accessories. Yet one recent line of interest to folks Down Under is a variety of chassis riflestocks called the H7 Chassis, which are tailored for short-action .308 Winchester barrelled actions such as the Howa M1500 and Remington 700.

While aftermarket chassis stocks aren't new the Hera H7 is quite unique, being made from high-strength glass-reinforced polymer and aluminium with a distinct appearance and array of ingenious features. Local distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies sent *Australian Shooter* a unit for the Howa M1500, which coincided with the new Howa Carbon Elevate rifle in .308 Winchester being reviewed concurrently.

## First impressions

The review chassis is black though tan and OD-green are also available. The unit was supplied with a matching Hera H7 AICS-style 5-shot magazine in .308 Winchester as well as an additional spacer, two special washers for the action screws and small Picatinny rail for mounting to the stock. A user manual and Hera pen were also included.

## Up close

The Hera H7 Chassis riflestock is a drop-in fit, in this case for the Howa M1500 in .308 Winchester only and suited more to varmint profile barrels such as number six or seven contours. The chassis weighs 1330 grams and is 860mm long with the 10mm buttstock spacer fitted from the factory.

The detachable box magazine, also supplied, is made entirely from polymer and weighs 100 grams. Looking at the chassis it consists of three major segments in the buttstock, the bedding block which includes the pistol grip, triggerguard and magazine housing and forward of this is the fore-end, all three main segments using glass-filled high-strength polymer and/or aluminium in their construction.

The buttstock has some innovative features. The buttplate is made from hard

polymer and has the toe angled inwards, probably an indication it was designed to be shot prone. The body of the buttstock has two polymer covers (one either side) which can be removed or left attached depending on requirement. Removing the two covers reveals a hollowed-out section with a couple of slots furnished into the bottom and rear edges, no doubt for use with a tactical sling.

On top of the buttstock comb is a non-adjustable cheekrest which is also removable and attaches to the comb via four locking hooks, two flush-mounted sling swivel cups (one either side) providing another means to attach a sling. The buttstock is attached to the pistol grip segment by an aluminium spacer (two are supplied), the 10mm unit being pre-fitted to the buttstock with a longer 20mm unit available for



Contents of the Hera H7 Chassis stock for the Howa M1500 short-action in .308 Winchester.

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## Classy chassis

users who require a longer length-of-pull.

The mid-section houses the aluminium 'V-block' which provides the bedding platform for the Howa M1500 action and is a solid block, superbly milled and finished to a high degree. Clamped to the aluminium chassis block with numerous screws is an outer polymer housing which also extends rearwards creating the pistol grip and rear stock tang, the pistol grip being quite slim and comfortable to hold with a shallow hook at the base. On the underside of the mid-section is the triggerguard and magazine well which is moulded integrally as part of the polymer housing anchored to the aluminium chassis block.

The triggerguard is generous in size and the front edge also houses the ambidextrous magazine release, while forward of this is the well which accommodates the supplied AICS-style detachable box magazine. The chassis is anchored to the barrelled action using the factory OEM action screws though Hera provides two stainless steel pillars which need to be fitted to the chassis as well as two small stainless washers. These sandwich between the action screw-head and base of the pillars.

Moving forward the fore-end is impressive in design and finish. It's made of a single piece of aluminum and is anchored to the chassis bedding block with three countersunk screws on either side. This is characterised by five M-Lok slots on either side of the top edge with another seven slots on the underside which is completely flat to allow a multitude of accessories to be mounted in the slots. The entire length of



**Buttstock with cheekrest and polymer side-covers in place.**



**A generous triggerguard lets you shoot with gloves.**



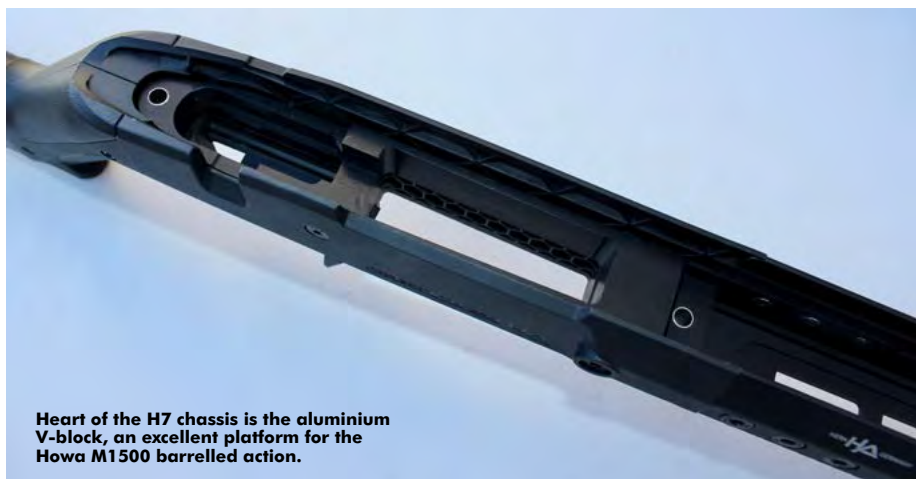
**The polymer AICS-style magazine holds five rounds in .308 Winchester.**

the fore-end sides are superbly finished in a cross-cut pattern which provides an excellent level of grip for the leading hand. As mentioned, both fore-end and chassis are designed to primarily accommodate wider profile barrels and these free-float easily.

It would be hard to mistake which barrelled action or application the chassis is for. The fore-end has 'H7SA/H22 stock system made in Germany' inscribed on the left while the right of the action has 'HERA GMBH H7/HOWA' impressed into the polymer cladding. Make no bones about it, this chassis is built to take all the punishment any discipline or field use can throw at it.

### Installation and range test

Installing the H7 chassis to the Howa M1500 Carbon Elevate barrelled action is easily done by simply removing the initial stock. The two supplied washers are threaded on to the factory OEM action



Heart of the H7 chassis is the aluminium V-block, an excellent platform for the Howa M1500 barrelled action.

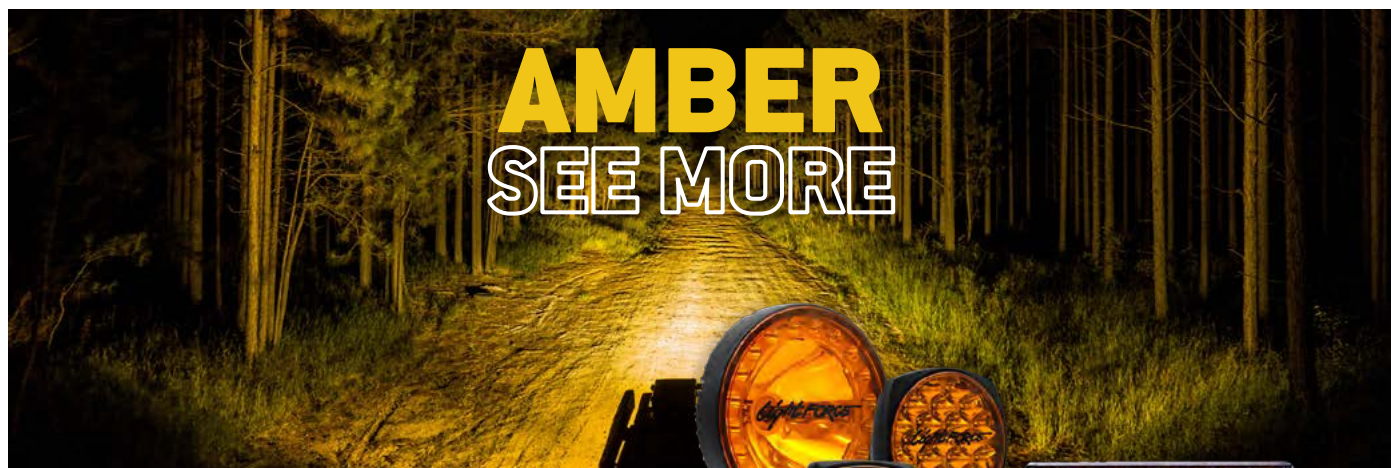


The inside of the aluminium fore-end reveals a generous channel to ensure a free-floating barrel.

screws then the stainless steel pillars need to be inserted into the bedding block. Once everything is positioned correctly the action screws can be tightened to the specified 35-40"/lb using a torque wrench.

Range testing was much anticipated. One major adjustment required was to see if the cheekrest was needed and in my case its installation gave a better cheek-weld and alignment with the Zeiss V4 optic, length-of-pull just fine with the 10mm spacer installed. The detachable box magazine functioned as expected and was easy to load to capacity. One minus point for me personally was the hard recoil pad, as something with a bit more recoil-reducing properties would've been advantageous.

Overall, shooting the rifle with H7 Chassis over the bench was a positive experience. It's squarely aimed at disciplines such as PRS or long-range prone as it's made to accept varmint/heavy profile barrels in .308 calibre (I'm sure an H7 Chassis in 6.5 Creedmoor is on the cards and would be popular). Perusing several east coast firearms retailers the H7 Chassis was priced around the \$550 mark which makes it affordable. More at [www.osaaustralia.com.au](http://www.osaaustralia.com.au) ●



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Changes to handgun laws came into force 20 years ago this month.



# Handgun law changes 20 years on

John Maxwell

**D**uring an econometrics lecture at Melbourne's Monash University on October 21, 2002, Chinese student Huan Yun 'Allen' Xiang opened fire, killing two fellow students and wounding another five people including his lecturer. The 36-year-old was armed with six handguns, all loaded and legally acquired. He was charged with two counts of murder and five of attempted murder but was acquitted on grounds of a paranoid delusional disorder and 20 years on remains in secure psychiatric care.

In the week before the shooting, Xiang's deteriorating mental state had become apparent to one of his lecturers. He'd been issued a Victorian handgun licence in June 2002 then bought a CZ-75 in 9mm, a pair of Smith & Wesson revolvers in .38 Special and .357 Magnum, a Taurus PT-92 in .40 Smith & Wesson, a Beretta 89 in .22LR and Beretta Tomcat in .32 ACP.

The obvious question was how a foreign student with minimal English, emerging mental health issues and a recent interest in the shooting sports had managed to legally acquire half a dozen handguns in just four months. Thus was launched Australia's

second guns buyback - directed at handguns - along with a national tightening of handgun laws.

Handguns were not touched in the gun law reforms which followed the 1996 Port Arthur tragedy, as at the time it was deemed handgun laws were effective and needed no adjustment. But this time there were calls for a total firearm ban, among them from Tim Costello, then-spokesman with the National Coalition for Gun Control.

The Victorian Government proposed tougher penalties for misuse of handguns but said it was not inclined to push for a total ban. Any such ban would of course have required a buyback at unknown but substantial cost. "There are obviously changes that can be made at both state and federal levels, further changes," said Prime Minister John Howard. And there it was. Those changes were unveiled at a meeting of the Council of Australian Government (COAG) on December 6, 2002 and were to be in place 20 years ago this month (June 30, 2003), implemented by all states and territories as with the National Firearms Agreement (NFA) of 1996.

Yet this guns buyback, unlike '96, doesn't seem to have been discussed at Federal Cabinet level as I could find no reference to the matter in lists of Cabinet documents released at the end of each year under the 20-year rule. The new plan had been (mostly) developed by the Australasian Police Ministers Council (APMC) which came up with 28 resolutions. Importantly, these resolutions didn't propose any calibre and barrel length restrictions, those being down to COAG, that is state premiers and the Prime Minister.

Unlike 1996 the Commonwealth wasn't footing the entire bill. It stumped up \$15 million left over from the '96 buyback then picked up two-thirds of the total with the states and territories absorbing the other third. It was estimated this would snare 65,000 guns at a total cost of \$118 million and that was pretty close with 68,727 guns surrendered and \$96.6 million paid in compensation along with \$70 million in administration costs.

Law-abiding shooters and dealers were compensated for 278,00 assorted parts and accessories and of course many went straight out and bought new (legal)



firearms, as witnessed in Victoria where shooters surrendered 18,814 guns and replaced them with 15,184 new pistols (presumably that pattern was mirrored across Australia). Consequently, the national inventory didn't greatly diminish and has since far exceeded previous levels.

Shooters didn't like this buyback and neither did the 'antis' who sought a total ban and saw this as an opening for gun owners to update their equipment at taxpayers' expense. Yet for shooters the changes were still far-reaching. Banned were handguns greater than .38 (9mm), other than for a couple of disciplines (Metallic Silhouette and Single Action) where shooters and the SSAA successfully made the case for use of larger calibres. But for everyone else that meant no more 1911s or .44 Magnums. So why these restrictions? I could find no published explanation by any of the main players including John Howard and his then-Justice Minister Chris Ellison. It could only have been that larger calibres were perceived as more lethal.

There were new minimum barrel length requirements: 120mm for self-loaders and 100mm for revolvers which meant no more small handguns which were seen as too easily concealed. There were new magazine restrictions with a 10-round maximum capacity, so no more 17-round Glock mags. The changes also contained an option for licensed shooters to relinquish all handguns (including those not newly prohibited) and be fully compensated but in return they had to surrender their handgun licence and undertake not to seek another one for five years.

Considering the apparent ease with which Xiang obtained his licence and that array of handguns, a raft of changes made it substantially more difficult and time-consuming to earn an H-licence (the current national H-licensing regime fundamentally dates from this period). Resolutions from the APMC envisaged a system of graduated access to handguns based on training, experience and participation.

As an initial step, a prospective pistol shooter had to undergo a police record check then present it to his or her club with potential new members also having to provide character references. H-licence aspirants had to undergo training and couldn't secure a handgun for six months then, in the following six months, could acquire one .22 pistol and one .177 air pistol or a centrefire pistol and an air pistol.

Alas, the John Edwards case in 2018 showed the system wasn't foolproof (at


least in New South Wales). Despite a recorded history of domestic abuse, Edwards managed to acquire an H-licence and a pair of handguns which he used to kill his children then himself, the case highlighting the responsibilities imposed on pistol clubs to vet new members. Any shooting club is fully entitled to accept or reject new members and, unimpressed by Edwards' aggressive manner, two clubs in Sydney rejected him. Yet there was no obligation on them to inform NSW authorities, though there would've been had they perceived him as posing a risk to the community or himself. Unaware of his history, a third club accepted his membership.

The new handgun regime imposed mandatory attendance requirements on members, meaning participation in a minimum six formal club competitions a year along with a further four for each additional type of handgun. In practical terms that meant, for example, a minimum of six centrefire and four rimfire shoots per member each year which placed an obligation on clubs to record attendance and, depending on jurisdictional requirements, report that to licensing authorities annually.

So 20 years on has it made Australia safer? Without doubt it's far more time-consuming and arduous to obtain an H-licence. No newcomer to pistol shooting can go straight out and buy a handgun, let alone half dozen as Xiang did. Yet any immediate decline in the number of H-licences and handguns has since been well and truly overtaken.

The '96 NFA and its consequences have been endlessly dissected by researchers in Australia and overseas (I counted at least a dozen assorted papers), yet the 2003 handgun buyback and licensing reforms have attracted nowhere near that same level of attention. One study of both buybacks by academics Wang-Sheng Lee and Sandy Suardi concluded they had not resulted in any real reduction in firearm deaths.

So why that lack of attention? It's unclear but here are a couple of thoughts. The 2003 buyback wasn't total and contrary to the desires of anti-gun groups, handguns remain legal though tightly regulated. Handgun crime by licensed shooters using legally-owned guns is rare, though sadly not non-existent. The Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) *Homicide in Australia* research series found 17 per cent of homicide incidents (34) in 2019-20



No newcomer  
to pistol shooting  
can go straight  
out and buy  
a handgun

involved firearms, about the same as the previous year, though there's no further breakdown to indicate how many involved handguns.

Another 2008 AIC study on criminal use of handguns found a rising proportion of firearm murders involved handguns (more than 50 per cent some years). Over the same period firearm use in homicide was declining, a trend which preceded the '96 NFA. Another AIC study in 2000 found the vast majority of people committing murder with guns (more than 90 per cent) were unlicensed and the firearms they used were unregistered. In that study period a quarter of murder weapons were handguns.

It's unclear if that situation has changed as there's no recent research on use of handguns in crime or on licensing and registration status of firearms used in homicide, though it's fair to say villains like handguns for all the obvious reasons - they're concealable, intimidating and deliver status in the criminal culture. Many lawbreakers are willing to go to considerable lengths to acquire handguns and cough up serious money.

National and state police have taskforces to target gun crime, underworld suppliers and associated criminal groups, especially drug dealers and outlaw motorcycle gangs. Every state and territory can impose serious penalties, yet crooks still manage to acquire handguns. And as I have noted previously a significant chunk of Australian gun crime, particularly handgun crime, occurs around Sydney's western suburbs and appears to be down to a seemingly endless turf war between a pair of rival 'families'. ■



# Top brass!

Peterson product close to perfection says Daniel O’Dea

One of the primary factors in achieving firearm accuracy is the elimination of variables which covers a whole gamut of areas be they action bedding, scope mounting, propellant or projectile selection to name but a few. The least change there is between shots, no matter how small, the better as consistency breeds accuracy not just with the shooter but with hardware and components too.

For those chasing the ultimate accuracy, match-quality brass is all but essential. You can have a great rifle and optics and even excellent projectiles, primers and propellant but that can all be undermined if there’s no consistency in your brass. Where do I start? If primer flash holes are not uniform, ignition may be different between shots and if case length differs, neck tension might vary while inconsistent case volume can create more variance. Lack of case concentricity may present the projectile differently each time a round is chambered and so on. Any one of these things can make a small difference but start stacking up multiples of them and it can make a tangible variance on paper.

Of course you can go overboard. I know there are plenty of reloaders saying: “Hang on, I use any old mixed brass and still shoot MOA or better!” It may not matter if



**Case heads are clearly stamped and primer pockets with flash holes perfectly concentric.**

you’re just after basic field accuracy and if it’s good enough to hit a small dinner plate at 100m, you won’t miss much in the field. Yet regardless of whether you’re shooting a benchrest match, hunting or just plain vermin control, it always pays to give yourself the best chance of success from the get-go so why not start with good quality brass?

Currently there’s a decent choice of worthy brass on the market but the

Peterson brand of match-grade has to be right up there among the best. As a US company based in Pittsburgh, Peterson make their brass on a new state-of-the-art case line and I’ve drawn much of the following information with the help of their website but the process basically goes as follows.

Cases start life as a part of massive coils of C260-grade cartridge brass which are split into narrow coils before being fed into a cupping press where brass cups are punched and formed. The finished cups are stout and wide before being processed through three separate drawing stages to elongate them to the desired length with excess brass trimmed, at which point they look like a brass tube with a closed end.

In the next step both the primer pocket and headstamp are formed where the case is rammed against a pocketing tool to create the primer pocket, followed by a bunter which flattens the bottom of the case and adds the headstamp. Then the extractor groove is cut. In a course similar to a horizontal lathe, the case is clamped on a spindle and spun at high speed while a profile cutter is introduced to cut the groove.

Now resembling a straight-walled case, tapering commences with cases tapered through three separate presses to be



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## Top brass!

refined into their final body, neck and mouth dimensions but are still without flash holes. They also need to be trimmed to final length and in this process, specially designed carbide cutters which are frequently changed out are used to prevent any burring inside or outside the case mouth, then the flash hole is punched.

Inherent to case performance, extra-special attention is given to ensure all flash holes are uniform and free from burrs or tearing. Then both case mouths and necks are annealed and as with the flash holes, this step is inherent to performance as uniformity in neck tension (or how the case neck grabs or holds the projectile) is also an important step in ensuring premium accuracy. To this end the annealing job is via an induction method rather than flame annealing, as induction produces a more precise control of temperature for each individual case. Lastly the cases are chemically



Used cases remained bright and fire-formed perfectly.



Testing on the bench using 6.5 Creedmoor Howa 1500 Bravo and Element Titan scope.



Case necks are annealed by induction for ideal temperature control.

washed which removes any leftover lubricants accumulated in the manufacturing procedure while a combination of acids, detergents and anti-tarnish compounds give a finished product with a beautifully polished lustre.

Local distributor of Peterson brass, SJS Trading, provided *Australian Shooter* a box in 6.5 Creedmoor for review purposes and on first inspection all the effort that goes into manufacturing was clearly evident. Brass was bright and neatly presented with not a burr or blemish to be found, primer pockets and flash holes appeared perfectly concentric as did the case necks.

The finished match cases come packed in case guard-type ammo boxes of 50 which prevents damage in transit and after inspection I'd no qualms about jumping straight to loading without going anywhere near a sizing die. Not only that, the boxes themselves are of premium manufacture with moulded plastic pivot-type hinges as opposed to just



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Pictured: Geovid Pro 8x42

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## Top brass!

a hinged seam. It's not uncommon to pay anywhere from \$15-\$30 for these ammo boxes alone which should last for years and save you buying them separately.

I didn't go overly scientific in testing these cases though I did individually weigh and measure them as this can give a good indication of consistency and volume. If they weigh the same they must have the exact amount of brass in each case, therefore it follows case thickness and volume should be consistent, likewise case length for neck tension and so on. Over 50 cases the average weight was 163.37gr with a standard deviation of 0.385 of a grain. Case length average was 48.57mm which is pretty much the recommended trim length with a standard deviation of a minuscule 0.027 of one millimetre.

Satisfied with those results all that was left was to prime the cases, load them with a sufficient amount of ADI AR2209, top them off with Hornady 140gr ELD Match projectiles and head for the range. For testing I was using my 6.5 Creedmoor Howa 1500 which is currently sitting in a KRG Bravo chassis from another review. Accuracy has always been excellent out of this Howa with ½ MOA or even better being pretty standard at regular intervals and my loads with Peterson brass continued



Brass is polished to a high lustre in manufacture.

that trend. My 6.5 Creedmoor loads are moderate and the brass came out nicely fire-formed and bright and I've no doubt in such applications case life should be quite lengthy. If any indication is needed the reloading data sheet provided as standard with the ammo box has provision for marking 'times loaded' x 20. Of course

quality comes at a price and Peterson brass is not cheap but based on its growing reputation it might just represent excellent value. Perhaps now more than ever is a time where you're better investing in a quality product guaranteed to perform and be long-lasting. For more and calibre availability visit [sjstradingco.com.au](http://sjstradingco.com.au) ■

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# Calls for National Register a result of system failure

Rachael Oxborrow

A review of submissions to the Attorney-General Department's public consultation on the development of a National Firearms Register should hopefully highlight - at least the submissions made by groups representing law-abiding licensed firearm owners - that system failure has brought us to this point, not firearms.

Public submissions made in April are now being reviewed by relevant government agencies and Australia's state and territory police ministers and, taking this feedback and other considerations into account, options for how a National Firearms Register could look will be discussed at a Police Ministers Council meeting this month before being presented to National Cabinet.

Talks of a National Register began earlier this year in the wake of a series of tragic events in rural Queensland last December, when an act of domestic terrorism involving unlicensed people acting illegally with firearms resulted in a tragic loss of life. The kneejerk commentary that followed called for firearms law reform and as details of law enforcement access to firearms licensing details came to light, the tune of the conversation changed to a perceived need for a National Firearms Register, which would allow police from all jurisdictions to access firearms licensee details with more ease than they can at present.

National Cabinet responded to the situation earlier this year and tasked police ministers to work towards creating a National Register. The following seven

questions were presented for comment:

- What capabilities should a National Firearms Register provide to government regulators and law enforcement?
- Should a National Firearms Register trace more than firearms, for example firearms accessories, magazines, parts and ammunition?
- Do you have any comments on the benefits a National Firearms Register will



offer to law enforcement and community safety, including any broader benefits that should be explored?

- What other capabilities could a National Firearms Register have that would be of benefit to the community, including to lawful firearms owners?
- Do you have any comments on the creation of a verification service to support licensing and permit systems?
- Do you think trusted entities should be able to electronically communicate with firearms registries and, if so, what capabilities should be available to trusted entities such as firearms dealers?

- Do you have any comments on the information proposed to be held by a National Firearms Register?

These lines of questioning highlight some concerning topics which SSAA National have previously addressed, including subjecting law-abiding licensed firearm owners to further regulation by tracking firearms parts, privacy concerns and potential for misuse and the scope of

the information that could fall within the National Firearms Register.

The elephant in the room, which each police minister would be acutely aware of, is the upgrade required to state and territory-based systems currently in place before a National Register could function. Two major criticisms of the current systems relate to the accuracy and consistency of information uploaded and the delay in that information being uploaded affecting the currency of information. These two factors are arguably the biggest risks to public safety when it comes to law enforcement having access to relevant and current details via the Register.

As government continues with this process, SSAA National is in regular contact with relevant departments and entities such as the Attorney-General's Department and the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission. Relationships which allow the government to consult on workable solutions, communicate with SSAA National, the Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia and other likeminded groups to collaborate on a constructive outcome and prevent the occurrence of unintended consequences from policy decisions is imperative. ●



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# SIFA





# All's well that ends well

## John Dunn wraps up his Cobourg Peninsula adventure with a banteng bull of epic proportions

**T**he day was a lazy one though we all had plenty to do. Rob and Caleb worked on the trophies, Gorgia was her usual busy self around camp, Larissa and Zahara talked girl talk and I did some washing and writing while John Spurr (a friend of Rob's), Graeme, Noah and Dylan went offshore-fishing in a boat John had towed all the way from the New South Wales central coast.

The quartet returned around noon with more than enough fresh fish to feed the camp for dinner. The afternoon hunt finished early and for the first time since I'd arrived, I sat in camp and watched the sun set over the Arafura Sea. As it always does in the tropics it dropped below the horizon in a matter of minutes, almost as if it was in a hurry to be somewhere else.

Rob and Gorgia headed for Darwin before daylight the following morning to pick up fuel and supplies along with a new buggy they'd ordered months ago. Larissa was given the honorary role of camp mother for the duration and did a good job, keeping us entertained and on our toes. Gorgia would've been proud of her.

The two travellers arrived back about midnight after a long day so the start next morning was a tad late. The new buggy needed a service before it could go hunting, as did the ute. I went fishing with John, Noah and Zahara and while I'm not much of a boat person I really enjoyed the morning, especially seeing the youngsters catch fish. In the afternoon we again went in search of buffaloes with the buggy giving easy access to a much larger area on the flood plain and though we saw some big bulls, none could match those I'd taken on previous hunts.

### Second banteng

The Fifield clan were due to go back to Darwin the following morning so we said our goodbyes early and when we heard the plane leave an hour or so later, we were down in the spring country looking for a banteng cow to convert into a flat mat. We couldn't find one though we did see quite a few pigs, including a couple of good boars. As we turned to go back to the vehicle two wild dogs came trotting up the creek line, no doubt heading for a feed on the carcass of a bull Noah shot several days earlier. In

line with the 'shoot on sight' policy of the traditional owners, Caleb downed the lead dog with a .500 Nitro Express double rifle he was carrying, way too much gun but devastatingly effective.

We spent most of the afternoon on the flood plains in the buggy, still looking for a big buffalo bull. They were hard to find and we were inevitably distracted by some banteng bulls way too big to ignore so, with buffaloes forgotten, we drove as close as we dared. One stood out as better than the rest so we left the buggy and moved in on foot. At a little over 200m, working off a bipod I found the bull in the scope, fired and missed with the shot flying high.

Rob shook his head in disbelief, Caleb looked at me hard and I had no excuses - it was me, not the rifle - I hadn't held it properly and my shakes had done the rest. The bull scampered away with a bunch of other animals disturbed by the shot and though we followed him up he was soon lost within their ranks, eventually heading back into the timber. Rob pulled up in a patch of shade while I took some time to compose myself and had a much-needed drink of cold



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## All's well that ends well



A young banteng bull watches from the timber as the group looked for a cow to take for her skin.

water. Then we picked up our binoculars and began to search again.

At roughly 1500m out on the plain a loose group of bulls were feeding around each other. They were all big but one of them had horns wider than anything we'd previously seen so it really was a no-brainer. Rob idled the buggy across the wind until we could move no closer and as we stopped to plan our stalk the bantengs saw us, milled nervously about and began to drift away with our boy right in the middle of the bunch. I shouldered the rifle to follow him in the scope and as the beasts began to string out along a pad the big bull was suddenly in a gap, clear of all the others. I swung the rifle a good neck-length in front of him and fired. The bull collapsed mid-stride, kicking up a cloud of dust as his erstwhile mates raced away without him.

Before us lay an outstanding banteng, huge in body, long and heavy in the horns with a tip-to-tip spread that was almost unbelievable. We took his cape and head then made our way back to camp, all three of us a little dazed over what we had. In the skinning area each horn measured more than 25" (63.5cm), the bases 15" (38cm) around and the spread 47" (119.4cm). This was a very good bull indeed.

### Banteng cow

The next day I missed again, shooting over a banteng cow at no more than 80m. No-one was happy, especially me, so back at camp Rob test-fired the rifle from a concrete bench. The bullet struck dead centre at 100m so we all knew what the

problem was. In late afternoon we went for a last look around and on the flats near the Minimini Creek a herd of bantengs were feeding through scattered woodland. Using a dry creek line for cover we left the truck and followed them away from the road for a kilometre or so, until right on dark I finally

### Hunting with R&R Outfitters

R&R Outfitters Australia is owned and operated by Rob and Gorgia Tritten who hold a hunting concession on the Cobourg Peninsula where they offer arguably the best banteng hunting anywhere. There are also buffaloes and pigs available with reef fishing right on the doorstep. Hunting is spot and stalk from either a dual-cab 4WD or all-terrain buggy.

It's a tent camp with basic facilities though everything is provided including good food and drinking water, a cold beer at the end of the day and comfortable beds (special requirements can also be accommodated). There's plenty of water for showers and washing and, if required, a firearm suitable for hunting can be supplied to licensed shooters.

Though it's possible to drive to the camp it's much easier to fly in and out on a charter flight from Darwin, the cost of the charter being additional to the hunt. R&R also offers an array of deer hunting opportunities and for information regarding cost and availability of hunts Rob can be contacted on 0429 900 390. Don't be too concerned if he doesn't answer right away as he's probably busy but will get back to you.



John Spurr, Noah and Zahara with their catch for the morning, the barracuda almost as big as the boy!



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## All's well that ends well

shot a cow without fuss or complication. Rob had said we were going to shoot a 'pretty' cow and there she was lying in the ash and dust with a trickle of blood on her right shoulder, looking sleek and trim and tidy in her caramel-coloured skin with dark dorsal stripe. Then Rob began the long job of removing her hide.

My hunt was over. I hadn't taken the big buffalo or black banteng bull I'd hoped for but wasn't unhappy as there was always next year to look forward to. Both bulls I'd taken were fine trophies, the cow skin an overdue icing on the cake and as I watched Rob working by the light of his headlamp a funny thought crossed my mind. When it reaches the stage where you're looking for a 'pretty' banteng cow, it's probably time to go home. ●

**The buggy gave fast and relatively comfortable access to a lot of rough or wet country where the truck couldn't go.**



**The banteng cow lying where she fell – sleek, trim and caramel-coloured with a dark dorsal stripe. The rifle is a custom Brno in .375 H&H.**

**John with his second and biggest banteng bull, the rifle a John Wilkes double in .500 Nitro Express.**



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# V for Victory

Zeiss Conquest scope a 'clear' winner, writes Con Kapralos

**A**s a provider of consumer goods and especially sports optics, Zeiss continue to redefine their market-place presence with products designed with a definite purpose in mind. Their current choice of riflescopes is one such line which is constantly upgraded, with the 2022 portfolio featuring some top-notch hunting and tactical optics.

For hunting, their top-tier models in the Conquest V6 and V8 are made in Germany and are cutting-edge for the most astute hunter or shooter. These are expensive but, as a global brand, Zeiss clearly recognises the need for a riflescope line that's more affordable, hence the Conquest V4, a range made in Japan under licence. Japanese optics manufacturing is without doubt up there with the European giants so the decision by Zeiss to select Japan is purely to make the optic a tad more affordable, though it's still an ultra-high-quality item.

Outdoor Sporting Agencies, Australia's Zeiss importer and distributor, carries four models of the Conquest V4 in the 1-4x24, 4-16x44, 6-24x50 and 3-12x56 (all based on a 4x zoom ratio) and sent *Australian Shooter* the 3-12x56 with illuminated #60 reticle. The scope arrived in a customary Zeiss

white carton displaying specifications and reticle and having tested and reviewed both the Conquest V6 and V8, it would be interesting to see how the V4 would stack up.

## At a glance

The review model is made from a single piece of aircraft-grade aluminium with a 30mm main tube diameter, is 368mm long and weighs 610 grams. Capped hunting-style turrets provide both elevation and windage.

## Externally

With a scratch-resistant, hard-wearing matte black finish the aluminium tube is a pre-requisite for a quality riflescope. Starting at the front the 62mm objective bell houses the 56mm objective lens and moving towards the turret housing in the centre, there's plenty of the 30mm main tube to position scope rings, 40mm forward and 55mm rearwards of the turret housing respectively.

The windage and elevation turrets are varied with external, capped, external-locking windage, ballistic stop and multi-turn turrets, the scope fitted with capped hunting-style turrets, perfect in my opinion for a hunting riflescope with simplicity in

mind. For users who like to dial turrets the other options will cater to their needs. The dials themselves are one-click for 1/4 Minute-of-Angle which equates to 7mm at 100m.

The dials are easily resettable to zero by simply lifting the dial rim and moving the arrow mark to the small dot on the turret body. I used this style of turret on my old Zeiss Duralyts and they're excellent in every respect. The protective dial caps are made of polymer which serves the purpose of protecting the turrets beneath. Adjacent to the elevation/windage turrets is the illumination dial which takes a single lithium-ion button battery and provides 10 brightness settings for the red dot in the reticle, with an 'OFF' position between each setting. The dial is simple to rotate throughout all settings.

Moving rearwards the ocular housing consists of the diopter focus adjustment, eye-box and power magnification dial with its 3-12x graduated selector ring. The ocular housing is slim at 88mm x 46mm with no awkward bulkiness or appearance, the power magnification dial moving seamlessly from 3x to 12x. A zoom-throw lever is also supplied and can be fitted to the selector ring if required. The eye-box gives



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## V for victory

a seamless view through the scope and diopter adjustment is carried out using the focus ring at the end of the ocular housing.

### Internally

This is where Zeiss engineers excel. Lenses are treated with the T\* six-layer multi-coating process which gives unparalleled clarity, contrast and colour from edge-to-edge, with a resultant 90 per cent light transmission. This may not be something most hunters would worry about but for serious deer stalkers who operate in challenging conditions, being able to clearly identify a target animal in lowlight is something directly imparted by the quality of glass and lens coatings.

Exterior lens surfaces are also treated with Zeiss' LotuTec coatings which repel moisture, dirt and dust for an unblemished image. The reticle is the #60 with illuminated red dot in the second focal plane and consists of two thicker horizontal stadia on the outer with finer cross-hairs in the centre, intersected by another thin cross-hair with a thick post on the lower vertical aspect.

The red dot which provides illumination is in the centre where the two thin cross-hairs intersect and with the illumination settings can be used either day or night. Even without the red dot the reticle layout is still perfect for general hunting, devoid of clutter or hold-over marks which seem to dominate too many scopes these days. For those who demand such, Zeiss does offer a choice of other reticles with and without illumination in the Conquest V4 range.

With the reticle in the second focal plane and erector tube housed in the 30mm main tube, this allows for up to 200cm of adjustment (at 100m), more than ample for hunting out to practical distances. The Conquest V4 3-12x56, as with all other models in the V4 line-up, is nitrogen purged, shockproof and waterproof up to 400mbar and carries Zeiss' Limited Lifetime Transferrable Warranty and five-year No-Fault Policy.

### Range and field testing

The scope was concurrently tested atop a Howa M1500 Carbon Elevate rifle in .308 Winchester and optically was excellent during normal range use, all images out to 300m being crisp and clear with full colour rendition and definition. Adjusting point of impact and performing tracking exercises with the hunter-style turrets was exceptional, all adjustments 100 per cent precise and repeatable. Field-of-view at 100m was tremendous, coming in at 12.7m (at 3x) down to 3.2m (at 12x) and 90mm of



Zeiss Conquest V4 3-12x56 as reviewed.



eye relief is appreciated when shooting a calibre like .308 Winchester or heavier. I didn't need the illumination during daylight hours as the fine cross-hairs were superb for precise shot placement at targets out to 300m.

In the field the V4 in 3-12x56 was first-rate and excelled in lowlight conditions, the 56mm objective lens being sublime at gathering available light with exit pupil range between 9.2-4.7mm. I had the rifle set at 8x for shooting from a blind in late evening which would have meant an exit pupil of around 7mm, considered the optimum for the human retina.

Making out kangaroos, foxes and the odd hare feeding in diminishing daylight was straightforward though sadly no deer



The turrets for windage and elevation are simple to use and re-settable to 'zero'.

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## V for victory

presented for a shot. Having used the V6 and V8 models with 92 and 95 per cent light transmission respectively, there's a noticeable difference which you'd expect with those higher-level optics, though the V4 certainly holds its own.

### Overview

The Conquest V4 is Zeiss' entry level rifle-scope line-up and represents outstanding

value. Yes it's made in Japan but that's never a negative, as optic builders there are considered some of the world's best. The scope was a joy, certainly one to consider for a varmint or general hunting rifle and shopping around the V4 3-12x56 comes in about the \$1200 mark, making it an affordable proposition. More at [osaaustralia.com.au](http://osaaustralia.com.au) ●

### SPECIFICATIONS

**Manufacturer:** Zeiss Sport Optics  
**Model:** Conquest V4 (made in Japan under licence)  
**Magnification:** 3x-12x  
**Objective bell diameter:** 62mm  
**Objective lens diameter:** 56mm  
**Main tube:** 30mm  
**Eye-piece diameter:** 44mm  
**Effective lens diameter:** 27.7-56mm  
**Light transmission:** 90 per cent  
**Exit pupil:** 9.2-4.7mm  
**Field of view at 100m:** 12.7-3.2mm  
**Eye relief:** 90mm  
**Diopter adjustment:** +2.0/-3.0 dpt  
**Parallax setting:** Fixed - 91.4m  
**Adjustment range at 100m:** 200cm  
**Adjustment per click at 100m:** ¼ MOA (0.7cm/100m)  
**Reticle:** #60 illuminated (other options available)  
**Weight:** 610 grams  
**Length:** 368mm  
**RRP:** About \$1200 at time of review  
**Distributor:** Outdoor Sporting Agencies



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# Do unto others: A collective obligation

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NO ACCESS

Ideal deer country  
but no permission  
means no access.

Opinion: Derek Nugent

A collective  
responsibility  
to be ethical,  
legal and safe  
practitioners

The notion of a 'fair go' and well-developed sense of community have long been two well established principles underpinning the Australian way of life. We have always, as a people, been quick to step up and do the right thing, lend a hand and call out wrongdoings. We've seen this dedicated community mindedness aptly illustrated in response to recent flood events which devastated much of the east coast earlier this year and the appalling situation in Ukraine.

It's important for the long-term viability of our chosen recreation and to protect our freedom to own firearms that a similar sense of fraternity be reflected in our behaviour when afield in the pursuit of game. In an at times hostile environment a favourable public image is essential - any deeds likely to bring our ability to own and use firearms into question must be challenged and condemned. It's a collective obligation to call out all actions which compromise the integrity of hunting and hunters across the country in terms of the ethical, legal and safe implementation of our outdoor endeavours.

#### Personal experience

I own a modest block of land on the fringes of the Brisbane Valley - it's red deer

country. I didn't inherit the land nor was it given to me, I worked hard and saved for 10 years to buy it and pay off the loan. It's a recreational area for family and friends - we camp, hike and ride bikes and it's also where I introduced my son to shooting and hunting. In doing so I believe I've developed in him attitudes and skills which will serve him well in later life and created memories I hope will sustain a close relationship between us.

So you can imagine my feelings when I found clear evidence of poaching on my property. Trespassers had shot a stag I'd been watching for more than 18 months, having passed on the chance to take him myself three times in the knowledge he would, in a few seasons, grow from being a good trophy to a great one. In the interim he'd have contributed much to the gene pool of the local herd which I hunt selectively in the interest of its long-term quality. His skull hadn't even been taken for a mount, the antlers crudely broken off and taken for knife handles or dog chews.

Sadly this is a common event for many landowners large and small who have to contend with such selfish antics from unscrupulous poachers on an annual basis, particularly during the roar. Many have experienced fences cut, gates left open, farm infrastructure damaged and stock

injured or killed. This is precisely the sort of experience which hardens the heart of landowners to grant hunting access, yet much worse is the highly negative public opinion generated by the behaviour of a few ignorant people.

This is the sort of conduct which must be addressed and called out by all of us, as it provides the anti-hunting/anti-gun lobby and politicians who support them with the evidence required to push their varied agendas, all to the detriment of our interests. Which brings me to the crux of the issue I wish to address by clinically discussing the full dimensions on the matter of trespassing. Namely the ethical, legal and safety considerations which need to underpin any response to putting a necessary end to the practice.

#### Ethical considerations

One of the most obvious means of garnering and maintaining support for our chosen pastime is to ensure we operate from a sound ethical foundation. The old adage that 'actions speak louder than words' is so true and as hunters we need

## Do unto others

to be seen by the public as 'practising what we preach'. In this respect the work of the SSAA is invaluable and should be embraced by all.

The SSAA publicly endorses an extensive Code of Ethics and if you haven't refamiliarised yourself with it I encourage you to do so as it's a manifest for safe, legal and respectful standards by all hunters. Furthermore it draws attention to the public benefit of hunting in terms of both the Conservation & Wildlife Management (CWM) program and Farmer Assist scheme. In my home state, the Queensland Government also provides a protocol of practice in its 'Feral Livestock Code' which promotes animal welfare outcomes for feral animals by defining ethical management procedures, some of which relate to hunting and as such are of relevance.

Committing to these or similar codes as the blueprint for our conduct as hunters immediately provides a sound ethical standard which any fair-minded member of the public would have to acknowledge and respect. And by introducing junior shooters to the system and modelling its tenets at all times, we provide a solid platform for future growth and sustainability of shooting and hunting in Australia. We protect our hunting interests by being ethical hunters and another aspect which must be respected by all is the legal one.

### Legal considerations

Firearms owners are the most scrutinised and regulated sporting group in the country. The legalities of owning and using a firearm are enshrined in law by each state and there's a reasonable public expectation that these laws are adhered to. Obviously then, any and every time a legal requirement of hunting is transgressed, we open ourselves to calls for more onerous legislation aimed at curtailing our possession and use of firearms, trespass being one of those traits which invite such calls to the disadvantage of all.

In Queensland the situation is quite clear: hunting is restricted to private property and then only with landowner consent. The Queensland Weapons Act 1990 details a host of offences trespassers may also be committing:

- Discharging a firearm on or across private land without permission: 40 penalty units or six months' jail.
- Carrying a firearm on private land without consent of the owner: 40 penalty units.
- Carrying a firearm exposed to view in a public place: 40 penalty units or six months' jail.



- Carrying a loaded firearm in a public place: 120 penalty units or two years' jail.
- Discharging a firearm in, into, towards, over or through a public place: 200 penalty units or four years' jail.

In addition, in some instances offenders found committing the offence of trespassing on rural properties can be fined more than \$20,000. Naturally, offenders also place their licences, firearms and associated equipment at risk of cancellation and confiscation so there's quite a lot to lose for the sake of an ill-gotten haunch of venison or illicit trophy. Once again though it falls to all of us, as a communal interest, to ensure such significant breaches of the trust extended to us as hunters don't occur or are condemned when they do. There's simply too much at stake, not least our safety in the field.

### Safety considerations

By its nature shooting is an activity which carries a certain risk, one which every responsible hunter seeks to minimise through various strategies. These may include wearing blaze orange, having set protocols with hunting companions relating to the conduct of a hunt and knowledge of the terrain being stalked. But trespassers by their unannounced and uninvited presence negate these precautions and place both themselves and others at risk of serious injury or worse, perhaps the most concerning and least appreciated consideration of all.

There are of course additional safety concerns linked to lack of familiarity with

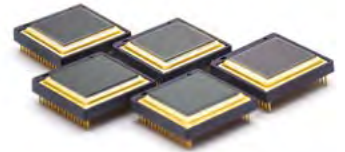
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## Do unto others

a particular property as there may be hidden hazards. For example it's legal in Queensland to use conventional steel-jawed traps to target wild dogs and on my own property there's an old mine shaft and live fire range. While known to a landowner and invited guests, hazards such as these could be challenging to the health of an uninvited third party who finds themselves in the right place at the wrong time. Again, it's at our peril we ignore/accept the damage done to our public image and community acceptance of our recreation by the unsafe and risky practices of a few, which tragically at its most extreme can make graphic headlines and validate the position of our detractors.

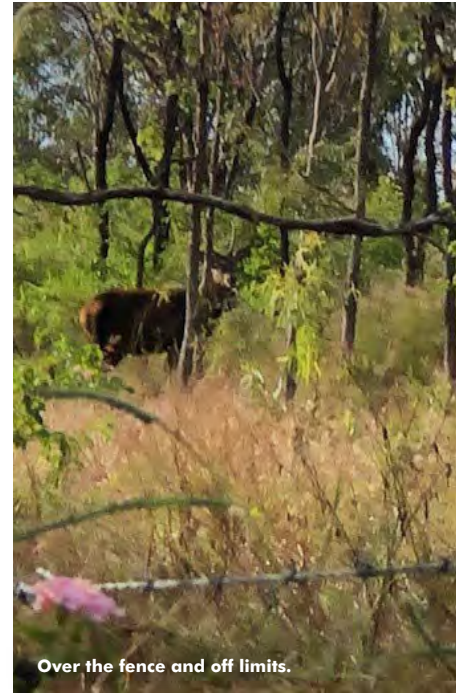
### Final thoughts

At this point I return to my initial assertion that we all share a community obligation to accept, respect and exercise the limitations placed on us as firearms owners and hunters. We have a collective responsibility to be ethical, legal and safe practitioners

and where necessary be prepared to call out inappropriate doings and insist our peers do the right thing.

Trespass and poaching constitute unethical, illegal and unsafe behaviour, a crime - and not just against landholders but more importantly against every legitimate hunter. It tars us all with the same brush and lends credence to the arguments of those who'd curtail our ability to own and use firearms. Rather than being viewed as the responsible, law-abiding citizens the vast majority of us are, we're portrayed as rednecks with a lust for blood and lack of respect for the law. In other words modern-day pariahs.

In parting I urge for the sake of our reputation in the wider community and to safeguard the opportunities we currently enjoy that we always consider the ethical, legal and safety implications of our actions and appreciate their impact on the public perception of us as a sporting community. Similarly if not a SSAA member, consider becoming one and stand up to be counted. It's in everyone's best interests. ●



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The compact WheelyBird 2.0 stows neatly with room to spare into a small SUV.

An end of year celebration wouldn't be complete without a bit of backyard cricket or maybe a game of barefoot bowls. Better still, the idea of shooting clays will always be a winner. And enjoying an afternoon smashing targets has never been so accessible thanks to Champion's new portable WheelyBird 2.0 clay thrower. Following a tradition of well-designed and robust machines, this is the latest transportable clay thrower from the Champion product range.

I bought an EasyBird thrower with oscillating base seven years ago to practise my shooting skills on the family farm. It served us well and entertained many a gathering of friends, spending quality time demolishing clays. But the EasyBird's drawback was its weight and lack of movability and since relocating back to town it's not used as much as we'd like.

There have been times where a clay

target thrower would've been perfect to fill a few hours and hone our shooting skills on western hunting trips but the EasyBird wasn't compact enough to pack in the ute along with our other gear. So Champion's WheelyBird 2.0 is the answer and apart from not oscillating it does everything available in its EasyBird big brother.

#### Built to last

Except for the throwing arm being aluminium, almost all other machine components are solidly made of steel. The main spring for the thrower release is tensioned by a crankshaft driven by an electric motor via reliable chain gears. Using the two colour-coded alligator clamps provided, a small 12-volt car battery (preferably in deep cycle mode) is all that's required to power the efficient little motor and from our experience that gave us hours of uninterrupted use. The single stack magazine holds 50 108mm standard or

110mm international clay targets.

The fast, slick freeloading of clays by the target retainer comes from the camming action of the thrower drive. Providing a protective perimeter around the machine is a hi-viz orange poly tube which reduces the risk of anything, including fingers and limbs, from contacting the potentially harmful arc of the thrower arm. But it's important to note the thrower arm must be in the uncocked position with power disconnected prior to loading clays.

New for the WheelyBird 2.0 is the addition of a remote release which includes an adjustable cycle time delay. The thrower can cycle at a fast minimum of 1.75 seconds and be dialled up to a maximum of 15

seconds. The remote sender unit with antenna simply plugs into the foot pedal cable connection and the operator can control release via a handheld wireless remote from an impressive 50m.

Alternatively, clays can be released by the supplied foot pedal and cable which is ideal for those who like to practise shooting solo. Importantly, if it wasn't for the large diameter, solid rubber wheels it wouldn't be called a WheelyBird and, with the addition of a collapsible steel handle, it really is a breeze to move around different shooting positions and for stowage.

**Fun test**

Now I'm no Russell Mark when it comes to shooting clays and no expert either but boy, do I have some fun trying. The family and I made an afternoon of it and set up near a scenic waterhole at our favourite hunting spot close to home. Using Federal Top Gun 7.5 target loads I was first up for a few shots while my wife Sue-Ann found a comfortable seat in the shade and, using the wireless remote, released clays on my command. I'd love to report a high strike-rate but it's safe to say if I'd been hunting wild ducks they'd have flown by with feathers intact. I suppose that's why we practise and, after numerous clays later, my hits improved.

The kids then had a turn and before too long Carl's tally was better than mine and while Rachel took a little longer to get her eye in, it was smiles and high-fives after she nailed a few clays in a row. The machine has an impressive throw range of roughly



**The WheelyBird 2.0 must be in the uncocked position prior to loading clays.**

70m and at its highest angle the targets tend to hang in the air long enough for amateurs like us to register a hit. So after our shared strike rate of clays up high we ramped it up a notch by adjusting the angle for a more challenging horizontal trajectory.

The WheelyBird 2.0 features flight adjustment altered easily by undoing two hex bolts, rotating to the preferred angle and fastening again. But before making any alterations to the machine the thrower tensioner must be disarmed by uncocking and the power supply disconnected, the same safety procedure as for loading clays.



**Rachel puts the Federal Target loads to good use, improving her strike rate.**

On changing the angle the horizontal trajectory tested our capabilities even further and Sue-Ann duly proved who's a natural and who needs practice!

The answer to a few hours' entertainment is a mere car drive away. The WheelyBird 2.0 is compact enough to be transported in most ute trays or SUV car compartments and by adding some clays and ammo, you have all the ingredients needed for a 'wheely' good time. Distributed and backed by NIOA, the WheelyBird 2.0 is well priced at around \$950 (at time of writing). More at [nioa.com.au](http://nioa.com.au) ●



**From a comfortable spot in the shade, Sue-Ann releases clays using the wireless remote.**



# Gemma get your gun!

Using SSAA/Beretta custom-built rifles, Mark van den Boogaart takes Gemma Dunn on her first deer hunt

Like a good story should, this one starts over food and drink. Rum for me, wine all round and plenty of tasty morsels with friends old and newly met. What came of all that was a plan and as it progressed from a seed into something more tangible, two specific goals were agreed upon. The first was that myself and Gemma Dunn, former editor of *Australian Women's Shooter*, would go on a hunt with me acting as Average Joe guide. The second was we'd hunt with our respective SSAA/Beretta Australia custom-built rifles (see the May-July 2022 editions of this magazine) and, as a bonus, the hunt would also be the first time Gemma would use her rifle away from the range.

With that we turned to the logistics of when, where and who? When would be February so as not to clash with deer season, where would be around Bathurst on a private property with a healthy goat population and, if time allowed, a nearby public land block for deer. And the who would be Gemma, myself and Joe, a long-time good mate. Tie a ribbon round it, this job is done.

The day finally arrived and on farewelling the family I began the drive from Brisbane, my plan being to overnight in Mudgee and meet the guys in Bathurst the following morning.

#### Getting there

After a long drive I met Gemma and Joe, we sorted a few things out and headed for the property, arriving just over an hour later at the farm gate then up a rocky track to the campsite. The site was a high, exposed clearing with panoramic views of the surrounding hill country and as it was still a little hot to set up tents, Joe headed to the owner's home to say hello while Gemma and I grabbed our gear and wandered off for a look-see.

Goats were in abundance and because of the numbers, rather than focusing on shooting we changed things up, found a well concealed spot and sat down to watch and listen. What followed were lots of questions, answers, speculation and observations about goats, their behaviour and shot placement. Thinking about it now, while the

temptation may have been to let the lead fly, that first interaction with Gemma, which saw goats wander to within comfortable bow range, was a valuable learning experience for both of us.

A little while later we set up camp, made ourselves comfortable and sketched a rough plan for the weekend. On our first day in the last hours of light we decided to head out for another active scout which proved a good move as we spotted goats and fallow deer. That was another first for Gemma whose only previously deer sightings had been them dashing across a country road and while we tried to take one, they proved too hard a target on that first afternoon.

Next morning we moved towards the river just for a look but knew that along the way there was a high likelihood we'd chance upon game, so it seemed a good plan. As we followed a creek that drained into the main water course the sides began to close in until we were under a significant rocky formation. Goats love rocks and sure enough there they were high up, a perfect opportunity for Gemma to take her first



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A significant storm would roll over our exposed hill site



game animal. Picking her first target she lined up and fired, the shot from her Tikka T3x Varmint in .243 Win a good one and, after stumbling downhill, the goat gave out to the Sako Gamehead projectile.

While the shot was good the potential retrieval was most definitely not, so we wrote it off to feral pest control while Gemma lined up on the second. Another good shot saw the next goat drop where it stood so two shots and two goats for Gemma and the rifle, not bad for a shot-gunner! After the shots had reverberated around the hills we congratulated Gemma on her straight-shooting then had a bite to eat and discussed what had happened.

#### The river

On the walk back we spotted a mob with some reasonable billies among them so devised an elaborate (with hindsight a little too elaborate) plan for Gemma and I to shoot on the mob. But with hunters ready and video camera rolling it all went haywire as the goats chose to ignore our script and, seeing our chance slip away, I rose from my concealed position and fired a running shot on a younger billy, striking it in the neck. Spotting another larger billy I cycled the action and fired again, delivering another neck shot and while things hadn't gone to plan, it was nonetheless a good result with two more feral marauders down.

It was getting warm and in fact would turn out to be the hottest New South Wales weekend in three years so it was time to head for camp and sit out the heat of the day. What we didn't know was a significant

storm would roll over our exposed hill site and while it didn't wreck the camp, we had to take cover in our vehicles while the rain, wind and pebble-sized hail blew through. We then had about an hour's worth of light left so decided to make the most of it. Splitting up, Joe and Gemma headed into a gully system while I scanned a very 'piggie' looking creek line and while no-one had much luck, it was worth the effort.

For our last morning on the private block we again rolled out of camp just after first light. The storm had pushed goats into heavy timber close to camp and very soon into our downhill walk we spotted them. We continued single file towards them and from about 80m could see them feeding in a slight dip below the eyeline of the hill, Gemma taking aim to make quick work of another couple.

It was still relatively cool and with Joe on knife duty we took some meat and hung it in the shade before moving on. We dropped into the low flats and checked the water source before moving up under the trees of a reverse-facing slope to check for game. There were goats at least 500m up on the sunlit slope and they appeared to be slowly ambling down. Sure enough over the next half hour they edged ever closer until they were only 80m away with some younger ones within 30m. We remained still and spotted three bachelor billies, one heavily coated black and tan being particularly interesting.

On his way down he nudged a few nannies, thrashed a thistle and slowly headed for shade and water so I decided

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## Gemma get your gun!

to take him and crawled forward, staying low to the ground. Taking aim, my first shot from the Tikka T3x in .308 was sound though it didn't stop him cold and an instant follow-up shot put him down. While he was a good solid animal he stank so I chalked it up as another one for the pest control tally.

### On the move

Back at camp we packed up and made our way to the public land block and while only a short distance away, it was fundamentally different with a rolling swath of pines, some mature, some newly planted and plenty clear-cut. We made camp and said our good-byes to Joe who was heading home for a Monday morning appointment. Gemma and I stayed put until the heat got the better of us and we jumped in the truck for an airconditioned tour which included a trip to a shady water source. Around 4pm we headed back to make ready.

Public land can be tough but the rhythm of the weekend was on our side and after walking a transition line between pine and native timber we spotted two young fallow bucks. Motioning for Gemma to take a shot



Mark lines up to take down another feral goat.

Mark's custom-built Tikka T3x in the field



she told me to go for it and reached for her smartphone. In the fading light the first buck, a deep chocolate-coloured animal, moved behind the ever-present blackberry while the second, a blonde, cut the other way and began to move into the pine. In doing so he presented an easy shot and I put down my first public land deer south of Tamworth. While a notable event for me it was also Gemma's first dedicated deer hunt, so luck was certainly on her side in firstly seeing them and being present when one was taken.

The heat hung around well into the night so after an early morning start to the tune of logging trucks and heavy earthmoving equipment, we agreed the hunt had reached its natural conclusion and packed up. Saying our farewells, Gemma headed for Sydney while I contemplated the drive ahead and a full 12 hours later I was home. On securing the rifle and ammo and putting my share of goat meat and venison in the fridge I cleaned myself up, headed to bed and closed the book on a hunt full of firsts. ●



Feral in the firing line.



The improvised goats that wouldn't stick to the script.

Read Gemma's account in this month's *Australian Women's Shooter*.

See Mark's video record of the hunt on SSAA TV





A powder scale lets you know what a powder scoop holds.



# For good measure

Remove the guesswork when reloading, advises John Hill

Handloading powder charges can be measured using a scoop, an adjustable mechanical measure or electronic dispenser and while the latter two are easiest, powder measures, particularly electronic ones, can be expensive so those who load only small quantities of ammunition are likely to use a cheaper mode of dispensing powder charges.

The simplest way is to use a powder scoop which, as its name implies, is dragged through a quantity of powder then levelled with a straight edge. Scooping is a fairly common practice but has several disadvantages, mainly the charge is permanently fixed to the capacity of the scoop, allowing no variation in the weight of the powder charge if you decide to change bullet weights. If the scoop's contents are a bit below or above those recommended then reloads will either be mild or may develop excessive pressure and just using different powders can change a reload from mild to dangerous with a fixed-capacity scoop.

Small quantity handloaders often use simple hand tools and no powder scale

which is flirting with danger but if they can borrow a powder scale to check capacity of their scoop then its contents will be known (it's important to know the weight of any powder charge). Scoops like those supplied with a Lee Loader are designed on the safe side no matter what powder is used. Overly-safe reloads could be well down ballistically on normal factory-loaded ammunition so it's important to know what your scoop holds and a handloading manual will give the amounts and type of powder for different bullet weights.

I have a Lee Loader for the .223 Remington cartridge and loading half-a-dozen cases using the powder scoop supplied, muzzle velocity was below factory specs. Making another measure of a more appropriate capacity can easily overcome this problem but a powder scale must be used to check the new measure's content. There's a better method for obtaining more uniform powder charges and that's to pour powder into the measure instead of scooping, as pouring can give consistent results providing the powder is poured from the same height and at the same rate. In

other words a high pour will pack a greater amount of powder into a measure than a low pour and a slow trickle will fill the measure more than dumping powder in quickly.

If these variables can be controlled, pouring may give accurate results though it should also be mentioned that pouring into a powder measure will increase the amount of powder the measure holds when compared to what it holds when scooping. Powder measures can easily be made from old cartridge cases. It's a simple matter to shorten a case until it holds the desired amount of powder but once again, a powder scale is required to determine the weight of powder the new measure holds. If a powder scale can be borrowed then a number of measures can be made for various purposes, such as different bullet weights.

A friend of mine owned a Krico .22 Hornet and reloaded his empties with an old Lyman Tong Tool which is like a big pair of pliers where the dies screw into the jaws. Using the Tong Tool, a powder measure made from a shortened Hornet case and the pouring method to obtain a powder charge, he loaded ammunition capable of

## For good measure

head-shooting rabbits out to 100m. Quite usable hunting ammunition can be made with the most basic of reloading tools and the Krico and its Tong Tool handloads illustrate that simple powder measures and reloading tools can produce excellent results.

Personally I wouldn't like to reload without a powder scale as I mainly load for small centrefires and prefer to weigh each individual charge. Minor variations in charge weights can make a big difference when loading small capacity rounds such as the .17 Hornet and half a grain of powder can make a 200fps variation so care must be taken when dispensing powder charges for small capacity cartridges.

We'll now move to mechanical powder measures which can be readily adjusted to drop any weight of powder. Most measures have a vertical hopper to hold the powder and a main body containing a rotating drum with adjustable cavity to alter the amount of powder it holds. When the operating handle rotates the cavity in the drum upwards, it aligns the cavity with the powder hopper and it fills with powder. When the handle turns the drum down, the powder in the cavity falls through the drop tube and into the scale pan so it can be weighed.

It's important the rotating drum is a close fit in the body and the cavity has a movable plug so it can be altered in capacity. A good measure will have a baffle at the bottom of the powder hopper which gives more consistent results regardless the amount of powder in the hopper.

There are a few basic problems associated with mechanical powder measures as while they're required to dispense a certain weight of powder, their mode of operation is to measure that amount by volume and not weight. Therefore any irregular use of the operating handle will be reflected in weight variations in the powder drop. Thumping the handle against its stops will alter the weight of powder drop as will the speed in which the handle is moved, so if a powder measure is to throw consistent charges it must be operated in a smooth and regular fashion.

There are two distinct types of powder measures - those with adjustment for the amount of powder dropped and those with a micrometer-controlled modification. The first works fine if there's only one cartridge to reload but if used on a number of different cartridges, it can be a bit of a chore to alter the powder charge from one to another. On the other hand, with a micrometer-type adjustment it can be set to any pre-recorded setting where it'll give the right amount of powder and if you load



Powder measure completely assembled.



Powder scoops - one commercially made, the other homemade.



Using the funnelled drop tube makes pouring easy.

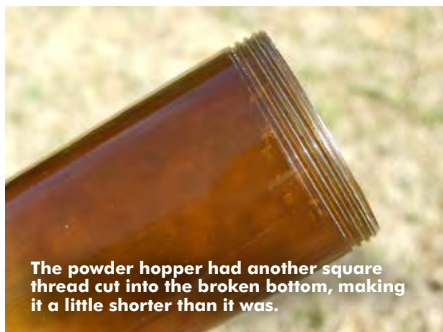
for multiple cartridges, it's only a matter of tweaking the micrometer to the setting for each particular one.

If you've ever seen any old shooting magazines from the 1950s you may have noticed the odd advert for Lightning powder measures. The Lightning is presumably an Aussie-made powder measure with a micrometer adjustment, its working parts made entirely of cast bronze with the powder hopper having a baffle. My powder thrower is one of these old Lightnings and cost just \$10 at a garage sale. It was attached to one end of a piece of timber with an almost unused Super Simplex reloading press at the other end. The asking price was \$20 for both which seemed reasonable, even if the plastic powder hopper on the Lightning was broken off where it screws into the main body of the measure.



The drum with the cavity clearly shown (note it's cast bronze).

As luck would have it the broken hopper was with the old measure and as I have a lathe in my workshop it didn't take long to cut a square thread on the broken end of the hopper and refit it to the body. While that measure may appear somewhat old, it functions equally as well as a modern powder thrower and has done for many years.



The powder hopper had another square thread cut into the broken bottom, making it a little shorter than it was.



A micrometer adjustment means any previously recorded powder throw can be duplicated.

Using a powder measure with care and uniform movement for each and every stroke, it can throw surprisingly accurate charges. Ball and fine-grained powders feed through more accurately than larger stick-type ones, while some of the coarser-grained propellants are inclined to become jammed between the edge of the cavity and body of the measure, where they're cut as the drum revolves to the drop position. On .223-size powder drops, a thrower should keep to within one or two-tenths of a grain depending on the size of the granules, close enough for some handloaders who drop powder straight into the cases.

When charging cases directly from the powder thrower it's advisable to visually check the powder level in each case as it's possible when loading in this manner to have an occasional 'log jam' in the drop tube. If this should happen a case may be given a lighter than normal powder charge, while the next case receives a heavier charge which would most likely overflow the case. The problem may never occur - but it could - so check!

There's still the electronic powder

measure which is a combined dispenser and digital scale. An electronic measure can dispense any powder charge by simply pressing the required numbers on the control panel though such a device is more for the professional handloader (or the rich). I know scores of shooters who reload but only one of them has an electronic powder dispenser and he owns a reloading service. Yet my old Lightning is just as accurate and requires no electrical power source to run and its 'micrometer memory' can recall just as many loads as the electronic, it's just a matter of recording settings for future reference.

To finish off I must stress that to reload without a powder scale and do a final check on the weight of any charge is akin to Russian roulette. While I started out reloading with powder scoops and counting sticks of cordite, I soon moved to an accurate powder scale and measure. There's no

No substitute for a good powder thrower and accurate scales

substitute for a good powder thrower and accurate scales as they not only speed up the process, they also remove any doubts when reloading. ●

## BOOK REVIEW

# A Classic back on the shelves

MANY AN AUTHOR will tell you the success of any book can be measured by its popularity and, for SSAA stalwart John Corcoran, that is most certainly the case with *Classic Rifles of Australia*, a labour of love he published with photographer and co-author Fred Bienvenu in 2019 and which has recently been reprinted due to demand.

Corcoran, a former Honorary Historian for the New South Wales Rifle Association, has been a SSAA member for more years than he cares to remember, and his love affair with antique firearms began in the 1950s when he shouldered a .577/450 Hollis Martini rifle on buffalo leases in the Northern Territory.

Having worked as a stockman in the Top End during that time, it wasn't until the 1990s Corcoran realised that if the countless tales of a fast-fading way of life were not recorded for posterity there was a real danger of them being lost forever. All of which led to him writing *Horsemen of the Outback: Their Spurs*

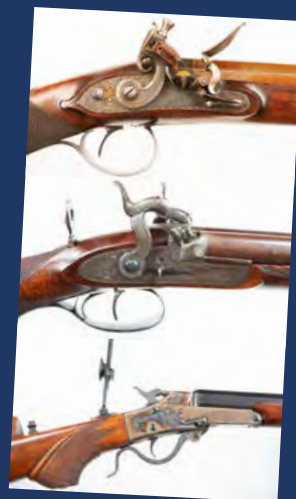
and *Their Spur-makers*, published in 2003 and jam-packed with tales of the numerous stockmen, drovers and blacksmiths and the challenges they faced in the days before road trains and helicopters.

Yet his first venture into the realms of the written word had come much earlier in 1975 following a 10-year stint with the NSW Police Force, when he penned *The Target Rifle in Australia 1860-1900*, a book reprinted in the US two decades later.

So it comes as no surprise that this life-long firearms enthusiast has seen his most recent work in collaboration with Bienvenu back on the shelves. Said John: "*Classic Rifles* . . . is a specialist work dealing predominantly with antique rifles in private collections in Australia."

This top quality publication turns the spotlight on no fewer than 59 antique rifles dating from 1645 to 1948 from collections Australia-wide and includes detailed information on the gunmakers themselves, their histories and patents, accessories and original owners, all accompanied by a series of detailed photographs.

## Classic Rifles in Australia



John Corcoran & Fred Bienvenu  
Foreword by Donald Dallas

*Classic Rifles of Australia* at 260 pages and more than 750 colour photographs is a must for lovers of antique and vintage rifles and is available from [buffalocreek-press.com.au](http://buffalocreek-press.com.au) priced \$135 plus postage and handling.

# Keep it clean!



Taylor replacement cleaning kit...a bargain at \$15.

## Looking after gun barrels isn't difficult says Dick Eussen

Regular shooters would know that cleaning brushes wear out while copper brushes must be replaced on a regular basis to ensure powder crud, copper and lead residue is totally removed from a barrel's rifling. With that in mind I treated myself at the local gunshop to a Taylor six-piece cleaning kit for my 9mm, .38 and .357 Magnum handguns for the princely sum of \$15. It's a standalone replacement brush kit with no rod though it does have a thread type which fits most standard rod fittings.

The kit includes two wool brushes (one each for gun oil and solvent), two patch jags (one with a loop and the other pointed) and two copper brushes. There are no instructions as this is a replacement kit with each brush packed into a small plastic tube. It's not easy to find single-purpose calibre replacement brush kits, especially for handguns, with many shooters using rifle calibre brushes though it's always best to use proper tools for the job at hand. In my case that ranges from .22 calibre to 12-gauge with most consisting of single brushes though I also have a couple of all-purpose kits.

When buying cleaning brushes and jags always ensure the calibre marked on the brush or kit matches the one it's needed for and check the thread fits the rod or cable threads you have at home. I'm no fan of pull-through cables as a rod does a far better job because it allows you to push brushes back and forth in the barrel with force.

To properly clean rifling, place a soft brush or patch dipped in solvent into the barrel and leave it there for 15 minutes or so to ensure it loosens all the built-up crud inside. It's a good idea to brush the bolt head, chamber opening and extractor surfaces with solvent too, using a sharp instrument to reach tight spots when removing crud. Once the soaking has done its job, fit a copper brush to the rod and push it vigorously in and out of the barrel, paying particular attention to the chamber. When done, fit a soft patch and keep buffing the barrel interior with patches until the last one comes out clean.

The gun may now be fired though if it's going to be stored, a wool brush slightly wiped with oil (use your fingers to rub it

in) is useful to protect the barrel from rust, something which is especially relevant in humid regions. There's no need to dismantle a firearm each time you clean it, unless several hundred rounds have been fired. Occasionally disassemble it and give all parts a good cleaning to the point that no powder crud and copper/lead residues remain. And don't forget magazines which can 'load-up' with crud after repeated firing to the point the spring won't push the last couple of rounds up. When dismantling, control the spring or it can flip off into the blue yonder if you're on the back veranda or, worst still, into your eye.

To complete the job treat all moving parts with a good grade gun oil and wipe the firearm over with a lightly-oiled cloth if stored (it's a good habit to push and pull a clean patch through the barrel before firing to remove oil). Also remove any excess oil on moving parts as it attracts and holds dust and, most importantly of all, never oil firearms to the point they're dripping with the stuff. Oh, and WD-40 is not a gun oil. ●



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### SSAA Renegade Jacket

The SSAA Renegade Jacket is made from wind and water-resistant breathable material and lined with cosy microfleece to keep you warm. The clamshell jacket comes with a structured hood to keep the rain off and has a multitude of zippered pockets to keep your belongings secure in the field, on the range, while hiking, hunting or just out and about.

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Please visit our website for measurements for correct sizing

### Snake Bite Kit

In the SSAA Snake Bite Kit are two snake bite indicator bandages and an easy to follow first-aid guide specific to snake bites. Along with other necessary bandages, the kit is compact and packaged in a durable, soft canvass bag that can be worn on a belt, making it easy to take it with you wherever you go.

**\$34.95**



### SSAA Rechargeable Knife Sharpener

The SSAA Rechargeable Knife Sharpener uses an abrasive belt sharpening system that operates on batteries located in the handle. It is designed to sharpen every knife you own. Use it on straight or curved knives, filleting or serrated blades and even scissors! It is the only knife sharpener you will ever need.

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### SSAA Sports Umbrella

The automatic opening SSAA Sports Umbrella has eight strong 190T showerproof polyester panels and eight windproof 76cm ribs. It has a fibreglass shaft with a soft EVA hand grip.

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### SSAA Traditional Logo Belt Buckle

The SSAA Traditional Logo Pewter Belt Buckle measures approximately 8cm x 6cm, comes with protective pouch and care instructions – just add your favourite belt!

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### SSAA Schrade Multi Tool Silver

This handy tool can be stowed safely in its sturdy, fold flap pouch and securely closed with a tough Velcro patch. The belt/loop system helps you keep track of your multi tool so you can cut, file, pry and pinch your way through any job.

**\$59.95**

## SSAA turns 75 this year!

To celebrate the SSAA's 75th anniversary we have a special production run of 75-year anniversary pins and cloth badges.

The 75-year anniversary pins are uniquely numbered and measure 25mm x 30mm (approximately). The 75-year cloth badges measure 75mm x 60mm (approximately).



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## National

### Combined Services National Postal Shoot

May 1-September 4, 2023  
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Program: Full details on National website. Contact: Steve Knight 0428 876 991.

### Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Rimfire Postal Shoot

June 1-November 30, 2023  
All SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette clubs  
Program: 40-shot match in accordance with SSAA Rifle Metallic Silhouette rule book. Contact: Kathy Tobler email toblerkathy@gmail.com

### SSAA National Junior Challenge

July 6-9, 2023  
SSAA Canberra, ACT  
Program: July 6: Pre-registration and practice; July 7: Rimfire Rifle Metallic Silhouette, 10m Scoped Air Rifle (subject to interest); July 8: Rimfire Field Rifle; July 9: 3P Rimfire Rifle. Contact: ssaa.actjds@gmail.com

### International Handgun Metallic Silhouette National Championships

September 28-October 6, 2023  
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: September 28-October 1: Small Bore, Field Pistol. October 2-6: Big Bore. See National website for full line-up. Facilities: Camping available, canteen. Contact: Russell Mowles via email at handgunsilhouette@disciplines.ssa.org.au

### SSAA Combined Services National Championships

September 29-October 1, 2023  
Eagle Park Range, Little River, Vic.  
Program: See National website for full details. Facilities: Camping at range with showers and toilets, powered sites, canteen on range open for breakfast and lunch, dinner on Saturday at 6pm. Contact: Jim Oden secretary@vmrc.com

## Tas

### SSAA (Tas) Single Action State Championships

November 25-26, 2023  
Glenorchy Mitchell Range, Tas  
Program: Saturday: 8.30 briefing, 6+ stages. Sunday: 9.30 briefing, 4+ stages, Master Gunfighter stage and presentation. Contact: Ray Vallerine 0487 334 714.

## Qld

### 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@ssaqld.org.au

### SSAA (Qld) Lever Action State Championships

September 2-3, 2023  
SSAA Townsville branch  
Program: September 1: Practice. 2: Open match. 3: Classic Calibre match. Facilities: No catering but barbecue available, camping at range with power, toilets, showers. Contact: Kerry Guinea leveraction@ssaqld.org.au or 0409 262 966.

## SA

### SSAA (SA) Rifle Metallic Silhouette Centrefire State Championships

June 24-25, 2023  
Monarto Shooting Complex, SA  
Program: Saturday 40 shots Rimfire, 40 shots Centrefire Hunter; Sunday: 80 shots Centrefire. Facilities: Event catered and onsite camping. Contact: mmsrcsecretary@gmail.com

### SSAA (SA) Fly Shoot State Championships

July 15-16, 2023  
Monarto Shooting Complex, SA  
Program: July 15: Centrefire 500m Fly, five-target competition plus practice target. July 16: 200yd Rimfire Fly, five-target competition plus practice. Facilities: Barbecue available all weekend, camping permitted (limited power sites), hot showers, toilets and cooking facilities. Contact: Pat 0455 280 024.

## Vic

### SSAA (Vic) Single Action Black Powder State Championships

July 15-16, 2023  
Eagle Park Range, Vic  
Program: July 15: Long Range, four Single Action main stages, dusk shoot. July 16: Six Single Action main stages, presentation. Facilities: Camping with showers and toilets, limited power, lunch both days, dinner Saturday. Contact: Tony Diablo 0419 187 980 or diablo6@bigpond.com

### SSAA (Vic) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

September 23-24, 2023  
Eagle Park Range, Vic  
Program: Saturday 80 rifle calibre; Sunday 80 shots pistol calibre then 80 shots smallbore rifle. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

### SSAA (Vic) Field Rifle, 3P, Scoped Air Rifle and NRA State Championships

October 22, 2023  
Eagle Park Range, Vic  
Program: Centrefire competition followed by Rimfire. Contact: Mark Butler 0409 135 740.

## WA

### SSAA (WA) Lever Action State Championships

June 2-4, 2023  
SSAA Geraldton Branch, WA  
Program: June 2: Practice; June 3: 9.30am start; June 4: 9.30am start. Facilities: Camping at range with power and water, canteen facilities, breakfast and lunch can be bought. Contact: Stephen Ellis 0418 388 991 or leveraction@ssaawa.org.au or Dane Taylor 0407 083 408 or geraldton@ssaawa.org.au

### SSAA (WA) International Rimfire Benchrest State Championships

June 2-4, 2023  
Wonthella Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: Gates open 6.30am, first detail 9am sharp, competition capped at 42 shooters. Facilities: Food and drink available from canteen, water bottles, tea and coffee for gold coin donation. Friday night burger \$10, Saturday and Sunday night dinner \$30 each. Contact: Ian Filgate 0402 987 171 or Zoe Filgate 0447 775 123.

### SSAA (WA) Practical Shooting Shotgun State Championships

June 3, 2023  
SSAA Kalgoorlie-Boulder Branch, WA  
Program: Eight stages, 125 rounds (competitors will need minimum 25 rounds OO Buckshot SSG and 100 rounds 7½ shot). Facilities: Canteen and barbecue lunch available, camping on-site but no showers, power or water. Contact: Steve Genovese sgenovese@bigpond.com

### SSAA (WA) Single Action State Championships

June 3-4, 2023  
Leschenault Handgun Club, Parkfield, WA  
Program: June 2: Camping available from 1pm; June 3: Six stages; June 4: Six stages. Facilities: Saturday and Sunday lunch, tea and coffee included in entry fee. Contact: waass.events@gmail.com or phone Meggs 0410 456 898.

### SSAA (WA) Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

July 6-10, 2023  
Hedland Sporting Shooters, WA  
Program: July 6: Practice. 7: Rifle Lever Action. 8: Pistol Cartridge. 9: Small Bore. WA State team selection will be on top 10 positions. Facilities: Canteen food sales, camping, showers, toilets, barbecue area, limited power, Saturday night meal supplied. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or clas@inet.net.au.

### SSAA (WA) Sporting Clays State Championships

July 30, 2023  
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: 100 Sporting Clays targets. Facilities: Hot food, cool drinks available to buy, free tea, coffee and biscuits. Contact: Neil Cobb 0404 040 357 or neilcobb@bigpond.com.

### SSAA (WA) Shotgun Tower State Championships

September 17, 2023  
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: 15 Target DB, 15 Target SB, 15 Target Points score and 15 Pairs (total 75 targets). Facilities: Hot food, cool drinks available to buy, free tea, coffee and biscuits. Contact: Neil Cobb 0404 040 357 or neilcobb@bigpond.com.

## ACT

### SSAA (ACT) Snowball Shoot

June 10-12, 2023  
SSAA Majura Range, ACT  
Program: June 10: Rimfire 80 shots, Air Rifle 40 shots; June 11: Centrefire 80 shots; June 12: Rimfire Hunting Rifle 40 shots, Centrefire Hunting Rifle 40 shots. Facilities: Camping on range with water and showers (\$10 per person per night), canteen facilities for the weekend. Contact: Mark 0401 867 839 or email mnl@live.com.au or Scott 0411 465 254.

## FIREARMS LAWYER

Get help from 4-time Olympic shooter  
and lawyer, Glenn Kable

Get the right legal advice!  
Available Australia-wide.

Having spent a lifetime around the sport, I have an intimate knowledge of the workings of all the bodies affecting the decision-making process, whether it is police or courts, local councils or governments, clubs or associations.

For a no-obligation assessment, phone 0407 962 200  
or email [glenn@hartmann.net.au](mailto:glenn@hartmann.net.au)  
[mail@hartmann.net.au](mailto:mail@hartmann.net.au)

### SSAA National Event Cancellation/Postponement Policy

SSAA National championship events may be subject to border controls and other COVID-19 impacts. In addition to general border closures, many states and territories may prohibit persons from known COVID hotspots. An event may be postponed or cancelled at any time by SSAA National, SSAA State Office or club directive. It is recommended competitors consider any potential COVID-19 impacts on travel, accommodation plans and insurances etc. SSAA National will not be liable for reimbursement to competitors for any costs associated with a postponed or cancelled SSAA National championship event for any reason, including COVID-19. Competitors planning to attend an event should consider options for free cancellation or refund of travel and accommodation costs where available.



Sign  
up a  
JUNIOR

SSAA National's 'Sign up a Junior' campaign was launched to help introduce youngsters to recreational shooting. Juniors are essential to the ongoing strength and vitality of the SSAA and we are seeking your support to protect and ensure the future of the shooting sports in Australia.

[ssaa.org.au](http://ssaa.org.au)

## Records tumble at Muzzleloading nationals

This year's Easter long weekend brought with it the SSAA's 48th Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge National Championships hosted by Perth Muzzleloading Club, with a total of 30 shooters from four states (WA, SA, NSW and Qld) participating in rifle, pistol, musket and shotgun events.

The host club did a superb job in providing excellent camping and range facilities and even put on a spectacular 12-minute fireworks display on Saturday night. Weather conditions were favourable this year and allowed many shooters to register personal best performances, some collecting their first-ever national gold medal.

Two national records were set, one by Shayne Barnsley, of NSW, who broke the single-shot pistol aggregate with 185.4 out of a possible 200 points and the other by Steve Nicholas, (SA), who smashed the Class 1 Military Rifle 100m prone event record with 96.4/100.



One of the flintlock competitors lights up the range.

Next year's National Championships are scheduled to be hosted by South Australia over the Easter weekend, though this will have to be confirmed at the national disci-

pline meeting in November. Once the venue is locked in, nomination forms and programs will be sent out and uploaded to the national website.

# SSAA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

ABN 95 050 209 688

SSAA Membership Office, PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
 Phone 02 8805 3900 Fax 02 9832 9377 Email [membership@ssaa.org.au](mailto:membership@ssaa.org.au)

Membership No.

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NEW  RENEWAL  **Have you been a member before? Yes/No**

Title (PLEASE CIRCLE) Mr Miss Ms Mrs Other ..... Preferred SSAA Branch \_\_\_\_\_

First name \_\_\_\_\_

Middle name \_\_\_\_\_

Last name \_\_\_\_\_

---

Residential address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/suburb \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

---

Postal address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/suburb \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_  
(IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE)

Phone (Mobile) \_\_\_\_\_ (Home) \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female  Other

Member referral number if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Tick to subscribe to the FREE SSAA National E-newsletter via email

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES AND SPECIAL OFFERS

Each membership category (apart from Family Member) includes 11 issues of the *Australian Shooter* magazine per year.

### Add four issues of the Hunter magazine per year



Just **\$30** per year!

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- \$72      \$102
- \$107      \$137
- \$72      \$102
- \$107      \$137
- \$475
- \$1900
- \$180      \$240
- \$27      \$57

#### Adult (over 18 years)



Includes \$35 for SSAA MUTUAL Member Firearms Protection for 12 months, or until next membership renewal.

#### Additional Family Member (No magazine) Applies to each additional person over 18 residing at the same address as a full-subscription Adult member.



Includes \$35 for SSAA MUTUAL Member Firearms Protection for 12 months, or until next membership renewal.

#### Pensioner Available on production or photocopy of both sides of your Australian Concession Card.



Includes \$35 for SSAA MUTUAL Member Firearms Protection for 12 months, or until next membership renewal.

#### 5-year Adult Contact SSAA for SSAA MUTUAL firearms protection information.

#### Member for Life Contact SSAA for SSAA MUTUAL firearms protection information.

#### Overseas Available to members living overseas.

#### Junior (under 18 years) Parent's or guardian's signature .....

Supporting Adult member No.

#### SIGN UP ONLINE



[ssaa.org.au](http://ssaa.org.au)

**TICK IF TAKING OUT SSAA MUTUAL MEMBER FIREARMS PROTECTION.** I understand that the Firearms Statement of Protection for SSAA MUTUAL Members Firearms Protection is on [ssaamutual.com.au](http://ssaamutual.com.au) for my reference.

## PAYMENT OPTIONS

Enclosed is payment for the amount of \$.....

Cheque    Money order    MasterCard    Visa

Card number

Expiry date     Signature.....

Cheques payable to the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc.

I also wish to donate the following amount to the SSAA \$.....

## PLEASE READ AND SIGN

This application is made in full recognition of the Associations' requirement for responsible and ethical behaviour. I undertake to do all in my power to preserve the good image of the sport and the Associations. I understand that members breaking the Code of Conduct and/or Social Media Policies may be subject to suspension or expulsion. Both can be found at [ssaa.org.au/code](http://ssaa.org.au/code)

SIGNATURE:.....

DATE:.....

Refund Policy: Subject to Australian law, membership fees are not refundable, nor can they be transferred.

Members join a SSAA state or territory branch. The information you provide on this form will be disclosed to the state or territory branch of the SSAA to which your membership application relates. A copy of SSAA Inc's privacy policy can be found at [ssaa.org.au/privacy](http://ssaa.org.au/privacy). You can obtain access to your personal information by writing to: SSAA, PO Box 2520, Unley SA 5061.

## ATTENTION NSW & ACT MEMBERS

Complete this section ONLY if you wish to use your membership of the SSAA to support your Genuine Reason for having a firearms licence. Register your SSAA activities by marking one or more of the following boxes:

- TARGET SHOOTING (longarms only)
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- COLLECTING
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MEMBERS FIREARMS PROTECTION



# Enter and win

Simply write your full name, address and contact number on a piece of paper and place it inside an envelope and send to:

(Name of competition)  
SSAA National  
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061

Competitions close June 30, 2023



Or enter online  
at [ssaa.org.au](http://ssaa.org.au)

# Winners!

**Australian Shooter  
April, 2023**

**Traser Green Spirit Watch**  
Gisela Buchan, QLD

**Top Shots Mug**  
Karl Penna, QLD

**Beretta Prize Pack**  
Scott Richardson, VIC

**Juniors – Winchester Prize Pack**  
April Dudek, WA

## Winchester Prize Pack

Includes:

- Winchester Men's Hoodie (Size XL)
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## Adult SSAA range mat & case



RRP \$189

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[onlineshop.ssaa.org.au](http://onlineshop.ssaa.org.au)

**Bonus**

## Top Shots Mug



Invaluable – money can't buy this!

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## Juniors

## Beretta Prize Pack

Includes towel, cap and flag



RRP \$90

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[berettaaustralia.com.au](http://berettaaustralia.com.au)

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## Pink stripe proves there's always something else to learn

This may come as a shock but even a world-famous gun writer and columnist like myself needs something on the side to pay the bills and for me that means being an Executive Coach. While that may sound impressive, what it really means is I help people become better leaders. As a career choice I get to work with people from industries big and small and focus on their journey to leadership. I'm not a mentor, I haven't done it all, for me it's about the technique of leadership or, more broadly, I enjoy helping people chase down a goal so it all fits together quite nicely.

As a coach my No.1. rule is *not* to make assumptions but, like everyone else, sometimes I forget Rule No.1. Now assumptions in themselves aren't good or bad it's how we apply them that makes the difference. We come to these assumptions through experience, learnt responses, sensory mechanisms and a touch of speculation. We also make them at lightning speed and use feedback to either confirm or challenge our initial assumption.

You may see a sign for icy roads ahead and slow down (or not) but once you feel that first loss of traction you quickly take action that confirms or challenges your initial approach. For ourselves we generally lean to the cautious - all guns are treated as loaded, all snakes will bite and that bump in the night was made by something.

Using the modern parlance our assumptions begin as a binary conclusion. From a perspective of survival it's a good choice, better safe than sorry. The downside is a binary approach lacks nuance and over time we may realise our assumption may have been a little inaccurate and it would be good to adjust. See Rule No.1.

A case in point was during a recent hunting trip with fellow SSAA writer, World Cup-level shotgunner and all-round good egg Gemma Dunn. We'd just arrived in camp and Joe, the third member of our hunting party, was off to see the landowner so Gemma and I took the opportunity to check out the property. It was at this point I broke Rule No.1 and made an assumption about Gemma's hunting experiences, in this case a wrong assumption.



**Learning curve: Observing game with Gemma and Joe.**

For all her considerable experience the type of hunting we were about to embark on, something I've done for years, was a wholly new experience for Gemma. Luckily she was forthright in explaining things and I was smart enough to listen. From my initial foot in mouth moment what followed was a fantastic hunt. By resetting my own approach Gemma, Joe and I were able to accomplish numerous things which many hunters spend years trying to achieve.

Firstly Gemma was able to take game in several different and challenging situations while also experiencing the inevitability of not always being successful and the learning that brings with it. She also had the chance to observe game. On one occasion we had game within comfortable bow-hunting

range, while on another we spent time watching close-in from 500m to 50m. Amazingly Joe and I were able to help Gemma observe, for the first time, wild deer and even be part of taking a deer on public land one Sunday afternoon.

In between the three of us spoke at length about game behaviour, shot placement and the importance of considering the effort needed to climb back uphill at the end of a hunt. For me it was the opportunity to share some of my learning and also reconsider some of it. Hunting is often a very private pursuit which inevitably limits our perspective as we only get to see things from our own point of view. Being able to speak with Gemma and Joe about the day's hunt gave me a chance to reevaluate and add to my own knowledge as both had different perspectives and it was great to hear those, consider them and add them to my own.

And it wasn't even always about hunting. For instance as a Queenslander I was finally able to understand why road crews in New South Wales spray a bright pink stripe on a dead kangaroo. It's to inform others the roadside carcass has been checked for a joey, while I always thought it meant they were leaving it for someone else to pick up!

I feel an obligation to help people discover shooting and hunting and thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to share my experiences with others, be that hunting in the field or at the range. I also know that for me, shooting and hunting is a lifelong journey of learning and if I want to help others I must ensure I continue to allow myself the chance to continue learning and not become locked in by my own assumptions.



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