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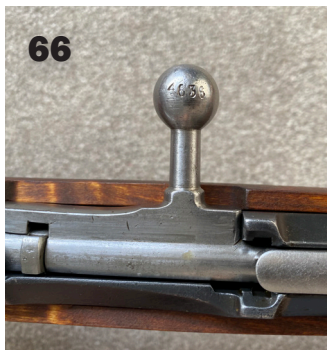
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## EDITORIAL

MANAGING EDITOR..... Allan Blane  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR..... Thomas Cook  
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR  
& GRAPHIC DESIGNER..... Elizabeth Tyson  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER..... Alex Heptinstall  
GRAPHIC DESIGNER..... Tammy Michalski  
WEBMASTER..... Mark Fieldhouse  
ADVERTISING SALES, MARKETING  
& SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER..... Travis Allen  
ADMINISTRATION..... Debbie Wing  
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT..... John Dunn  
SENIOR CORRESPONDENT..... Rod Pascoe

## CONTRIBUTORS THIS ISSUE

Alby Adams, Brendan Atkinson, Ivo Dimitrov, Dick Eussen, Laetisha Scanlan, Mark van den Boogaart, Sam Garro, Matthew Godson, Scott Heiman, Con Kapralos, Thomas Tabor, John Maxwell, Derek Nugent, Joe Norris, Chris Redlich, Daniel O'Dea, Paul Miller, Ben Unten.

This magazine is owned and published by the Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia Inc. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policy of this Association.

## MEMBERSHIP AND MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES

02 8805 3900  
PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
membership@ssaa.org.au

## EDITORIAL INQUIRIES

Allan Blane  
edit@ssaa.org.au

## ADVERTISING INQUIRIES

Travis Allen  
advertising@ssaa.org.au

ABN 95 050 209 688



## SSAA STATE OFFICES

NSW	02 7900 1555	WA	08 9497 7919
QLD	07 3281 3447	SA	0419 849 452
VIC	03 8892 2777	ACT	0400 138 955
TAS	0418 734 008	NT	0402 013 918

## NATIONAL CONTACT

SSAA National Accounts Office  
PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
02 8805 3900  
accounts@ssaa.org.au

## SSAA General Insurance Brokers

Unit 1, 212 Glen Osmond Rd  
Fullarton, SA 5063  
08 8332 0281  
Freecall: 1 800 808 608  
Fax: 08 8332 0303  
insurance@ssains.com.au

## SSAA National Executive

PO Box 282, Plumpton, NSW 2761  
ssaa@ssaa.org.au

## Wildlife Programs

Matthew Godson  
PO Box 2520, Unley, SA 5061



## Fight will go on after WA election setback

Last month's Western Australian state election delivered a disappointing result for the shooting sports. The Labor Party was returned to government very comfortably, while the Liberal Party didn't do as well as either they or many observers expected. The ALP holds a strong majority in the Lower House.

Results in the Upper House were better for shooters and if there's a bright side to the election then that's it. The ALP lost its majority in the Upper House, meaning they won't be able to ram through legislation the way they could during the previous term.

While this is good, we shouldn't get carried away. There are 36 seats in the Upper House with 19 enough to control the vote and the ALP holds 16. They lose one vote because they have to provide the President of the Upper House, meaning they need another three people to vote with them

to pass legislation. The Greens have four seats and normally vote with the ALP, so things still look tough for sporting shooters in the west.

The first priority of SSAA (WA) will be to work with the Nationals, Liberals and other parties to disallow the firearms regulations which were introduced just before Christmas and, while this will be tough, we will not give up the fight. The new Act came into effect on March 31 and when we've had a chance to assess how it's operating, SSAA (WA) will undertake a formal review of the legal position for all shooters in Western Australia.

SSAA (WA) extends its thanks to all members who made the effort to become involved and help with the election either by donating time, money or, most importantly, by voting for those parties which support the shooting sports in WA.



**218,613**  
MEMBERS STRONG  
JANUARY 2025

## Taking stock

WITH REFERENCE TO Robert Moore's article 'If you rebuild it' (*Shooter*, August 2024), I found it interesting as I also own an older M77 in .223 (with the old 'paddle' stock) and have upgraded it over time with an aftermarket stock and Timney trigger, this being a big improvement on the factory one.

The stock and trigger came as an unused bargain from a retiring shooter and I got both for \$125. The stock is a synthetic conventional profile which also improved the handling.

Another improvement was shortening of the leg on the magazine follower to allow five rounds to be loaded instead of the original 4+1. I also carefully smoothed out the port area of the action to stop it scratching extracted cases. The factory machining was quite rough and all it takes is a fine needle file, patience and care.

I found a US firm which makes Picatinny rails for the M77 in zero or 20 MOA, allowing you to use any type of Weaver-style mounts and get around the dedicated Ruger mounts situation. The author mentioned the problem of having to use Ruger mounts and them being rather high-set and limited in what sort of scope diameter can be mounted. Even that reflects on locating the fore and aft movement of the scope position as a Picatinny rail offers more range of movement and the option of having built-in MOA. Search online for Weigand Machine and Design.

I like Boyd stocks as they're of excellent make and reasonably priced compared to many aftermarket ones, though what the article didn't say was whether or not a B709 permit was required to import it. I've been involved with several imports requiring B709 permits and am considering a stock import for a new-build Boyd, so would be handy to know ahead of time if a permit's needed (if it's considered a 'firearm part'). Can anyone advise?

### Lance Raftery, via email

• I've since had contact with Border Force who say no B709 is required as long as it's not a folding stock. You need only declare its value to access GST with none payable if valued at less than \$1000 - **Lance.**

## Toughen up on wrongdoers

I READ EVERYTHING in every issue of *Australian Shooter* and take a close interest in the long battle to retain the rights of the law-abiding shooting community. For years now there's been a thorough attack on all our traditional values, yet there's now a welcome build-up of pressure against all the woke nonsense which at one level rejects legitimate activities such as shooting.

So when I came across an article by Gary Furnell in *Quadrant* magazine ('Distorting Justice', August 2024), I was most interested when he referred to how we make multiple fussy rules affecting everyone's liberty rather than making a public dissuasive example of wrongdoers.

He made owning firearms an example as follows: "The punishment for those who steal firearms from legitimate owners or use firearms in crimes has not increased in severity. It would be fairer for honest owners of firearms if the rules around owning firearms were relaxed, but the punishment meted out to those few people who misused firearms were made far more severe."

I imagine the statistics support this and, if so, would love this message to become the centrepiece of all our lobbying and media efforts in conjunction with the excellent work we do in defence of our sport.

**Ken Anderson, Vic.**

## Knives didn't make the cut

WITH REFERENCE TO the letter from Robert Lee (*Shooter*, September 2024), I also have a fortnightly cleaning service by BlueCare and during a recent service interview, one of the questions put to me was about firearms. The interviewer was someone who'd actually been a fill-in cleaner at my home when the regular cleaner is away.

They read out the question and replied to themselves that I didn't have any firearms. I corrected the assumption and stated I do indeed have firearms so they asked where. My reply was: "You've cleaned here a few times, you tell me where." Their reply: "No firearms."

Now considering I have a work station in my lounge with an RCBS bottom-pour lead pot for casting projectiles, O-frame reloading press, progressive reloading on the floor, rifle cleaning frame clamped into a fixed vice on the workbench and cleaning rods leaning in the corner, I felt it was a good outcome for common sense.

I love sharp knives and have a great collection in my kitchen readily at hand. So with recent criminal activities involving knives I thought they'd be more relevant and mentioned along with firearms. But no, not a word.

**Name and address supplied.**

## F is for Firearms

REGARDING ROBERT LEE'S letter 'Out of the blue' (*Shooter*, September 2024), on being asked about 'weapons' in his home. I also experienced this when collecting my father, a WWII veteran, from hospital after surgery. I mentioned he'd a small rifle (.22 Lithgow) which he took when he ran away from home, underage, to sign up and fight for us in New Guinea. True story. They put his little gun in storage, gave him a .303 and returned his rifle when he came home.

The biggest surprise came from the nurse who asked about the 'firearm' then realised she'd been in our home on numerous occasions. As kids we often heard the 'N' word but never the 'F' word, whereas nowadays we hear the latter on TV on a daily basis. Seems in these ridiculously woke times, the new 'F' word is now 'Firearms'.

**Ed Ginns, NSW**

## Cartridge omission

I REFER TO Thomas Tabor's article 'Best rimfire varmint cartridges' (*Shooter*, August 2024) which makes no mention of probably the best one of all, namely the 17WSM. I feel this is a bit misleading as, after all, it's not as if the 17WSM is obsolete as Page 13 of the same edition contains an advertisement for a Winchester Low Wall chambered for this very fine cartridge.

**Nev Meier, via email**

## Feral baiting programs work - until they don't

A recent article in *The Conservation* discussed the effectiveness and challenges of using poisoned bait in predator control. The article goes on to say poisoned baits are the primary method used by land managers to control foxes, feral cats and wild dogs. These baiting programs aim to reduce livestock losses, protect economic interests and alleviate pressure on endangered wildlife yet despite millions of baits being laid annually, the true effectiveness of baiting remains uncertain, with mixed evidence and potential unintended consequences.

Baiting can sometimes backfire. Research suggests poisoning wild dogs may lead to an increase in fox and feral cat populations, ultimately worsening the impact on native wildlife and, in some cases, baiting has even been linked to higher livestock attacks. These unintended outcomes highlight the need for better data on how these methods truly affects predator populations.

To address this knowledge gap is newly-researched and analysed data from 34 previous studies which assessed baiting effectiveness, covering more than 1400 individual predators. This comprehensive review shed new light on how well baiting works and how it can be optimised. Analysis found baiting programs generally cut predator survival rates in half (51.7 per cent) compared to unbaited areas (16 per cent). This effect was consistent regardless of whether baits were placed along roads and tracks or scattered more widely.

But predator populations can often rebound quickly after baiting. Under opti-

mal conditions, fox and feral cat populations can double in a year, while wild dog populations can grow by 50 per cent. Additionally, predators from surrounding areas often repopulate baited zones, sometimes leading to little long-term change in population numbers yet, despite these challenges, prolonged and large-scale baiting programs have shown success. For example, sustained baiting efforts in New South Wales and South Australia have significantly reduced fox numbers, leading to population recoveries of threatened species including the yellow-footed rock wallaby.

It has long been believed feral cats are less likely to consume poisoned bait than foxes and wild dogs due to their hunting style and dietary preferences. However, this research suggested feral cats are just as susceptible to baiting, which is good news for conservation efforts aiming to reduce their numbers. Significant research has gone into designing bait specifically targeting these rogue felines such as the widely-known Eradecat, though analysis didn't find strong evidence Eradecat was more effective than other poison, suggesting any bait is better than none when controlling cat populations.

There's been ongoing discussion about whether increasing bait density or frequency is more effective, research indicating placing extra bait within a given area is more effective at reducing predator numbers than baiting more frequently. This is likely as some predators, particularly foxes, may develop bait aversion if they encounter sub-lethal doses or have negative experi-

ences with bait. A single, intensive baiting effort is more likely to succeed as it reduces the number of potential survivors which could learn to avoid the bait in future.

Interestingly, while fresh baits have traditionally been thought to be more effective, analysis found bait type had little impact on predator survival rates. Improving baiting efficiency means fewer baits are needed to achieve the desired results which reduces costs, minimizes harm to non-target species and enhances overall effectiveness of predator control.

While poison baiting remains a crucial tool for protecting livestock and wildlife, it's essential to continually refine its use. By focusing on evidence-based strategies, managers can ensure baiting programs effectively reduce predator pressure on threatened species while minimizing unintended ecological consequences.

Thinking about this research it's clear to me that if baiting is stopped the targeted species will return, the very argument used to discredit shooting as a pest-control method. Having regular shooting activities should produce the same outcome as regular baiting programs at no cost and with no non-target impacts. All tools need to be part of the toolbox so let's not have anti-hunting/shooting ideology stand in the way of protecting our native wildlife. ●



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## Blood . . . and lots of it

**H**ave you heard the word ‘exsanguination’? It’s pronounced ek-san-gwuh-ney-shun and means severe blood loss or the action of draining a person, animal or organ of blood. We exsanguinate every time we field-dress a wild harvested animal as it’s an important way to preserve meat. Specifically, mammals have a core temperature of 37 degrees Celsius, so quickly removing as much blood as possible helps cool the carcass. Blood is also an ideal medium for bacterial growth, while removing internal organs also takes away a primary cause of meat spoilage.

While a feature of hunting, exsanguination has broader relevance. After all, we’ve spoken in this column before about how accidents happen every day, everywhere, when we least expect them. And when outdoors we could be a long way from professional medical treatment which means we need to prepare for the unexpected.

So ask yourself: ‘What would you do if you suffered (or witnessed) an injury causing acute blood loss?’ Whether you’re dealing with trauma from a gunshot wound, a severed limb after a vehicle accident or any other calamity, there’s no future in hoping someone else knows what to do. You need to act. Immediately.

On average an adult human body has five litres of blood and most adults can withstand blood loss of around 15 per cent without detrimental effect. But somewhere between 15-30 per cent you’ll feel nauseous and fuzzy, with an increased heart rate and decreasing blood pressure. If blood loss passes 40 per cent your body can’t compensate without external intervention, meaning you’ll most likely pass out and slip into a coma.

For a long time the Australian Resuscitation Council (ARC) disapproved of tourniquets to deal with trauma wounds, the problem being people were using improvised materials and applying methods like ‘cravat and stick’ or ‘belt and clasp’ which sometimes just didn’t work. Without proper equipment and training, victims were suffering unnecessary nerve damage and tissue death, particularly if proper medical attention was delayed. Because of bad outcomes like these, the use of tourniquets



**Do you know how to use one of these?**

stopped being taught in Australian accredited civilian first-aid courses around mid-last century, though that situation has now changed for several reasons.

Prompted by their observations in Somalia in the 1990s, a couple of US Special Operations army medics developed a prototype tourniquet which would truly restrict arterial bleeding. Since 2005 every US soldier deployed overseas has been issued with a Combat Application Tourniquet (CAT), which can be self-applied one-handed. This development has seen an 85 per cent drop in mortality rates due to extreme exsanguination. Soon after their introduction into the US military, Australian troops were also issued CATs, a practice which continues to this day.

Parallel to their military operational use, the 9/11 (2001) attacks in New York and Boston bombings of 2013 elevated the profile of tourniquets more broadly. Stories emerged of civilian bystanders having ineffectually tried to help victims by improvising tourniquets with items like trouser belts. Results were generally woeful, in many instances triggering wounds to bleed-out more quickly than if the Good Samaritan had instead applied a dressing and direct pressure.

From these origins a range of companies now make commercially available custom-made tourniquets, while advances in technology mean rescue helicopters and ambulances can generally get professional

medical assistance to wound victims more quickly than in the past. Such factors have led the ARC to endorse again tourniquet use among first responders and you can now buy them from suppliers like St John Ambulance with associated first-aid training available.

Yet there are still some ‘buts’. The ARC advises tourniquets are to be used only as a last resort for life-threatening limb injuries where other methods, like direct pressure with wound dressings, have proven ineffective. So where can you acquire a reliable tourniquet to add to your first aid kits?

In addition to St John Ambulance, commercial suppliers such as Adventure Medical Kits sell emergency trauma tourniquets. We have this brand ourselves. It looks like a stretchy inner tyre tube and can be used as a tourniquet by itself or in conjunction with a wound dressing. It’s multi-purpose and when not wrapped too tightly can be used as a normal bandage and, being stretchy, I reckon it could be useful for snakebites or as an improvised sling.

Whichever supplier you use, dependable tourniquets are available for around \$50-\$100, so why risk being without one? Include one in your first-aid kit and make sure you learn how to use it properly. After all, the life you save might just be your own. ●





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**Q** I've been told I'm a decent shot and should examine ways I could potentially be paid to enjoy the sport I love. So is there a way to make money from clay target shooting as a sport in Australia?

**Jack B, Vic.**

**A** So you're dreaming of becoming rich through clay target shooting? Well they say if you want to be a millionaire in this sport, you should start with a billion dollars! Unfortunately, this isn't a sport known for its financial rewards but the question of whether you can cash in on it is still a valid one. From my experience, here are some realistic ways to monetise your passion for clay target shooting.

### Government grants

Let's start with government funding. This is one of the toughest routes to pursue but if you want to secure this type of financial support, focusing on Olympic shooting disciplines is essential. This could be your ticket to some financial reward but first you need to prove yourself at 'benchmark' events and achieve impressive results on the world stage. This path is for long-term dedicated athletes who are prepared to sacrifice years of time, money and commitment. Typically, this funding is reserved for top-tier Olympians in the sport.

### Sponsorship

Slightly more attainable, with the main players in this arena being shotgun manufacturers and ammunition companies. They're always on the lookout for the next champion in the making. Just remember it's a two-way street and while they may provide you with products, equipment or cash, they'll expect you to perform and promote them regularly. My advice would be to build your personal brand, show off your achievements and pitch to companies who align with your values for a mutually beneficial partnership. Note: If you live in a small town don't underestimate local businesses as they're often happy to back hometown heroes and, let's face it, every cent counts.

### Coaching

Now if you have the credentials along with a wealth of knowledge and experience, technical coaching can be your golden



Elite shotgunners are more likely to attract financial backing.

ticket. There's a growing demand for skilled coaches, whether it be helping beginners with the fundamentals or fine-tuning experienced shooters. By offering personalised coaching sessions or clinics, you can make some extra cash doing what you love, at the same time giving back to the sport and contributing to its future success.

### Prize money

While it's true cash prizes in shooting aren't exactly life-changing, some events offer better payouts than others. If you're motivated to chase the dollar, be smart about which competitions you enter and what's on offer. After all, a little strategy can go a long way.

### Product importing

Have you noticed some of the amazing shooting and hunting products from the UK or US you just can't find in Australia or which cost a small fortune in shipping? Do your research and consider becoming a distributor for quality international shooting products. This can be a great way to

introduce some exciting new gear to the Australian-based market while also creating an additional income stream.

So Jack, while it's unlikely you'll strike it rich from shooting clay targets alone, you'll certainly grow rich in the knowledge, friendships and experiences this sport has to offer. I highly recommend keeping your day job but bear in mind there are plenty of creative ways to advance in this sport. With some strategic thinking and entrepreneurial spirit, you may just find a way to make your passion pay off one clay at a time. ●



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**Q** A friend recently gave me a box of old pistol and rifle cartridges for my collection. Among them I found two cartridges head-stamped WRACo .22WCF. I know WRACo is Winchester Repeating Arms Company but what does the WCF stand for? To me they look like .22 Hornet cartridges and I was wondering if you could provide some information on them.

**D. Craig, via email**

**A** The WCF stands for Winchester Centre Fire and was used on a wide range of different calibre cartridges. The .22 WCF was introduced in 1885 for the M1885

Low Wall single-shot rifle and was a popular small game, varmint and target round with a reputation for good accuracy. The standard factory load was a flat-nosed, 45-grain bullet pushed by 13 grains of FFFg powder at a velocity of roughly 1540fps. It was dropped from production by Winchester in 1936.

In the 1920s, experimenters at the Springfield Armory developed a wildcat cartridge based on the .22 WCF and called it the .22 Hornet. Winchester added the Hornet to their production line in 1930 and the rest is history. Another spin-off from the .22WCF is the 5.6x35R Vierling, essentially a European version of the .22 WCF

but loaded to higher velocities. According to some sources, the Vierling provided inspiration for development of the .22 Hornet.

Other .22 centrefire cartridges from around that era are the .22 Extra Long Maynard introduced in 1882 (essentially a centrefire version of the .22 Extra Long rimfire cartridge), and the .22-15-60 Stevens introduced in 1896 primarily as a target cartridge. All make interesting additions to a collection of old cartridges.

**John Dunn**



**Q** A friend has a single-barrelled 12-gauge shotgun made by AYA which is well-made and the action is tight. I've enclosed a photo of the markings and wonder if you can tell me anything more about this old gun?

**Jeff Evans, via email**

**A** Thanks for your query, Jeff. Your gun is most likely an AYA Cosmos model and from the serial number would've been made between 1966 and 1971, according to a post on an online shotgun forum. There may be a more accurate date code stamped beneath the breech. The company is still in business and makes good quality shotguns. Founded in 1915 by two friends, Miguel Aguirre and Nicolas Aranzabal from the Eibar region of Spain, the name comes from their two initials either side of the 'Y' which is Spanish for 'and'.

**Geoff Smith**

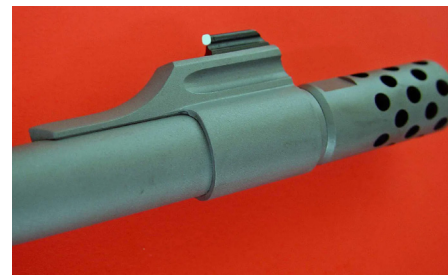


**Q** I'm a junior shooter interested in deer hunting, which obviously means larger calibres. I've noticed a lot of hunters use muzzle brakes on their rifles and was wondering what they do and if using them can help improve the hunt?

**Jessica Thompson, via email**

**A** Great to hear of a young shooter like you interested in hunting and giving some thought to the physical aspects of someone your age using the more powerful cartridges needed to humanely dispatch deer-sized game. Muzzle brakes are indeed popular among many hunters, as they reduce the amount of recoil a shooter feels when firing a rifle with one fitted.

This reduction is caused by the brake redirecting gases which fly out the muzzle immediately the bullet leaves the barrel. They're designed to pull the rifle forward and in some cases down a little to reduce muzzle jump, both clever and effective,



the downside being they're invariably very noisy. They can be particularly noisy and annoying in the confined areas of a shooting range, though very useful in that they reduce recoil and make target shooting more comfortable.

Many muzzle brakes reduce recoil by about 30 per cent which is significant when using more powerful cartridges. Deer cartridges start realistically with the .243 Win and go up from there, the .308 Win having traditionally been very popular and effective though with a lot more recoil than the .243. The more recent 6.5 Creedmoor is somewhere in between these two, being highly capable and more pleasant to shoot than the .308 Win.

Any of those three cartridges should be comfortable for you to shoot with a muzzle brake but be sure you have good hearing protection. And remember, less recoil invariably means better concentration and results both on target and in the field. All the best with your deer hunting adventures. Go girl!

**Paul Miller**

**Q** The pictured group is typical of those I've been getting from my Howa 1500 Varmint .308 using the same handloads which, in the past, performed well out to 500m. The original stock was a Hogue I eventually replaced with a Bell and Carlson M40A1 model that's super-rigid and I put a wraparound cheek-riser pad on it for extra comfort.

I mostly shoot cast-lead loads out to a maximum of 300yds without any issues. Occasionally though I like to shoot a few full-power rounds, yet since I've had the Bell and Carlson stock, this is the kind of group I've been getting with full-power loads. Removing the cheek-riser produced the group pictured but with a riser in, the group split the opposite way with high flyers instead.

I cross-checked by having a friend shoot a group with everything the same and he'd no problems producing a good one. As a last resort, I put the rifle back in its original stock and suddenly shot a  $\frac{3}{4}$ " group with three bullets in one hole! All of which leads me to believe the comb height is causing my problems and I wondered if this was a known issue?

**Patrick Kerin, via email**

**A** An F-Class shooter once told me there are dozens of things which all need to be working correctly (and all at the same time) to shoot long-range precision accurately, including the shooter. The purpose of the stock is to interface between the rifle's action and its support system, usually the shooter.

Two aspects of its role are important, one is the fitting or bedding between action and stock must be correct and secure, secondly the fit between the support system and stock must be consistent. The shooter has several points of contact with the stock, obviously shoulder to the butt, cheek resting on the comb for aiming and shooting hand on or around the pistol grip with a finger operating the triggering, with the non-shooting hand supporting the fore-end.

Shooting from a bench adds another aspect to the support system as the left hand (assuming right-handed shooter) will be gripping the rear sandbag. The amount of pressure on each of these points of contact can affect accuracy. I have little to go on from your question and without seeing you shoot or know-

ing about your scope, the weather and your benchrest set-up, I can't point to any one factor, stock or otherwise, that's causing the problem you're experiencing.

The cheek piece you added might make shooting more comfortable and allow you to maintain constant eye relief and centering, but how much pressure are you putting on it? All contact points between the stock and the rest, including position of the front rest to the stock, should also be consistent from shot to shot.

Some shooters will eliminate the number of contact points by simply squeezing the trigger between thumb and trigger finger, rather than wrapping their whole hand around the pistol grip. Others will shoot rimfire rifles without shouldering the rifle at all. So yes, the stock may be the issue here but never overlook all the other elements required for accurate shooting.

**Rod Pascoe**





# High praise for High Precision

**Chris Redlich** salutes an Italian triumph

Interesting indeed but traditional it ain't, was my initial reaction when I laid eyes on Benelli's new rifle. At first glance their Lupo HPR conflicted with my personal taste and unwritten rule of only reviewing gear I'd potentially buy for myself, until my wife exclaimed: "Don't be so judgy and just test it!" Decision made and I happily agreed to review Benelli's all-new Lupo HPR in .308 Win, one of my favourite cartridges.

By comparison, it was coincidental I'd just finished assessing a brand new lever rifle which reflects every inch of its historic design yet is still relevant today. Now I'm

reviewing a new rifle that looks nothing like 1800s era yet likewise feels right at home in 2025. Benelli's century-plus history of producing motorcycles and almost 60 years of gun-making is apparently well known, though not to me.

Truthfully, my introduction to Benelli rifles came when reading Con Kapralos' review of their Lupo back in 2021. But Italy is known for far more than motorcycles and, quite famously, the Mediterranean nation produces some of the highest quality products in the world and anything Italian I've ever owned has impressed.

Upon receipt, my initial misgivings of what a rifle should look like began to fade and a renewed excitement to test the Lupo HPR took over. Differing somewhat to Con's synthetic model, the new HPR (High Precision Rifle) reveals all the tell-tale signs of a purpose built long-range firearm. Almost deceptively, the two-part stock appears to be fastened to a block-style receiver, yet this isn't so as the clearly metallic centre section is a separate chassis, machined from an aluminium billet which connects the fore-end and buttstock.

Additionally, the aluminium chassis securely cradles the barrelled action,



**Left: The Lupo HPR was perfect for long-range shooting with the Hy-Skor bipod lying prone; Below: Two-position tang safety is within easy reach.**



thus providing a rock-solid platform while removing any negative influence the front and rear may have on accuracy. The entire stock is designed for long-range hunting and target shooting, in particular the PRS or Precision Rifle Series discipline. The contoured 'beaver tail' fore-end provides full-length barrel free-floating and incorporates a dimpled rear finger grip section.

It's flat base averaging 50mm wide seats nicely to any target-style benchrest, while dual M-Lok slots at the 3, 6 and 9 o'clock positions ensure all portable mount and accessory attachments are covered. This is just as well as I'd planned on fitting a bipod

which distributor Beretta Australia supplied with not only the M-Lok Picatinny rail, but a Hy-Skor tactical bipod.

While not dissimilar to the Long Range genre, the butt stock is where engineers have produced a rear end worthy of praise. The HPR comes with target and hunting pistol grip options but this rifle had done the rounds of reviewers before me and, for whatever reason, its alternate pistol grips weren't available. Thankfully I'm a fan of the supplied vertical profile grip for shooting prone. It's ambidextrous palm swell fills the hand beautifully and promotes a positive grip, while enabling perfect reach

for trigger-finger contact. Once again, a dimpled grip surface will ensure a non-slip fit to the operator's hands.

Despite its futuristic styling the stock is wholly practical and improving further is the adjustable cheek piece. By pressing the right-side button, the spring-loaded cheek piece locks in at eight different levels with me settling on the fourth click. Interestingly, the HPR stock with all its adjustments in no way hampers rear bolt travel, something I'd frustratingly experienced with other chassis and target stocks recently. The so-called 'progressive' tiered rubber butt pad is strong yet soft enough to tame felt recoil,

## High praise for High Precision



**Outstanding results replicated at 600m with Winchester and Sako ammunition. Inset: Lupo CRIO-treated barrel achieved outstanding results throughout all testing.**

while removable spacers ensure correct length of pull. Rounding out the butt stock's inclusions is a single M-Lok groove for attaching a rear sling stud.

As with all rifles, a practical stock wouldn't be worth a pinch if its steelwork wasn't up to the task. Ensuring this isn't the case is Benelli's interesting though not entirely unique way of combining barrel to action, receiver to stock and trigger to shooter. The beating heart of this rifle is its semi-trailer-like mild steel cylindrical receiver, mated to the stock via a machined recess and chassis recoil lug. Interestingly, the two action screws fasten from opposite directions, the front from beneath and rear from the top of the tang recess.

Despite the largest HPR chambering being .300Win Mag, I've no doubt the heavy-duty receiver is capable of handling much higher pressures generated by larger cartridges. Yet in the event of possible case ruptures, the shooter can feel at ease knowing a large port to the left of the breech

will expel any dangerous gases. This angled ejection port takes up virtually one quarter of the receiver's diameter, allowing for more than just clear ejection but easy single loading and top-up loads to the detachable magazine. A full-length Picatinny rail rounds out an important inclusion expected of modern factory target rifles.

I love the bolt on this rifle, it's rear sweeping dog-leg design clearly having been given attention by engineers to promote a fast-cycling action, while triple locking lugs enable a short, 60 degree throw. Although Remington can boast their Model 700 bolt face having an unbroken 'three rings of steel', Benelli virtually achieve the same principle by housing a large claw extractor within the bulk of the 2 o'clock bolt lug. For whatever reason, some makers use weak springs behind their ejector pins but the Lupo's was tough to depress by finger nail, indicating a strong spring.

Their push-feed bolt design has one of the best extraction and ejection cycles I've

ever used and, for added convenience, the bolt can be field-stripped without the use of tools. The two-position safety is conveniently located to the rear and below the tang within reach of the thumb. It slides fore and aft with ease, locking both firing pin and bolt simultaneously, though interestingly a spring-loaded release button behind the closed handle unlocks free bolt travel.

Surprisingly familiar yet nonetheless a practical design is the Tikka T3-style bolt release located rear left of the receiver. The single-stage trigger is fully adjustable from 1-2kg by Allen key via the rear of the magazine well. Despite the review rifle being set a little heavy at 1.3kg (3lbs), it broke sharply and crisply during testing so I left it alone.

Emblazoned boldly on the receiver is B.E.S.T, not a marketing boast but reference to the Benelli Surface Treatment, where all metallic components have undergone this patented process for protection. The HPR metal surfaces are non-reflective



Magazine fits beautifully to the rifle's contours.

*A weekend at my brother Charlie's property ensued, where I'm happy to report the gong was ringing consistently at various ranges out to 600m*

matt black including the aluminium centre, while the polymer magazine is matching. The low profile, dual-stack magazine holds five .308Win cartridges and, once fitted up, rounds out the shape and contour of the lower receiver section beautifully.

Now we reach the business end and delivering high precision to this self-proclaimed High Precision Rifle is its monster barrel. The tapered heavy barrel measures 610mm (24") and like many long-range rifles of the modern era, parallel fluting saves weight and adds visual appeal. A new design feature on the HPR model is its hexagonal barrel nut which not only ensures a solid fit to the receiver but promotes precise head spacing.

Benelli marketing and labelling make several references to CRIO treating of their barrels and, after a little digging, I was able to better understand their pitch. CRIO is an abbreviation for their cryogenic system, a process Benelli have employed for years on their shotgun barrels and now rifles. Lupo

barrels are hammer forged and cryogenically treating them further relieves any stresses caused during the forging process, thus promoting a uniform surface which improves accuracy, reduces fouling and remains cleaner for longer. The combination of BE.ST and CRIO treatments must be good as Benelli guarantee their barrels against rust and corrosion for 10 years!

Using the patch method I measured the rifling to be 1/11 (one turn in 11"), a twist rate I feel is best suited to medium-weight bullets of 150 to 168-grain for the .308Win. The muzzle is threaded and all HPRs come fitted with a brake, the horizontal tri-port muzzle brake being reminiscent of military rifles, designed to redirect flash away from the sight picture and reduce dust clouds when shooting prone, though it nonetheless tames recoil felt by larger chamberings.

#### How does it shoot?

Lupo claim their barrels to be sub-MOA standard and after running the microscope

## High praise for High Precision

over the review gun, I couldn't wait to point it at some paper. The rifle came supplied with the new Eliminator 6, Burris' first range-finding scope which actually looks like a normal scope. My first outing proved quick and easy as the rifle and scope produced surprisingly good results from mediocre ammunition.

The second round of testing including various factory loads reinforced Benelli's claim of sub-MOA standard and, to be frank, the HPR made most other rifles I've reviewed recently look amateurish for so-called 'out of the box' accuracy. Bullets of medium weight proved outstanding with Winchester's 155 and 168-grain Match loads printing sub half-MOA, and Sako 162-grain Gameheads smashing it with a ridiculous .145 MOA! Although impressive at 100m this rifle wasn't built for close-quarters shooting, so I looked forward to long-range testing.

I'd previously used the Eliminator 5 and found it a handy piece of kit, yet my relationship with its new sibling was somewhat strained at first. Unlike the Eliminator 5 which required manual data input, the new 6 relies on Bluetooth connection via the Burris Connect app. For whatever reason, my phone and the scope weren't talking and frustration led me to seek advice from tech minds better than mine.

So once we'd solved the scope's communication issues I cross-loaded the ballistics data to the Eliminator 6 and was good to go. A weekend at my bother Charlie's property ensued, where I'm happy to report the gong was ringing consistently at various ranges out to 600m with both Sako and Winchester factory ammo. Charlie repeatedly hit the gong at 300m, pretty good considering he's left-handed and had never seen the rifle before.



Left: Several M-Lok fittings allow for many accessory attachments; Right: Interestingly, rear action screw tightens from the top.



Cylindrical receiver mates precisely to the chassis by the large recoil lug and machined recess. Note large hexagonal barrel nut.



Dual-stack magazine and Lupo's tri-lug bolt with large claw extractor.

### Conclusion

Weighing about 5.7kg loaded (with scope), I wouldn't recommend lugging it around the paddocks for pig hunting, though would happily shoulder it to a shooting spot for an afternoon of long-range feral control. The Lupo HPR crushed any prejudices I held over this kind of rifle and I feel privileged to have tested this 'bad boy' of long-range shooting whose looks are a reflection of entire practicality.

Furthermore, the HPR lives up to its name and really is a high precision rifle which proved accurate at all ranges with a wide variety of ammo. Benelli have done a great job of upholding the tradition of quality which Italian manufacturing is famous for and, retailing for around \$4999 at time of writing, it's not a scary price for someone in the market for this kind of rifle. Available in 6.5PRC, 6.5CRD, 338LM, 300PRC, 300 Win Mag and of course 308Win, the Lupo HPR has long-range targets covered. ●



Progressive Comfort buttstock worthy of praise with numerous adjustments.



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# More bling for your buck

**Ben Unten** rates an affordable feature-packed scope by Pecar

I was fortunate enough a while back to be asked by *Australian Shooter* to review a selection of Pecar Optics riflescopes, which I found to be packed with features and very reasonably priced. So when the chance arose to run the numbers on the biggest scope in the range, the Black Carbon 5-25x56IR FFP, I was keen to put it to the test.

But first a quick recap. The Pecar Optics team has been around for decades and pride themselves on research and development and, so confident are they in these products, they offer a 10-year warranty on all optics.

There are three grades of riflescopes to choose from, top of the range being Black Carbon which offers professional grade, precision optics. For those pursuing affordable full-featured scopes there's the Blue Carbon selection, while for the everyday shooter the White Carbon range is probably the most popular option.

## **Black Carbon 5-25x56IR**

Measuring 365mm long and weighing 672g, this one's at the larger end of the scale, sporting a 30mm tube and 56mm objective, typical in a higher-powered scope. Sweeping through the 5x-25x magnification range is done by rotating a knurled ring

with a single raised rib, with eye relief at maximum power listed as 100mm. The top target-type turret adjusts elevation and the right-hand one windage.

Unscrewing the far end of the larger (left) turret facilitates installation of a CR032 3v coin-type supplied battery which allows the reticle to be illuminated, adjustments made via a segmented ring. A knurled ring sits inside that which allows for parallax adjustment. Included is a removable neoprene scope cover with generous finger loops at each end, a cleaning cloth, two Allen keys and a pair of clear scope covers connected by two elasticized ribbons.

## **In use**

I mounted the Black Carbon 5-25x56IR on my heavy-barrelled Tikka .243 to conduct some longer-range testing. Initial focusing is achieved by rotating the rubber protective ring of the eye piece with magnification then adjusted to your preferred setting.

Windage and elevation adjustments are made by first lifting the knurled turret caps to 'unlock' them, then rotating in the directions indicated by arrows on the caps. Once sighting-in has been completed, the turret caps are pressed back in to 'lock' the adjustment in place. Parallax adjustment is in

yards from 15 to infinity and is easily visible from behind the scope, which avoids having to break your hold to check the yardage.

Adjustments for this scope are in MRAD or milliradians or MIL as opposed to MOA (Minute of Angle). This is a slightly complex concept and an online search states: "Strictly from the math side of things, MRAD is a measurement of an angle based on the metric scale. When talking about gun scopes, MRAD is a measurement of distance."

A recent *Field & Stream* article reported: "One radian is an angular unit of measure that can be applied to a circle. Take a measurement from the centre of a circle to the outside edge (this is called the radius). Then take the length of the radius and wrap it around the outside edge of the circle. Mark the point where it ends and extend another line to the centre of the circle. This should give you a pizza slice and the angle at which your pizza has been sliced equals one radian. The prefix 'milli' means 1000, so one milliradian is the angle between two-1000ths of one radian."

**Large sweep of magnification.**



PECAR OPTICS  
AUSTRALIA

5-25x56 FFP SFIR

+ . -

## More bling for your buck



Above: Battery, illumination and parallax adjustment. Left: The scope passed the 'box' test with flying colours.

Now you're thoroughly confused I'll add that MOA is roughly 29mm at 100m and not 25mm as most of us incorrectly believe. So what does all this mean in laypersons' terms and in rounded numbers? Well,  $\frac{1}{4}$  MOA click = 7mm change of impact at 100m and 0.1 MRAD/MIL click = 10mm change of impact at 100m. This makes calculations more straightforward at known distances, especially for countries which use the metric system. MRAD is currently preferred in some military and law enforcement circles.

Another feature of this scope is its ability to 'zero reset' the turrets, which is done once the rifle is sighted-in at your preferred range. Then with the turrets pushed in and locked the three grub screws under the cap are loosened, allowing the turret cover to be removed and rotated to the '0' position. The screws are then re-tensioned and any future adjustments you make can all be referenced from this 'zero'.

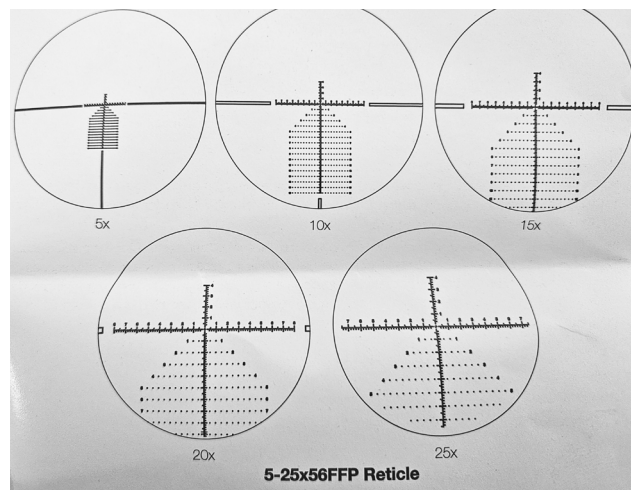
The Black Carbon 5-25x56IR features a First Focal Plane (FFP) reticle, meaning when you increase magnification the reticle increases in size. As the photos show, there's a fair bit going on with an MRAD reticle and the sight picture changes with the magnification, the advantages being

corrections shown remain the same no matter the magnification.

The illuminated reticle has six brightness settings, accessed by rotating the inner ring of the left-hand turret clockwise, each click representing the next level of brightness. A very clever feature is that in-between each of the brightness settings is an 'off' position, meaning you're never more than one click away from your preferred setting.

### Testing

Due to the 56mm objective, high mounts were required. I began by sighting in at 50m and, once on paper at this range, stepped the target out to 100m, 200m and finally 300m. The reticle and MRAD adjustments took a little getting used to but the mildots were helpful during the sighting-in process, the scope comfortably passing the 10-click box test by



Graphic representation at a selection of magnifications as to what the FFP reticle looks like.

returning to zero after '40 square clicks'. The Black Carbon 5-25x56IR retails for around \$1195. It offers features found on much higher-priced scopes and when you add the 10-year warranty into the mix, it represents extremely good value. For more and to see the full range of products and dealer listings, visit [protactical.com.au](http://protactical.com.au) ●

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# SECRETS TO GOOD WING SHOOTING

Thomas Tabor's tips for successful bird harvesting



Largely because my siblings and parents showed little interest in hunting and shooting, I became one of those unlucky blocks who'd to learn everything on his own. Somehow I managed to persevere and eventually began to see marginal improvement. But having no basic instruction early on, I developed more than my share of poor shooting habits which even today, many decades later, unexpectedly and without warning still rear their ugly heads.

#### Stay anchored

Perhaps one of the worse problems which frequently plagues shotgunners is the tendency to lift their head off the comb of the stock. Essentially this is a subconscious attempt to get a better look at the target and something most shooters are unaware of (many refer to this as 'peeking' or 'peeking at the target').

To the uninformed this may not seem a major issue to overcome, yet when a shooter's head comes off the stock even by a few millimetres, their line of sight to the target becomes totally different than the path the shot will be taking. In almost all cases this results in a missed shot and frequently the shooter being confused as to why it happened. One of the best ways to help to ensure a tight bond between the comb and your cheek is to develop a habit of always mounting the butt of the stock as high on the shoulder as possible. Doing so helps discourage you from having to pick your head up.

#### First pull of the trigger

When a covey of birds or even a single bird flushes right under a wing shooter's feet, it often sends the heart rate soaring and,

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## Secrets to good wing shooting

thinking the target could be getting out of range, can sometimes result in a rushed first shot. But pausing for a couple of micro-seconds before that first trigger pull lets your eyes better focus on the target and calculate any potential lead that may be necessary. Furthermore, as the bird's range increases so does the size of your shot pattern which in many instances could actually improve your odds.

### Shoulder arms

Not all birds flush in the same way. Some species have a tendency to do so individually while others, like some members of the partridge family, have a seemingly inherent desire to take to the air in a unified manner. Yet even in the latter, sometimes when a flock is spread out a bit there may be a few stragglers that could make their exit moments after the main group has absconded.

For this reason it's best to not be too hasty in bringing the gun off your shoulder. Staying in position, keeping the shotgun anchored against your shoulder, eyes focused in the distance and cheek firmly on the stock for a few extra seconds can result in increasing the odds of putting more birds in the bag.

### Ammo selection

Some shooters have a preference for a particular brand of ammunition yet, in the world of shotgunning, more important than the specific brand name is the content of those shells. Three of the most important factors when considering which shotshells to buy are the velocity they'll produce, shot size and overall shot charge weight.

Higher muzzle velocity generally translates into a higher level of impact energy, while larger-sized shot will produce more individual pellet energy and can even result in penetrating deeper than smaller shot, though no-one should overlook the potential benefit associated with shooting smaller shot sizes.

For example, you can expect about 55 per cent greater number of individual pieces of shot when you select a shell loaded with No.7½ size over the same weight charge of No.6. And when an equal weight charge of No.4 is compared to a charge of No.6, we find the latter (smaller) equates to about 66 per cent more pellets. In this case, while the smaller shot typically produces less

individual pellet energy, when the volume of shot impacting the bird is increased it can raise the overall energy level substantially.

There's simply no right or wrong answer as to which shot size you should use. I select one size less when shooting smaller gauge shotguns as opposed to a 12-gauge. The reason for this is simply that smaller gauge shells have smaller shot capacities than larger gauges. So when I'm hunting quail, doves and some partridge species with a 20 or 28, I typically prefer 7½ rather than my usual 6s in a 12-gauge.

### Avoiding going too small

A few years back on a quail hunting trip I decided to deviate from my self-imposed shot size rule. Instead of shooting my usual handloaded shells with 7½ shot in my 20-gauge over-and-under, I decided to try some factory-loaded Winchester AA skeet shells with No.8 shot, a decision which turned out to have disastrous consequences.



Hunting conditions that day seemed near perfect with great weather and lots of birds, still I quickly became disillusioned with the outcome. Time and time again I could only watch as birds flew away after apparently being strongly impacted by those shells. Feathers flew as the shot stuck the targets, yet only about half of those I hit actually fell to the ground.

The mystery was eventually solved that night when I began cleaning the quail I was able to bag, as I discovered each one was laced with shot which was lying just under its feathers and skin. The vast majority of that small No.8 shot simply didn't have enough energy to penetrate deep enough to cause any real damage. While I still believe there's often a significant advantage in more pellet impacts than fewer of a larger-sized shot, avoid the temptation to go too far the other way. On the next quail hunt I reverted successfully to my usual 20-gauge with 7½ loads.

**The smaller No.7½ shot is a perfect match in smaller gauge shotguns for species like quail. Opposite: Pheasant hunting can be challenging and requires strict dedication to good shooting techniques.**



## Secrets to good wing shooting

Coaching and training young shooters will aid them greatly in the future.



### Right eye or left?

Not an overly-efficient shotgunner? The problem could lie in the fact you may be right-handed but left eye dominant (or vice-versa). While you might think this is a rare situation, it's actually more common than you'd know and I actually have two friends who fit that bill.

When a shooter's eye dominance doesn't match that of their dominant hand, the only realistic answer is learning to shoot based solely on their eye dominance. In other words, if the person is left eye dominant and right-handed they must learn to shoot left-handed. I know this is difficult and can't imagine having to do that, but it's the only realistic solution to the cards nature dealt you.

To see if you fall prey to this there's a very simple check. With both eyes wide open, hold one finger out in front of your face which aligns with a mark or object

on the adjacent wall. Now close your left eye and see if your finger position appears to change in location to that target. If it doesn't that's an indication you're right-eye dominant and should be able to effectively shoot right handed. If your finger appears to move in relationship to that image, that's an indication you may be left-eye dominant.

### The way I see it

It's been a struggle overcome some of my initial bad shooting habits and I certainly wouldn't wish anyone to be forced to develop their skills in a similar manner. But understanding a few of the basics of good shooting techniques will surely help those starting out to enjoy the fine sport of wing shooting and, in some cases, even help those with more experience to understand why sometimes their target was missed and what they can do to keep those failures to an absolute minimum. ●



Dry-firing a shotgun is great training but snap caps should always be used to protect the internal mechanisms of the gun.



As gauge size reduces so does the shell's shot capacity, from the massive 10-gauge (left) down to the little .410 (right).



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# Hunting: *Why bother?*

**Joe Norris** has the answer covered

I've been asked many times why I hunt and sometimes I struggle for the right way to answer that question depending on who's asking. There've been times when we're at a gathering and the question comes from someone looking to challenge me based on their 'green' ideologies. Other times someone genuinely wants to understand why I choose to hunt instead of just buying my protein from a shop and I've struggled for the right answer.

I guess I've asked myself the same question many times and the answer varies, at least for me. I don't measure my hunting trophies as I'm not interested in scores or a ranking on some record sheet as that's not why I hunt, so it's not for bragging rights.

There are many reasons why and each time it's a slightly different combination, sometimes for the challenge of outwitting a

particular animal that's causing some sort of problem. It could be a wild dog preying on domestic stock or a fox targeting chook pens. I've had feral pigs raid the garden or feed bins at the homestead and brumby stallions trying to steal my working horses that had to be hunted. Pigs wallowing in the house dam contaminating our domestic water source are a problem that must be dealt with, yet mostly no-one knows about these hunts and they remain private.

But the underlying reason for me is the challenge each hunt presents. The chance to experience different landscapes and countries which only hunting provides is a major factor, as I've no interest in climbing mountains just for the view but will gladly do so to hunt thar or chamois. I think when we're hunting all our senses are turned fully on as I can see, hear and smell so

much clearer when I'm out in the bush.

Of course there's the old catchphrase of hunting for cheap meat. Logically this doesn't make sense, because if you add up all the expense incurred when actually going hunting, the cost of the protein gathered at the end of the hunt will be many times greater per kilo than buying it over the counter. Ask a duck hunter how much each bird cost at the end of the season and you'd probably be surprised at the answer. The money clearly isn't the reason, so it has to be something else.

The social aspect of duck hunting, the opening day and duck camps is a major drawcard for many of us and worth the expense just to enjoy this annual tradition. The deer rut is another time we hunters live for. Just to hear fallow deer croak or the red or rusa roar is worth all the time and

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## Hunting: Why bother?



Joe stand high above the Franz Joseph Glacier in New Zealand while hunting chamois.

*Some of us just want to experience different countries, cultures and environments and the opportunity to pursue the unique species these places have to offer*

money invested in getting to a position to experience this.

Some of us just want to experience different countries, cultures and environments and the opportunity to pursue the unique species these places have to offer, or maybe it's for the chance to pitch our wits against a truly wild animal in its own environment. I guess for everyone it's different, though I honestly believe for the vast majority it's not just to shoot something for the sake of it.

I had the chance to look at the hunting industry in Africa last year and, while talking to outfitters and concession owners there, it became obvious that without hunters there wouldn't be any animals left in Africa. Almost all the little district schools and villages surrounding hunting areas are directly supported by the hunter's dollar as well as the meat they provided. Anti-poaching efforts in these areas are also

mostly supported by hunters themselves. All the 'green' tours and eco outfits don't support a fraction of the conservation that hunting does and I'm proud to have been part of it.

Some of my most memorable hunts have been when I haven't actually fired a shot. I've returned home without the animal I set out to harvest on several occasions, yet don't think there've been many hunts where I didn't learn something new and had the chance to grow as an outdoorsman. At times I've just taken photos and carried my rifle over my back with camera in hand. These are still rewarding hunts and I have some amazing 'photo trophies' as a result.

Of course the chance to harvest free-range organic meat is still a major drawcard for me. The opportunity to collect an old animal past its prime which represents a true trophy is gladly taken as a memento of my time in the bush. Looking around

my trophy room I can recall the sights and smells, as looking at each trophy transports me back to the time and place they were harvested.

Time spent in the bush is never wasted and I cherish each opportunity to get out there and take it all in. To bring home meat or a trophy is a bonus and while I try to do this, I'm not disappointed if I don't. So I guess the answer to why I hunt is because it's part of me and what makes me feel alive and for that I'll always be grateful. ●



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# VERY HIGHLY R8-TED

More German genius impressed **Daniel O'Dea**



The R8 is a totally modular system with the only tool required a supplied hex key for removing the stock from barrel.

**T**he Germans are renowned for their engineering expertise and if it's a premium product there's a good chance it's made there. Names like Porsche, Mercedes, BMW and Audi in automotive, Zeiss and Leica in optics and companies such as Siemens, Bosch and Miele are all leaders in their fields for innovation, technology and design.

Likewise Blaser falls into this category. Founded in 1957 by Horst Blaser, the firm quickly developed a reputation for building high-quality hunting rifles and shotguns, specialising in the quintessentially European multi-barrel 'drilling' designs. This is where you may have two shotgun barrels over a centrefire rifle barrel, or even a shotgun barrel stacked with two centrefire

rifle barrels of different calibres. Their Model DB14 for instance might incorporate a 20-gauge shotgun alongside both a .308 Winchester and .222 Remington rifle barrel, all combined in the one firearm.

In 1993 Blaser hit the European market with an all-new straight-pull design in the R93. This new rifle offered a unique and speedy straight-pull bolt cycle combined

with an efficiently simple barrel change system, a package offering swift follow-up shots, accuracy and flexibility of calibre change in the field. The rifle proved highly popular with more than 200,000 built during its 23 years of production. Blaser's most recent straight-pull rifle is the R8 and that's the one we're looking at here.

In the Blaser R8, instead of just a single rifle we have a modular system, one which seemingly offers unmatched flexibility and innovative design. Built around a solid metal billet receiver, barrels mate perfectly via two pillars which bolt and bed perfectly, providing a completely free-floating barrel for an inherently accurate and harmonious connection. Barrel swaps can be achieved by simply loosening the two bolts with the tool provided, remove and replace.

Rather than an action or receiver ring as such where bolt lugs lock in and the barrel threads into, Blaser barrels are hammer forged to include the chamber to which the proprietary radial bolt head locks in directly. This isn't via two or three bolt lugs as in a conventional bolt-action rifle, rather by 14 points of radial connection for exceptionally strong lock-up.

In something unique to my experience, the detectable magazine housing actually includes the trigger pack. The whole assembly is an amalgamation of metal and polymer which not only incorporates the trigger pack but a removable polymer cartridge that's interchangeable dependent on calibre choice.

Bolt assembly is another example of precision machining and intricate small parts coming together to somehow combine complexity with simplicity. Your fingernail is ample to operate a latch which raises a small spring-loaded lever to remove the bolt head, as required for calibre changes (calibre dependent). In fact simplicity through complexity pretty much sums-up this rifle, a complex machine which ends up very user-friendly. German indeed.

Distributor Outdoor Sporting Agencies provided an R8 in the Blaser Professional Success model featuring a thumbhole stock, along with a Blaser B2 2.5-15x56iC rifle-scope in Blaser Saddle Mount. That's right, a Blaser riflescope. In order to provide quality hunting optics to perfectly complement their range of rifles, in 2013 the company acquired Minox (of Lecia, Minox) - the famous German camera manufacturer who themselves have been making quality optics since 1945 - thus forming Blaser Optics.

Equally Germanic the scope features a 30mm main tube machined from a solid metal blank, making for a relatively compact but hefty unit made to withstand the

heaviest recoil. Proprietary multi-layered lens coatings produce brightness and clarity arguably equal to the best European premium optics. Large turret towers left and top allow for elevation and windage adjustment at 1cm per click at 100m, while a right tower provides parallax adjustment from 50m to infinity and also contains adjustment for the illuminated A4-style reticle. A screw-off cap at the end of this third turret also houses a single CR2023 battery.

The scope features Blaser's iC or 'illumination Control'. It took me a little while to work it out, but this clever tech means once synced with your R8 rifle, illumination will turn on and off automatically as the rifle bolt is cocked and decocked, more of which later.

The saddle mount is yet another example of supreme German engineering, where two small circular posts on the mount mate perfectly with corresponding notches on the R8's barrel. These clamp in place via two small thumb levers which fold inwards, out of the way, once locked in position. The mount can be removed and replaced at will without loss of zero and carries a 10-year guarantee.

In the field or at the range the Blaser R8 Professional Success demonstrates a lot of built-in active safety features, at the heart of them the oversized thumb safety to the rear of the bolt. Unlike most bolt-actions where the safety catch effectively blocks a spring-tensioned firing pin from moving forward and/or trigger backwards, in this one activating the thumb safety effectively decocks the bolt by removing tension from the firing pin spring.

**Barrels bed perfectly into an all-metal receiver channel with a crossbar recoil lug via two bolt studs, providing a completely free-floating barrel.**



Very highly R8-ted



**Blaser R8 Professional Success in the Lead Sled. Inset: Accuracy in the .30-06 chambering averaged in the 1-1.5 MOA range.**



Pressing the thumb safety forward cocks the bolt and reward decocks it. The whole system is reminiscent of any hammer-fired gun be it lever-action rifle, hammer-fired shotgun or handgun, where it can be carried hammer-down for safety and brought to action by cocking the hammer. As mentioned earlier, if fitted with a Blaser-compatible iC scope this action also turns illumination on and off.

Adding to the safety systems, removing the magazine automatically de-cocks the bolt, activating the thumb safety hence removing the magazine. This of course includes the trigger pack which, by default, renders the rifle incapable of firing. Likewise, with the safety activated the bolt is also locked closed, preventing accidental opening if moving through heavy brush.

Initially I found the whole idea of the trigger housing detaching with the magazine somewhat disconcerting - what happens it fell out and was lost on a hunt? Yet Blaser have thought of that too in their design, as the magazine release incorporates not one catch but two, one either side of the assembly which must be depressed in unison to release the pack.

If you're still concerned about this unlikely scenario, a small catch at the bottom of the magazine well, accessible by

finger with the action open allows you to lock the assembly, overriding the magazine release catches and leaving it locked in place. The only downside is while single rounds can be easily loaded directly into the chamber, I found topping-up the magazine while in the rifle isn't a simple task. In short, you'd want the job done with rounds onboard at the start of any engagement.

The rifle supplied was chambered in .30-06 Springfield, father of the now more popular .308 Winchester and still a fan favourite with many a deer hunter, myself included. Range testing was limited by a shortish supply of Hornady American Whitetail ammo in the 150gr loading, which I augmented with 180gr Remington Core-Lokt and 150gr Federal Power Shok factory loads. Accuracy was highly acceptable with most groups falling within the 1-1.5 MOA range, ironically my best being the first one from a cold bore with Hornady which measured just under an inch. Perhaps I should have stopped there.

Sadly with ammo and components costing what they do, gone are the days of running through half a dozen packs of different factory rounds or working up tailored handloads for a rifle you'll be sending back to the distributor next week. Regardless, accuracy displayed was more than acceptable for

*Once synced with the rifle, illumination will turn on and off automatically*

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## Very highly R8-ted

a hunting rifle in .30-06 and I've no doubt even better would be achieved once run-in and with the right ammo.

Trigger pull was delightfully light yet totally predictable. With a trigger weight below 2lb, averaging just 1lb 14oz on my Lyman gauge, you might think it too light for field use. Yet never did I feel unnecessarily surprised with the release coming precisely when called for, very crisp with zero creep and I'd rate it with some of the best trigger pulls I've ever encountered.

Off the bench and into the field the R8 proved deadly when I stalked in on a couple of sows turning over sods where I'd had a dozer pushing blackberry. Hugging a tree line to within about 80m, the first dropped instantly to a bullet between the shoulder and ear. The second screamed up the hill through berry and brush only to be tagged as it passed into a small clearing, the speed of the straight-pull action providing a rapid reload for a finisher before it made it to the other side.

The gun's balance and great optic made tracking through the shadows a breeze, especially when aided by the automatic activation of the illuminated centre dot on the reticle, which lit up perfectly against the black hide of the sow. A perfect rifle/scope pairing for the circumstances.

The Blaser R8 Professional Success is a premium rifle offering a host of great features and technology. As a modular firearm there are many options with respect to stock and action finishes, barrel and calibre choices etc. Customisation is really a specialty with Blaser, though of course premium products come at a premium price with the package as tested retailing for more than \$10,000.

Blaser proffer a good option for those who might choose quality over quantity. With a rifle set up with a couple of additional barrels potentially replacing a safe full of guns as well as a good option for the travelling hunter, where it can be broken down into a case and re-assembled without loss of zero. More at [osaastralia.com.au](http://osaastralia.com.au) and a shout-out to Horsley Park Gun Shop [horsleyparkgunshop.com.au](http://horsleyparkgunshop.com.au) who assisted with logistical supply. ●



**Above: Daniel with one of two sows taken with the Blaser R8.**

**Below: The open action design leaves no question as to the rifle's status, with rounds in both chamber and magazine clearly visible.**






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


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# Everybody needs good neighbours!

## Derek Nugent's new hunting partner is shooting his dream

I'm constantly amazed by the degree to which our lives are influenced by chance and coincidence - sliding doors if you will. I'm not talking 'gold lotto-type' moments (if you were ever that lucky), more of those small and almost daily incidents and decisions which, when viewed as a whole, open our lives to new and previously unimagined experiences, endeavours and friendships.

In this respect it was the sale of the house next door and resulting appearance of new faces in the street which recently provided such an opportunity for me. Unbeknown to me, my new neighbour Danny was a keen shooter with a desire to get into deer hunting and a very interesting piece of bespoke hardware with which to do so.

### Kindred spirit

As is the case with many of us these days, I choose not to advertise my involvement in shooting and hunting outside my immediate friendship group or to 'strangers', as there's simply no way of predicting the response. Though I'll admit that in most cases people tend to accept my chosen pastime without much comment.

Yet there are always the few who feel entitled to pass woke judgment on gun sports and those of us who enjoy them, despite our activities being heavily regulated, licensed and legal. I've no need to debate with the ignorant and uninformed, as simple facts rarely triumph over emotional rhetoric, so I tend to test the waters before revealing this element of my life to others.

Initially, apart from introducing myself to Danny and engaging in the typical 'welcome to the neighborhood' dialogue, I was content to sit back and see what might develop, as I'm not the pushy type and believe in respecting people's privacy. After a few weeks Danny popped over with his dog in tow to apologize for it having developed the habit of nicking deer bones from my own dog's feeding point at the front of the house.

In the course of conversation the origins of the bones came up and the penny dropped immediately for both of us, which led to a comfortable conversation about shooting and hunting. Before long we were strolling around my 'pool room' looking at the various trophies and 'huntingalia' which adorn it. Danny was stunned to see an old



Scoping clear country overlooking two dams.



Everybody needs good neighbours!



**One man's dream rifle. One less canine predator to worry about.**

article from *Australian Hunter* penned by my son, which he'd actually read and retained for his own lad.

It transpired he's a SSAA member and while he'd done a lot of target shooting and pig hunting, was especially keen to learn the deer stalker's trade. I've always seen it as somewhat of a responsibility to introduce fellow shooters to new opportunities, so extended an offer which was promptly accepted. A week later we were afield targeting both deer and wild dogs for a local landowner, and it was at this point I was introduced to the personalised firearm Danny had commissioned.

### One man's dream

A particular set of family circumstances (a gift from his late mother) had given Danny the chance to indulge his interest in firearms and build a custom outfit to his own specifications, the result best described as a tactical-style rifle designed for precision shooting over extended ranges. It's a visually appealing firearm with niche usage in mind, namely the targeting of pigs on open/flood plains from a vehicle, though regular use at the range was also a prime consideration.

The bespoke rifle was built by GC Precision Development Arms (GCPD), an Australian-owned company based in Canberra. GCPD provides a versatile product range aimed at the law enforcement, military and civilian markets and their extensive array of offerings can be viewed online at [www.gcpdarms.com](http://www.gcpdarms.com). Each firearm is individually designed and built from the ground up, after extensive dialogue with the client as to exactly what they want from their new custom rifle.

The end result is a world-class precision rifle based on the best materials and technologies available, one designed for everyday use regardless of conditions and supremely accurate straight out the box. GCPD proudly market themselves as being "here to build your long-range shooting dreams" and, in Danny's case, that's exactly what they did.

The donor rifle for the project was a Tikka T3X Varmint synthetic S/S in .270Win. The action was customised by GCPD through the use of one of their Titanium bolt packages, Ti bolt handle and shroud and carbon fibre bolt knob, the old trigger assembly replaced by a compatible aftermarket Timney option. A Works Precision Arms muzzle brake was also fixed to the factory standard barrel of the Tikka, this then mounted in an MSP-T3-LRP chassis with fully adjustable LRS configuration butt-stock and under barrel fore-end,

complete with a genuine Tikka T3X extended magazine (five-shot).

The chassis features fully ambidextrous ergonomics in terms of magazine release, cheek piece, grip geometry, stock adjustment points and sling mounting positions and, being a completely modular design, it can also be precisely configured to each client's requirements. It's made from aeronautical-grade aluminum, alloy, titanium, high-strength steel and stainless steel, all coated to a military-grade hard anodized finish. A Picatinny rail allowed for the fitting of an ACCU-TAC BR-4 G2 quick detachable bipod and Nightforce ATACR 4-16x50mm F1 scope in corresponding Nightforce Ultralight X-Treme duty rings.

This was no lightweight endeavour by any stretch, the \$10,000 firearm coming in at a hefty 8kg, but the man had a vision of exactly what he wanted and GCPD Arms actioned it accordingly. The result is a bespoke rifle for an exact purpose and, in that respect, its weight works in its favour as once aligned on target, it simply doesn't move and makes for a highly stable and accurate long-range shooting platform as envisaged.

## *The result is a bespoke rifle for an exact purpose*

### Afield

Our first joint hunt was only partially successful. We didn't encounter a single deer but did manage to nail a wild dog much to the delight of the grazier who owns the property. Subsequent hunts were focused on the quest to have Danny grass his first red deer which I knew he dearly wanted to do with his custom rifle, so we employed a variety of appropriate tactics during the next few months.

I'd no doubt the hides on my property and open cleared ridge faces on my neighbour's would provide ample opportunity for his dream to be fulfilled and full potential of his rifle to be realised. As it was that's exactly how things turned out. We knew a bachelor herd of red stags had taken to frequenting some well-watered flats on a friend's property, predominantly in the afternoon.

So Danny and I positioned ourselves to our advantage and patiently waited to see what might unfold. At about 5.30, two stags appeared at the furthest point of the flats and began to leisurely feed their way

along the timbered verge, albeit a good 500m away. Fortunately they were blissfully unaware of us and we were able to move on to a ridge which they would, with any luck, graze past at about half that distance.

With my part done I hung back and observed as Danny selected his stand, eased himself into position and waited for a shot to present. It was all down to him now and he'd have to contend with the fact the targets were on the move, sometimes obscured by saplings and waist-high grass. It seemed to take forever for the deer to traverse a good kill zone. From my position in the tree-line about 30m rearward, I could almost hear the beat of his heart and feel his nervous energy as he waited to take the shot. All the while I was mindful of the fact that should the deer detect him, his chance would disappear in a flurry of hooves and antlers so timing was everything.

Luckily he'd the grit to wait until they emerged on to a cleared patch of ground, even as the light was fading fast. The loud crack of the .270 and sight of only one stag fleeing up the flats seemed to signal success as my enquiry "Did you drop him?" was met with an enthusiastic "Bloody oath!" He'd taken his first stag with a well-placed shot at a comfortable 220m so I was both relieved and happy for him. Interestingly, this was the second time in a month I'd been able to put a mate on to their first stag and in virtually the same place, so who says lightning doesn't strike twice.

### Horses for courses

While the gun's an absolute beauty in the circumstances envisaged for use (long-range shooting from a prepared position), the simple fact is it's not a stalking rifle. This is down to its weight which, in my opinion, makes it burdensome to carry and unwieldy to use in situations where it's necessary to rapidly acquire a target and get a shot away in a quickly-evolving hunting scenario.

My subsequent advice to Danny has been to buy a more traditional rifle for this purpose and future stalks. Yet that said, his GCPD Arms custom firearm is perfect to use from a hunting buggy, ute tray, hide or similar stand, particularly on more distant game unaware of the presence and intent of a hunter.

Given the hunter's discipline to wait in a prepared position overlooking likely territory like a water source, intersecting game tracks or margins of agricultural land, would undoubtedly see more rewards of the type illustrated by our success with the stag. It's one man's vision made manifest in a quality one-off firearm made for precision shooting over extended range. Full stop. ●

# HARD GAS



# ES!

## Chris Redlich on options for secure gun travel



**A**part from your knockabout 'ute guns', most owners appreciate the dollar value of their favourite hunting rifle or shotgun, with many now of premium build costing around \$2000, while adding a quality scope can potentially double that figure. That's why it's important to protect them from the rigours of travel, whether it be local or international.

Apart from loan cases which accompany review items, hard protective gun cases aren't something I've owned before. That said, a custom padded drawer on my vehicle would be the exception, being built to achieve a similar principle only much larger and not so portable. So when the chance arose to review a pair of hard gun cases from Pro-Tactical, I was keen to check them out.

In fact being on the Pro-Tactical mailing list meant I'd seen these ones before, but what caught my eye was their attractive price. But are they as good as others on the market? I was about to find out. They sent me their double gun 55" (1400mm) aluminium case and the popular Cyclone plastic 48" (1250mm) single rifle case.

**Slim aluminium case stows neatly in the back of most vehicles.**

### **Cyclone heavy duty**

By all appearances the Cyclone plastic case is by far the heavier duty-looking of the two with the same model also available in 45" and 53" double gun cases. They're extremely tough with the Cyclone made of durable, blow-moulded thermoplastic with stainless steel components at all critical points of strength and wear.

The rib-reinforced top and bottom halves are both one-piece sections connected by four substantial, integrated hinges using thick stainless steel hinge pins. The broad main carriage handle is solid and is the only separate plastic component to the case, once again attached to the main body by stainless steel pins which reinforced my confidence in their strength.

A full perimeter lip and silicone seal on the top and bottom halves provides dust and watertight peace of mind, while the inclusion of heavy duty memory foam in the base and anti-move 'eggshell' foam in the lid will ensure your rifle stays cushioned and scope remains zeroed. Conveniently, Cyclone cases also include a separate ½" thick full-length foam spacer which can be added or removed depending on the width of your gun.

Four stainless steel 'butterfly' toggles at reinforced sections of the front edge clamp the top and bottom halves together securely. The camming action of the toggles

## Hard cases!



The 53" aluminium case holds two large guns comfortably and the Cyclone 48" plastic case was the perfect fit for a large single rifle.

is so strong you can feel the rifle sandwich between the foam when tightening, while a bleed valve on the base will relieve any air pressure if necessary.

Most importantly are the two reinforced sections of the case which require padlocks to secure. The good old-fashioned padlock is still a favourite of mine and it doesn't matter which brand or make of case you have, it's a valuable deterrent for opportunistic thieves. The Cyclone was a perfect fit for virtually all my guns, including the large .284Win custom hunter and heavy barrel 6.5 Creedmoor varmint rifle, and would be my preferred choice for interstate or international air travel. The 48" single rifle model retails for an extremely competitive \$249 and, at this price, I believe is an absolute bargain considering the value of your favourite gun.

### Aluminium gun case

The Pro-Tactical aluminium gun case is the larger of the two under review and in my opinion a lighter-duty alternative to the Cyclone. Yet despite being light this one still provides ample protection for guns where the risk of rough manhandling is minimised. This would be my preference for general vehicular transit by stowing in a lockable ute tray or RV due to its slimline profile.

The external aluminium skin is quite thin to reduce weight but reinforcing its corners are steel caps to prevent dinting. Four plastic caps on the edge and base ensure the case stays clear of the hinges and remains level when sitting upright in either position. Even with my larger guns stowed, the three steel wire hinges looked adequately strong and no slop was observed during opening and closing.

Unlike the Cyclone the aluminium case has only two 'hook and loop' catches in the centre, while flanking those are two more attaché-style combination locks on the outside. Although not watertight, a rebated lip on the top and bottom edges ensure dust ingress is kept to a minimum, while top and bottom 'eggshell' foam liners cradle the guns securely.

This case holds two guns comfortably and easily accommodated my double-barrel shotgun and .303 hunting rifle combination during testing. Also retailing for \$249 (aluminium 55" double case) makes this one a price-appealing alternative for gun protection that's not quite as chunky as the Cyclone.

### And finally

Obviously I wouldn't go out my way to deliberately try and break a Cyclone case



Attaché-style combination locks on the aluminium case.



Toggle clamp and padlock help ensure safe locking in transit.

for the purpose of testing their claim of 'shockproof'. However, all indicators during review revealed a product that would protect my rifle from potential rough treatment by a busy airport baggage handler. Likewise, the aluminium case will offer plenty of protection for your guns, providing you don't have the misfortune to lose it off the back of a shooting buggy.

The Cyclone on the other hand would be my pick to handle such an unfortunate mishap and I'd be confident enough to say your scope would also remain on-point. For the full range and prices of all their gun cases and bags, rests, cleaning products and much more visit [protactical.com.au](http://protactical.com.au) ●

**RAW**  
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# More mischief-making by Australia Institute

John Maxwell

The Australia Institute has been up to its old antics, producing another report commissioned by Gun Control Australia and the Australian Gun Safety Alliance. It claims yet again there are far too many guns in the country and states and territories still haven't fully complied with the 1996 National Firearms Agreement (NFA). Entitled *Gun Control in Australia - An update on firearms data and policies*, the 44-page document was released in late January with the apparent intention of placing guns on the national agenda in an election year.

This shock-horror approach doesn't seem to have produced much of an impact. "As of 2024, there were over four million guns owned by civilians - one for every seven Australians. This is a 25 per cent increase from the 3.2 million firearms in Australia before the Port Arthur massacre," it says. That's an increase of around 400,000 in five years. "Australia has not 'solved' the problem of gun control," the report says. Their solution? More gun control of course.

This completely ignores a couple of factors, one being Australia has grown since 1996. Back then the population was 18.3 million and according to the Australian Bureau of Statics, it was 27,204,809 as of June 30, 2024, a more than 48 per cent increase. On the basis of population growth alone, there could be a whole lot more guns in the community, so a 25 per cent increase actually seems quite modest.

Everyone who's acquired or renewed a firearms licence since 1996 has met the more onerous licensing conditions the anti-gun lobby found entirely appropriate under the NFA. It would appear a most uncomfortable truth for the Australia Institute, Gun Control Australia and friends that while firearm numbers have risen, the use of guns for murder and suicide has fallen.

According to the latest in the Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) annual



Police are waging an ongoing battle against illegal firearms in the community.

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## More mischief-making by Australia Institute

Homicide in Australia statistical series, 11 per cent of murder victims (33 from a total 247 for the year) involved a firearm, below the long-term average. In 2021-22 it was 34 dead by gunshot from a total of 234 and in 2020-21 it was 25 from 221.

In 2022-23 substantially more people were murdered with knives and other sharp instruments (85 victims), blunt instruments (19) and hands and feet (42). The Australia Institute says 206 people died in 2023 from firearm-related injuries including suicide, murder and accidents. Subtracting the 33 gun murder victims in 2023 shows the great majority of firearms deaths continues to be suicide. Since the 1980s suicide from firearms has fallen dramatically, with a current rate of less than one per 100,000 population (hanging remains the most common means of suicide for men and women).

So more guns in the community, owned by licensed sporting shooters, certainly doesn't mean more gun violence as the Australia Institute report seems to imply. Back in 2000 the AIC released a study which found between July 1997 and June 1999, only nine per cent of homicide offenders held firearms licences. No handgun used in homicide during that period was registered.

That study established emphatically the vast majority of firearm crime was committed by those not holding licences and using unregistered guns, not by licensed shooters. Has that situation changed? We just don't know as there's been no comparable recent research. Indisputably, some licensed shooters have used guns to commit appalling crimes, yet most reported gun crime seems to involve criminal gang members engaged in drug, turf and, more recently, tobacco wars.

The report was accompanied by polling explicitly commissioned by Gun Control Australia which, unsurprisingly, finds a majority of respondents (70 per cent) want tougher gun laws, though 31 per cent want them to stay the same or be wound back. The hook for this poll was recent changes to gun laws in Western Australia, with limits on how many can be owned.

Commissioned polling, especially conducted by phone, can produce pretty much whatever outcome a client desires. The scorecard rated states and territories by green tick or red cross in six criteria 'for effective gun control' - data transparency, consultation, limits on firearms ownership, a ban on under-18s accessing guns, ban on digital blueprints for 3D guns and police regulation of clubs and ranges allowing unlicensed shooters to try out shooting. NSW did best with three green

ticks, WA two, Victoria and Tasmania one and the rest none at all.

Let's start with U-18 shooters, permitted in every state and territory yet which The Australia Institute, Gun Control Australia and others insist is banned under the NFA. No it's not and to say otherwise is either ignorance or outright mendacity. The NFA agreement emerged from a special meeting of the Australasian Police Ministers' Council on May 10, 1996.

Contrary to views of the anti-gun groups - that the NFA agreement was perfect and immutable from the outset - there were amendments approved by Federal Cabinet over ensuing weeks and months dealing with a range of issues. In the minutes from a meeting on June 11, Cabinet agreed to propose to states that: "The position of under-age shooters under the Police Ministers' resolutions be clarified to indicate all jurisdictions would allow and continue to allow persons under the age of 18, but above a specified minimum age, to use lawful firearms in supervised situations." Not sure how much clearer that could be.

There's long been a shortage of reliable and current data on registered guns and licence holders, so making more information available isn't fundamentally a bad thing for shooters. However, the Australia Institute wants that data readily available online down to particular post-codes, presumably so anti-gun groups can campaign against all those guns in suburbia.

In promoting its proposed new gun laws, the WA government tried that and managed to release data which allowed the homes of some individual gun owners to be identified. Now shooters can adopt every conceivable security measure (locks, alarms, safes) to guard against criminals who are ever on the lookout for guns to steal, yet anonymity remains perhaps the best protection, not just for gun owners but the entire community.

Through organisations such as the SSAA, gun owners are generally consulted when governments are planning new initiatives or considering law changes. Anti-gun groups would also like to be included on these consultation panels, with one of their objectives being 'to balance the commercial interests of the firearm industry'.

WA's tightening of its gun laws and imposition of limits on how many may be owned (five for a hunter and 10 for a competition shooter), has certainly excited the anti-gun community which believes every other jurisdiction should follow. The Australia Institute laments that even these are well above the limit of two guns per person proposed by Gun Control Australia for NSW

in 2019. Considering the substantial cost of compensating gun owners for confiscated property, no other jurisdictions are rushing to follow the WA example.

Marking states and territories up or down according to whether they've banned possession and sharing of digital files for 3D-printed gun plans seems a curious priority, given 3D printing of firearms is utterly illegal in every state and territory under existing laws. Home production of illicit guns is a significant and growing issue, which police services are actively investigating and making routine arrests and seizures. So far only NSW and Tasmania have outlawed possession of 3D gun plans, though others may follow. The Australia Institute says other measures could include additional safety requirements on 3D printers sold in Australia, or through moderation and blocking of harmful online content.

Finally there's regulation of unlicensed shooting by clubs and ranges, which the Australia Institute reckons should be managed by police rather than private organisations (i.e. the clubs). Every state and territory allows non-licensed people to try out shooting, a practice which has been tightened up in recent years. Typically it's now under close supervision of a club instructor or Range Officer and after completing a declaration form. Considering the demands on state and territory police services, would they really want to take on the responsibility for supervising newbies at clubs and ranges across the nation. You'd have to think not.

The Australia Institute has touched on gun control previously, releasing a series of reports in conjunction with Gun Control Australia in 2019. Though it describes itself as an independent thinktank, it remains as it was back then, an exponent of left and Greens policies, including on guns. The Australia Institute is an agreeable home for former Greens staffers and candidates, which appears to be well reflected in its agenda. Current executive director Richard Dennis and deputy director Ebony Bennett are former staff members to Greens politicians. Former executive director Ben Oquist was a longtime staffer, working for Greens leaders Bob Brown and Christine Milne and remains a board member.

The Greens political party remains committed to its longstanding anti-gun agenda with its policy platform on justice declaring they want to 'progress gun law reform, including prohibition of the possession and use of semi-automatic handguns in the community'. ●

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Go like a  
**PRO**

**Paul Miller** on a range of impressive cleaning products

I was talking to Mark Herron and Mark Wilson at Herron Security and Sport when the subject of cleaning firearms came up. Turns out both are meticulous about cleaning their firearms to enhance performance and keep them in tip-top condition and, to this end, Herron Security and Sport import a wide variety of high-end products from US firm Pro-Shot. I was provided with a selection of fluids, brushes, jags and a superb cleaning rod which fitted my 25-06 and 6.5 Creedmoor, so I could try these products and report back to our loyal SSAA members.

Pro-Shot is a family-run business now in its fourth generation of the Damarin family based in Taylorville, Illinois which has been growing exponentially since it was founded in 1982 and continues to add and refine products for civilian and military use worldwide. All their products are proudly made in the US and, as we've come to expect from anything firearms-related made there, the quality is up with the best in the world and often as good as it gets. We recently had a few Top Shots questions about how necessary it is to clean firearms and how frequently, so this Pro-Shot 'care package' couldn't have come at a better time.

#### Bore-cleaner lubricants

**1-Step CLP** (Cleans, Lubricates, Protects) comes in a 30ml bottle with a needle-point applicator for precision and economical lubrication. The Pro-Shot website says it's used for copper, lead, plastic and primer fouling. It has special additives including rust inhibitors and these fluids penetrate metal and provide a corrosion barrier for superior rust protection. 1-Step CLP is synthetic, non-hazardous and said to be made of bio-friendly ingredients.

**Zero Friction** also comes in a 30ml bottle with an applicator which facilitates a drop or two being placed in hard-to-reach spots. Zero Friction is described as an ultra-hi-tech synthetic lubricant, being a non-gummy metal treatment and protectant which clings to metal parts and provides superior lubrication to facilitate flawless operation of all moving parts.

**Pro Clean Gun Cleaner #1** comes in a larger 240ml pump-spray bottle for removal of carbon, oil, grease, powder, lead and copper fouling. It conditions metals to resist future fouling and, like the others,

is said to be biodegradable, non-toxic and non-hazardous. This one doesn't lubricate so you'll need either 1-Step CLP or Zero Friction after using Pro Clean.

**Butch's Gun Oil** comes in a 118ml container and is a proprietary blend of several natural oils which work together under extremes of heat, cold and pressure. It's an exceptional lubricant which also provides maximum corrosion protection and 'gunaholics' like me will probably like the smell of this one!

#### Cleaning rods - micro-polished

Pro-Shot make exceptional quality stainless steel cleaning rods with ball bearing handles in one and two-piece for every conceivable firearm. They're completed with a proprietary mirror-like jewelled finish designed not to pick up and carry any abrasive grit or dirt through your barrel. The rods are of varying sizes to specifically suit groups of close diameter calibres from 17 to around 50, while they also make rods suitable for all shotgun gauges (410 to 12) and pistol calibres currently available. Their extensive inventory is impressive indeed.

The precision manufacture of these rods, with their threaded ends for perfect fit between the male and female parts of the rod and the brushes and jags is superb. This ensures there's no way the joins can damage the rifle's crown on exiting or entering the barrel during cleaning strokes. This is incredibly important for maintaining accuracy by not allowing a poor-fitting accessory to rub against the rifling where it meets the crown end of the barrel. Many barrels have been ruined by poor cleaning practices, second-rate rods and poorly-fitting brushes.

**Pro-Shot Jags and Brushes** are available in all calibres and are considered benchrest grade, being superbly made with either bronze or industrial-strength nylon bristles on a precisely spun brass core. They're produced in calibre sizes and perfectly fit the appropriate calibre-specific cleaning rods and are easily the best made and best fitting jags and brushes I've ever used.

**Pro-Shot Patches** come in a variety of sizes specifically designed for cartridge diameters. I was given three packets to try with various centrefire cartridges, namely a 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" square for .22-.270, a 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" square for 6mm-6.5mm-7mm and a 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" square for



Needle applicators allow easy access to hard-to-reach parts and allow single-drop application to save waste.



Pro-Shot Gun Cleaner #1 and double-ended brush get the job done and condition the metal to resist fouling build-up.

## Go like a Pro

30-338-35-38cal. These come in 500 packs and are 100 per cent cotton flannel with a double-sided finish and double-napped for maximum absorbency. Quality patches indeed and super-smooth when used in combination with the rod and jags and brushes mentioned above.

**Gun Bore Lights** are a clever innovation you insert in the chamber to light up the bore for inspection in natural sunlight and can be further enhanced by using a torch.

**Pro-Shot 'Splatter Shot' Targets** are available in 12 options from various bullseyes to silhouettes. They all feature splatter technology where shots on target are highlighted by a splatter of chartreuse, fluorescent orange or white, making bullet holes much easier to see particularly at longer ranges. They come with a useful number of stickers to cover bullet holes and allow repeated use of the target, with packets of stickers available to extend target life even further. The bullseyes are highly visible and I was even able to see the splatters on the 500m target on a misty day while testing a 7mm Rem Mag. I used the 8" bullseye at 300m and 17.25" bullseye at 500m, both ideal for these distances.

### Cleaning our firearms

You hear all sorts of talk about how little or how often we should be cleaning firearms and often it's determined by what the gun is used for and/or how cleaning affects performance. A 'ute gun' treated as a tool with little or no regard for maintenance is a very different story to a \$10,000 target rifle expected to perform at the outer limits of accuracy and repeatability. Fractions of a minute of angle are completely different to 'minute of pig'.

All jokes aside, there are target shooters who clean several times during an event and people who rarely clean their firearms. Sometimes this may be a matter of laziness or simply so few shots being fired that the barrel doesn't appear to need a proper clean. Somewhere in the middle of these extremes is where most of us need to clean our firearms. It goes without saying that cleaning your barrel or barrels whether it be a rifle, pistol or shotgun is necessary if you want to protect it internally from corrosion or metal fouling. Pro-Shot offer fine examples of products which do just that and ensure your firearm will operate at its best and keep rust at bay and your barrel shooting its very best.

We hear stories of target shooters who only clean barrels when accuracy starts to drift and this can be several hundred shots. Some of the smaller bore hotshots like the 17 Remington and 204 Ruger, 220 Swift or



**Top:** Cotton flannel patches in calibre-specific sizes for optimum fit and residue removal.

**Right:** Splatter shot 12 targets are ideal for seeing bullet impacts at extended ranges (various sizes available).



**All Pro-Shot jags and brushes fit perfectly so there's no ridge to potentially damage your rifle barrel crown.**

22/250 benefit from more regular cleaning. Individual barrels can need different regimes but often these hotshots benefit from a clean every 50 rounds or so to promote the finest accuracy for long-range vermin control.

These Pro-Shot products are genuinely top shelf. They're not cheap but are made in America to very high standards and the results I found spoke for themselves. My 25-06 and 6.5 Creedmoor both produced some of their best ever groups after cleaning with the products supplied.

We can spend thousands of dollars on firearms and the cost of quality cleaning equipment and chemicals is a fraction of this, ensuring our guns are well protected and work at their very best. Imagine spending a packet on a big game hunt here or overseas, only to have your rifle play-up at the crucial moment that trophy animal presents. Or consider losing a prize target

event by just a few millimetres with a group that let you down because you didn't have the best cleaning products to fix that accuracy inhibiting copper fouling.

Think hard about your cleaning regime and don't be over-zealous as you can go too far. Think about when and where is the right time to service your firearm. It might be at home after a weekend hunt, at the range between competition sessions or so you can then fire a couple of cold bore shots ready for that big hunt. Whatever you do, ensure you use the best products available as rust is a shooter's number one enemy and a superbly functioning firearm our best friend, when we go shooting at least.

I recommend the Pro-Shot brand and their amazing inventory of cleaning products which are easily as good if not better than any I've used. Check them out online at [proshotproducts.com](http://proshotproducts.com) and look for them at your gun shop. ●

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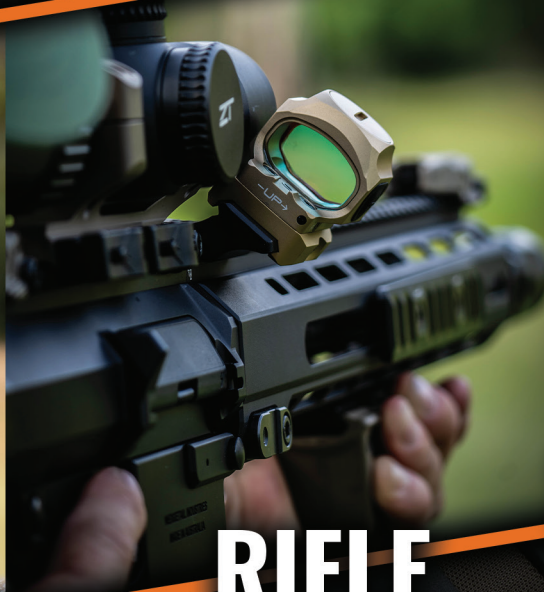
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# ACT centre stage for Australian Masters Games



The SSAA's ACT branch will be thrust into the national spotlight later this year, when it steps up to host the shooting events at the Australian Masters Games (AMG) in Canberra from October 18-25. The 20th edition of the popular biennial event will see hundreds of athletes converge on the nation's capital for eight days of competition and social engagement, with more than 30 sports in the mix being contested in three age groups from 30-49, 50-69 and 70-plus.

AMG general manager Adam Drinkwell was delighted to have the Games back in

the capital after a 20-year absence. He said: "We're thrilled to invite athletes of all backgrounds back to Canberra for the first time since 2003. The AMG is a festival of sport which brings friends together for competition and a week of good times."

The ACT Majura Range complex will be the venue for multiple shooting disciplines featuring rifle, shotgun and pistol. First up will be the pistol events on the weekend of October 18-19 followed by shotgun (22-24) then rifle (25-26). Further to that, the neighbouring ACT Smallbore Rifle Club will stage the smallbore and air rifle competition on the opening weekend.

Added Mr Drinkwell: "The Australian Masters Games is a celebration of community, wellbeing and the love of sport at any age. Whether you're there to win medals or just have fun, this event promises to create memories that'll last a lifetime.

"Canberra is the perfect city to host this year's AMG and I encourage everyone to take the time to explore it during the Games. From its world-class museums and galleries to stunning outdoor spaces, there's so much to see and do. Combine this with a week of sport and you have an experience like no other." Full details of individual events can be found at [australianmastersgames.com](http://australianmastersgames.com) ●



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# PASSING ON A LIFETIME'S SKILLS

**Sam Garro** visits a  
deer-hunting master



Dean and client inspect fresh  
rub signs and deer activity.

**W**hen you hunt with someone with almost 40 years of deer hunting experience, even if you're a seasoned hunter, you're bound to learn something new or, in the case of a novice, a lot. Dean Williams started Sambar Park Safaris in 1985, guiding hunters in Victorian Alpine High Country and periodically in New Zealand. In addition, he's been a practising taxidermist on and off for the past 35 years with a hiatus in-between working in the commercial sector.

Yet more recently after all those years of guiding, he's now turning his focus to sharing his deer hunting experience and knowledge with others, to better appreciate what's involved and improve his or her chances of success. His passion for taxidermy will continue as normal.

Starting later this year under revised new trading name Murray Valley Taxidermy and Hunting, he'll be open to receiving (for example) a father or mother with son or daughter combination or other individuals, maximum three clients for a two to three-day weekend informative and hands-on field course with accommodation and meals provided. Areas of learning are touched on in part as detailed and, depending on the

participants' requirements and circumstances, a meat animal may be considered or included.

I've known Dean for many years and appreciate his new direction which can only benefit prospective or budding deer hunters. I relate to my own time as a young hunter desperately trying to target deer without success, briefly joining the Australian Deer Hunters' Association in 1971 (member No.304) who's good work and reputation has strengthened over the years. Those were different times.

#### **Understanding behaviour**

Sambar deer are considered the toughest and smartest species to harvest, when considering their historical origins from the Indian subcontinent and innate survival instincts to coexist with formidable predators like the tiger and leopard. A rifle calibre in .308WM or .30-06 Springfield and above, with a penetrating and expanding projectile of around 150 grains or greater should prove sufficient. Although lesser calibres and projectile weights have been used, a mature sambar stag can prove difficult to stop. I've known a hunter to down a beast of a sambar with a .458 Lott when his mate's 300WM proved inadequate.

They're attuned to other local bird and animal sounds, frequently used property vehicles, machinery and whatever local activities they're accustomed to. So the sound of a new vehicle approaching or other unfamiliar ones like a hunter walking through the bush will alert them, picking up from afar the slightest movement with their keen eyesight. Human odour, especially if having been previously pursued by a hunter, will certainly ward them off.

Dean once showed me a photo of a distinct sambar rub about 12 feet up a thick sapling. You'd think it impossible yet a mature stag can bend a sapling and rub its antlers where the upward pressure is just right. Under cover of darkness they tend to behave differently as if the advantage is in their favour. If disturbed by a vehicle or spotlight they tend to stop after a short distance and look back, as if through curiosity. If this isn't understood you may think the animal has left the area and the opportunity is lost. These are just a few examples which can assist a hunter.

#### **Hunter awareness**

Camouflage gear is useful so long as it breaks up the hunter's silhouette and doesn't present as a solid block. When



Muddy wallows frequently visited by sambar.



Dean show how a mature stag can achieve a rub 12 feet up a thick sapling.

## Passing on a lifetime's skills



Frequented deer trail leading up the hill.

stalking, walking five to 10 paces, temporarily stopping and taking time to carefully glass the surroundings, particularly in long grass or scrub where deer may be resting and only the antler tips of a stag may be visible, can provide an unexpected sighting. Similarly, observing horizontal shapes among vertically growing trees could reveal a deer, while at other times a flicking ear or tail can be the only indicator.

Frequent use of a wind direction powder puffer to stalk downwind of deer will prove invaluable, particularly in hilly terrain where the wind tends to swirl and suddenly change direction. All these tricks are normally learned and experienced over time, but what if this knowledge is acquired early?

### Best time to hunt

Winter months, early morning and evening, when the ground and leaf matter is moist or wet from rain, dew or frost are usually best as it makes stalking quieter and improves the chances of getting close to sambar. Yet they don't seem to have a specific rut period like red deer in March/April or fallow in early April and can be hunted year-round. The biggest fallow stags tend to cast their antlers mid-September with younger stags holding on until early October then later in October start growing into velvet.

### Recognising signs

The obvious ones, if you can identify them from other game or grazing animals like kangaroos and wallabies, are deer droppings or pellets, rub trees, scrapes, wallows and the like. But where to look and how

to determine their freshness or age is a different matter. For example pellets a few days old or more in shaded cool places will look fresh. However, those appearing glossy with flies milling around them is an indication a deer may still be close by, so start looking and glassing ahead where a trail might be leading.

Stag scrapes can be visited by more than one stag. They'll scrape clear the ground around them, usually close to a tree where they'll urinate, stand on their hind legs and rub the scent located in the preorbital gland at the base of the eyes to mark their territory (you'll know it's a frequented scrape by the pungent odour).

Other subtle signs, obvious more to Dean than a novice, would be a trail of brushed, frosted or dew-covered grass in the morning, distinct from a cow or livestock track. Identifying the different shrubs and fruits grazed on by deer, like tender tips of the prickly Coprosma shrub and wild blackberries, will indicate the extent and frequency of their browsing. Similarly with the other signs there are ways to determine their age and usage. Having this knowledge can only improve a hunter's skills and help determine the best approach, whether that be waiting it out in a tree hide close to a trail or wallow, or a predawn stalk in a promising area.

### Where to find them

They can be almost anywhere and tend to feed during the night or in favourable weather conditions throughout the day. It can often also be a matter of thinking logically and following your instincts. In hilly

Access to scenic Alpine country ideally suited to deer.

terrain after a cold night, deer tend to seek higher ground or open areas where the sun will first shed its warm rays.

On private property or where fence lines exist, deer will enter crops or livestock paddocks where there's a break or low point in the fence, at times detectable by small clumps of hair snagged on wire. Game cameras strategically placed on well-used game trails leading to water, wallows or feeding areas can indicate their presence and numbers.

### Field dressing and capping

For a hunter to gain maximum benefit from a culled animal and avoid possible disappointment later, especially where a trophy stag is concerned, knowing where to make hide cuts and how much of the cape to remove is vital. The more hide a taxidermist has to play with the better. Meat recovery and/or hide removal can prove challenging at first but, once shown, the process won't seem so daunting and before you know it you'll be teaching others.

### Conclusion

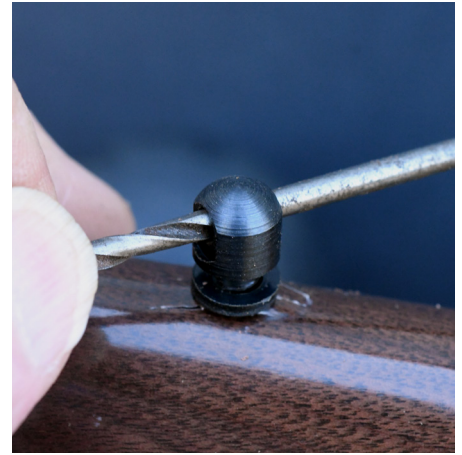
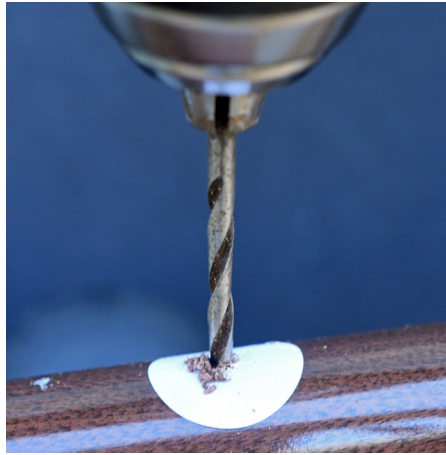
While I've tried to outline much of what Dean's about and his future focus through my own dealings with him, no amount of reading can compare to experiencing and appreciating first-hand the numerous facets of deer hunting from a long-established, reputable hunter. Remember, successfully stalking deer is an art in itself. For anyone interested, Dean can be contacted on 0417 405 176 or email [murrayvalleytaxidermy@gmail.com](mailto:murrayvalleytaxidermy@gmail.com) ●



Dean shows where to make cuts for a proper shoulder mount.



Dean with an impressive set of antlers for mounting.



# FIT YOUR OWN SLING SWIVELS

Dick Eussen

Generally, centerfire rifles are factory fitted with sling swivels but most .22 rimfires, shotguns and centerfire lever rifles are not. If you want swivels it's a case of fitting them yourself or have someone with the expertise and tools needed do it. In my case I've had to fit sling swivels on my Marlin, Browning and Remington lever and slide-action rifles. It's a simple task but if not done correctly can look unsightly with damage to the stock and screws.

I recently fitted swivels to my .22 Browning lever and Remington side-action rifles, as I find a sling makes it easy to carry a rifle and frees up the hands for other tasks like taking photos, drinking or GPS direction. I bought two sets of Grovetec GTSW-40 two-piece barrel band swivel sets for .22 calibre tube magazine rifles. Similar sets are also available for centerfire levers and full-stock rifles from this US-based company. Their excellent products are all-steel construction and available in quick-detach (QD) premium black oxide and stainless-steel models for 25mm and large slings widths. Prices start from about \$44 and upwards.

My pack included one aluminium key, two-piece barrel band, two screws, a swivel stud with two spacers (one black, one white) and two sling swivels. The hollow grub screw for the front swivel has no tool supplied and has a very fine screwdriver head that's easily damaged if you don't have a slim driver, so take care.

**Left:** Tighten the bottom barrel clamp screw with the aluminium key provided or use a proper gunsmith screwdriver kit.

**Right:** Use a narrow-bladed screwdriver to tighten the hollow grub screw on the tube magazine swivel stud.



**Left: It's important to place a patch or similar where the hole is punched and drilled to prevent stock damage.**

**Middle: Use a small bit first to drill a pilot hole, followed by the correct size of bit for the screw stud.**

**Right: Use a drill bit to screw the swivel stud in.**

Needed for the job is a drill, two bits, a hammer and punch and the rifle must be secured in a vice for best results. I locked mine in a Tipton gun vice and started by measuring my choice of swivel placement on the tube and stock (if unsure measure the distance from a rifle already fitted with QD swivels). You need to place a patch (a target patch is ideal but any sticky tape will do) where you want to drill the pilot hole into the stock to avoid splintering and the drill bit from wandering.

With the patch in place on the stock, punch in the swivel stud hole lightly with a sharp punch and hammer. Next use a fine drill to start the pilot hole and drill it to the exact length of the stud (you can 'measure' it with the aluminium key). When done, drill the exact hole for the stud with the correct size bit. Remove the patch, clean the hole, choose the preferred spacer colour and screw the stud in, starting very slowly to ensure you don't twist it. Use one of the drills to turn the stud and the stock job is done.

Next we clamp the barrel band about the magazine tube, making sure it's in the right place and lined up properly. Hold it, fit the long screw into the bottom hole and tighten, noting one clamp has a smooth interior and the other a screw thread. Next screw in the hollow grub screw which the sling swivel fits through. Never overtighten small screws as they'll strip and, if you think they may work loose, a little Loctite will ensure they don't.

Fitting a swivel to a long stock is the same, except you'll need to drill a large shallow hole to accommodate the screw holding the front swivel nut in the inside of the stock. Take care when doing so and again, it's recommended to tape the hole position to prevent splintering of the wood. A large washer under the lock nut is a must as is a spacer, because the timber's thin where the swivel stud's located and where



**Fit the QD swivel to the tube magazine stud and job done.**

it bears the weight of the gun. You can follow the same procedure on plastic/rubber stocks with a high-speed drill for the holes. You may have to add glue to ensure screws won't work loose in some hard plastics, though it will be a permanent fix.

And there you have it, fitting sling swivels is a simple job if you have the tools at hand. I highly recommend every firearm enthusiast invests in a purpose gun screwdriver kit, available in different sizes with a selection of drivers to fit all and damaged screws will be a thing of the past. Many gun owners look on this as just a hobby and part of the whole shooting experience and, like reloading your own ammunition, it's a rewarding one. ●



**The Grovtec QD swivel set is simple to install with the right tools.**



# Is this the ultimate Mosin?



## Ivo Dimitrov on Finland's Universal M39

**W**hen Finland won their independence from the Russian Empire following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, they'd an abundance of Russian M91 Mosin rifles that were either left behind in arsenals when the Russians departed, or later captured from Red Russian forces who fought on the side of the Finnish Reds in the Finnish Civil War of 1918.

After the Great War, all newly independent European countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia would standardise on a Mauser-action rifle chambered in 8mm. However, Finland was too poor to adopt a new rifle and the large supply of M91 Mosins on hand made the choice obvious for them. They would adopt the M91 and

standardise on the 7.62x54mm cartridge.

The Finnish Civil Guard evolved from the White forces which fought the Red (communist) forces in the brief but bloody Finnish Civil War in 1918. Following that conflict, the White Guard and newly-emerged Army were split into separate entities, with the former considered a voluntary part of the Finnish military. The Guard was active in numerous sectors of Finnish life and organised sports activities, especially cross-country skiing, shooting, orienteering and baseball.

Only able-bodied males aged from 17-40 could be full members of the Guard, with every member required to attend a specified amount of training. They were obliged to buy their own uniform, equipment and

rifle with help from local chapters and, until 1934, the Guard would've formed a division on full-scale mobilisation. The Civil Guard had its own weapons development and procurement programme which was independent from the Army and their own factory (Sako).

In the Winter War the White Guard was responsible for carrying out mobilisation, a quarter of the manpower of the field army consisting of Guard members which proved important, as these were the best trained and equipped personnel in an army which lacked a lot of basic equipment in 1939.

With the large stock of M91s on hand post-independence, the Finns began to refurbish them to higher standards than their Soviet counterparts. Often the Army



White Guard cavalry during a parade in Helsinki, March 1919.  
Photo: Helsinki City Museum

## Is this the ultimate Mosin?

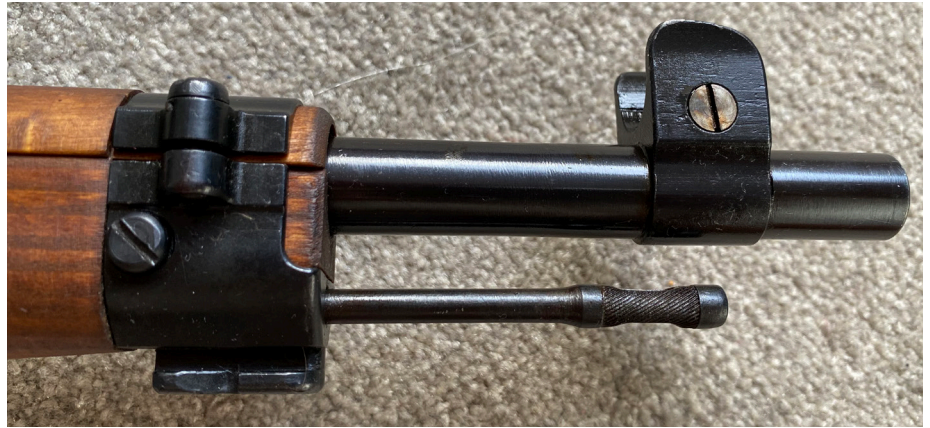
re-stocked or refinished the wood on the rifle, giving it a very distinctive look. They re-barrelled their M91s with barrels from local sources, improved triggers, shimmed actions and counter-bored them if needed.

In the 1920s Finland continued to buy M91s from all over Europe, a large number coming from France which had been captured by Germany during the war and given as reparations after 1918. In 1924 the Civil Guard gave their rifles a massive overhaul and created the M24, these having barrels made by SIG in Switzerland and Bohler-Stahl in Germany. In 1927 the Army upgraded the M91 to the new M27 short-rifle standard, cutting down the stocks and installing shorter barrels and new front sights with protective ears.

The Civil Guard's M28 improved on the Army's M27 by working on the trigger and giving it a better nose cap along with a new barrel. The M28 was upgraded by the Guard yet again and redesignated the M28/30 rifle with a new rear sight, windage adjustable front sight and installation of an aluminium bushing in the nose-cap for free-floating to increase accuracy.

Finnish Army and Civil Guard infighting and competitiveness throughout the 1930s resulted in delayed procurement of a universal military rifle intended to jointly equip both services. Their differing requirements led to production of the M27, M28 and M28/30 which lacked total parts commonality as well as splitting the country's meagre resources.

The Army favoured a short new carbine and offered its own prototype (M91-35) with an overall length of 111cm, while the Civil Guard staunchly advocated for its excellent M28/30 with its longer barrel. A series of



Front sight screw adjustable.

committees, debates and appeals wasted valuable years and by the time both parties came to an agreement, it was too late to produce the new rifle in meaningful quantity before the onset of the Winter War in 1939 (only 10 pre-production M39s were ready and the Finnish Army didn't issue them).

In 1939 Joseph Stalin decided to restore the old borders of the Russian Empire with the Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania occupied without a fight and subsequently incorporated into the USSR. When Finland refused to buckle, the Red Army invaded in November 1939, sparking the short but intense Winter War which lasted until March 1940. Finland lost territory in the peace treaty but crucially halted the Soviet onslaught and retained its independence.

The final compromise between the two services laid the following framework for the universal rifle, which would be based on the Civil Guard's M28/30 with modifications to the barrel and stock. A heavy new

two-piece spliced stock with semi-pistol grip was adopted, which made the M39 the heaviest and sturdiest of bolt-actions introduced in the 1930s and also allowed the barrel to easily free-float. It also made it the most distinctive-looking Finnish Mosin.

The nose-cap was revised and sling attachments copied from the Swiss K31, using a barrel band fitted with two points and a buttstock with bottom and side attachments. The front sight was identical to the excellent screw windage adjustable sight of the M28/30 but it was moved back 13mm on the barrel. The rear sight was also identical but the lowest graduation was for 150m instead of 200m.

The M39's groove diameter was increased to .310 as opposed to the .308 of the M28/30, allowing easier usage of captured Soviet 7.62x54 ammunition which has a nominal .311 diameter. Finland didn't produce any Mosin receivers or bolts and instead utilised those from M91 Russian Mosins, thus all Finnish rifles are built on Russian receivers and use refurbished Russian bolts.

The M39 finally entered service in the Continuation War - Finland's bid to recover lost territory from the Winter War



Semi-pistol grip.



Bolt serial number.

alongside Germany's invasion of the USSR - in mid-1941 and quickly proved itself in combat. Their troops welcomed the new rifle but deliveries remained painfully slow and by autumn 1943, M39s accounted for just 13 per cent of the Finnish Army's total rifles.

Sako and the state rifle factory (VKT) both made the M39 during WWII, the former the full rifle with the help of subcontractors, while VKT made only barrels which Arsenal AV3 assembled into complete firearms. After WWII the Civil Guard was disbanded as per the terms of the treaty with the Soviets in 1944, and the Finnish Army standardised on the M39 while warehousing its other Mosin models. The rifle was slowly phased out on adoption of the RK62 (Finland's version of the AK), though continued serving in diminishing capacity until the late 1970s and remained in long-term storage until the mid-1990s.

Sako, on receiving their first order for 20,000 M39s, used 6200 pre-existing stock blanks which lacked the semi-pistol grip the Finnish Army desired. The Army subsequently agreed to accept no more than 7000 M39s with straight stocks, these early examples now quite rare and sought after by collectors.

While the Army and Civil Guard conceived the M39 as a joint model, the Civil Guard still found it necessary to place separate orders with Sako. Their rifles are easily distinguished by the SK.Y (Suojeluskuntain yliesikunta or High Command of the Civil Guard) property mark on top of the barrel. About 10700 were delivered between 1942-1944. By the end of the WWII the Finns would end up producing more than 96,800 M39 rifles, split roughly 60,000 by Sako and 30,000 by VKT (barrels only) and of these about 78,000 survived the Continuation War.

As the Army standardised on the M39 post-war, they entered an agreement with

Valmet (formerly VKT) and AV1 arsenal to shorten old M91s and bring them to as close a configuration to an M39 as possible. This process involved shortening barrels, changing the sights and fitting them with M39-style stocks. Most converted rifles were Finnish-barrelled M91s from Tikka and VKT, though some Czarist-era M91s also underwent conversion. Later, the AV1 arsenal also produced around 6000 post-war rifles (so-called 'late date' by collectors), mostly with leftover parts from 1967-1970.

Many collectors regard the M39 as the ultimate Mosin due to its exceptional accuracy, quality of build, ruggedness and durability. The semi-pistol grip stock in particular makes it highly attractive and it's generally the most sought-after and collected of all Finnish Mosins. Sako-made rifles generally exhibit slightly higher quality of finish than their VKT counterparts.

The example featured here is a Sako-made 1943-dated Civil Guard contract rifle as denoted by its SK.Y marking (it was re-stocked post-war by the Finnish Army). The Civil Guard was disbanded in 1944 and its weapons inventory passed to the Army. Wartime stocks feature a rounded finger splice, whereas early post-war examples have a square finger splice. Furthermore, the barrel channel has been bored out for improved free-floating for target shooting. Civil Guard district number S88014 on the barrel indicates the rifle was issued to the District of Kainuu (which borders Russia) during the Continuation War. ●

Rear sight and barrel markings.



Civil guard district number.





# Silence is **GOLDEN**

**Daniel O'Dea** enjoys the latest Sordin ear protection

**A** true hunter may invoke all five senses while hunting, albeit two will only come with success: 'Touch' when you first lay hands on your fallen quarry and later when you process it with your blade, then 'taste' when it finally comes out the frying pan. But before that 'sight', 'sound' and 'smell' will perhaps all get a run and most likely fall in that order of importance to success. I've certainly smelled game before I've seen or heard it (goats come to mind) though such occasions have been few.

Sight of course is the most important sense to a hunter with sound a resounding second, pardon the pun. Countless times I've heard my quarry before I've seen it, with the fact I have being essential to success in many instances. For this reason, over many years I'll admit I never wore ear protection when hunting. With the ability to gain the upper hand on my quarry by using my sense of sound (hearing), to my mind I'd be crazy to dull or muffle it with earplugs or muffs.

Of course I'd always wear EarPro on the range or when culling from a vehicle,

yet for hunting not only would they literally dull one of my most important senses, they were often bulky, hot and awkward to use. But that's all changed and, with modern electronic EarPro, not only are they more comfortable and compact, they actually increase your ability to use the sense of sound rather than dull it. And none more so than the Sordin Supreme Pro-X range of electronic hearing protection we're looking at here.

So who are Sordin? They're a Swedish firm whose foundation sprung from a

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## Silence is golden

company developing safety equipment in the motorized forestry industry, mainly everything above the neck - ear, eye and head (helmets). That was in the 1970s and by the late '80s they'd developed a passive range of earmuffs in the Sordin Classic. At a time when worker safety was coming into greater focus, Sordin offered this rugged yet comfortable range of hearing protection which was so successful it's still being sold today.

By the 1990s they were heavily involved in tactical hearing protection and communications for military applications. Towards the end of that decade they introduced electronic hearing protection, specifically aimed at hunters with a version of their Sordin Supreme range. This came with the aim of "improving hunters' safety and performance, delivering a natural sound image while improving users' situational awareness and directional sensitivity".

Many more developments have arisen since and here we'll look at their Supreme Pro-X LED, designed for hunting and featuring their advanced SordinHEAR2 audio system, launched in 2023. SordinHEAR2 offers four unique audio profiles - Hunting, Shooting, Focus and Comms - allowing you to best adapt the headset to your chosen application.

Profiles are selectable via manipulation of the audio controls on the left ear cuff, a simple layout of three buttons, plus and minus symbols right and left respectively with a central power on/off button. When

**Daniel wears the Sordin Pro-X LED for testing a Laugo Alien pistol.**



The Sordin Pro-X LED features a handy headlight.

pressed in different ways, selected profiles are confirmed via a series of beeps and below is a verbatim description from the Sordin quick guide.

**Hunting** is the main audio profile for general purposes. The sound image is optimized for a normal hunting day, balancing clear ambient sound such as speech with comfortable low noise audio.

**Shooting** is a comfort profile with lower gain and a narrower audible frequency spectrum. Perfect when normal situational awareness is sufficient, e.g. in shooting training at the range.

**Focus** is your full-alert profile. It features high amplification and a wider frequency spectrum for highest situational awareness. Use this audio profile e.g. in

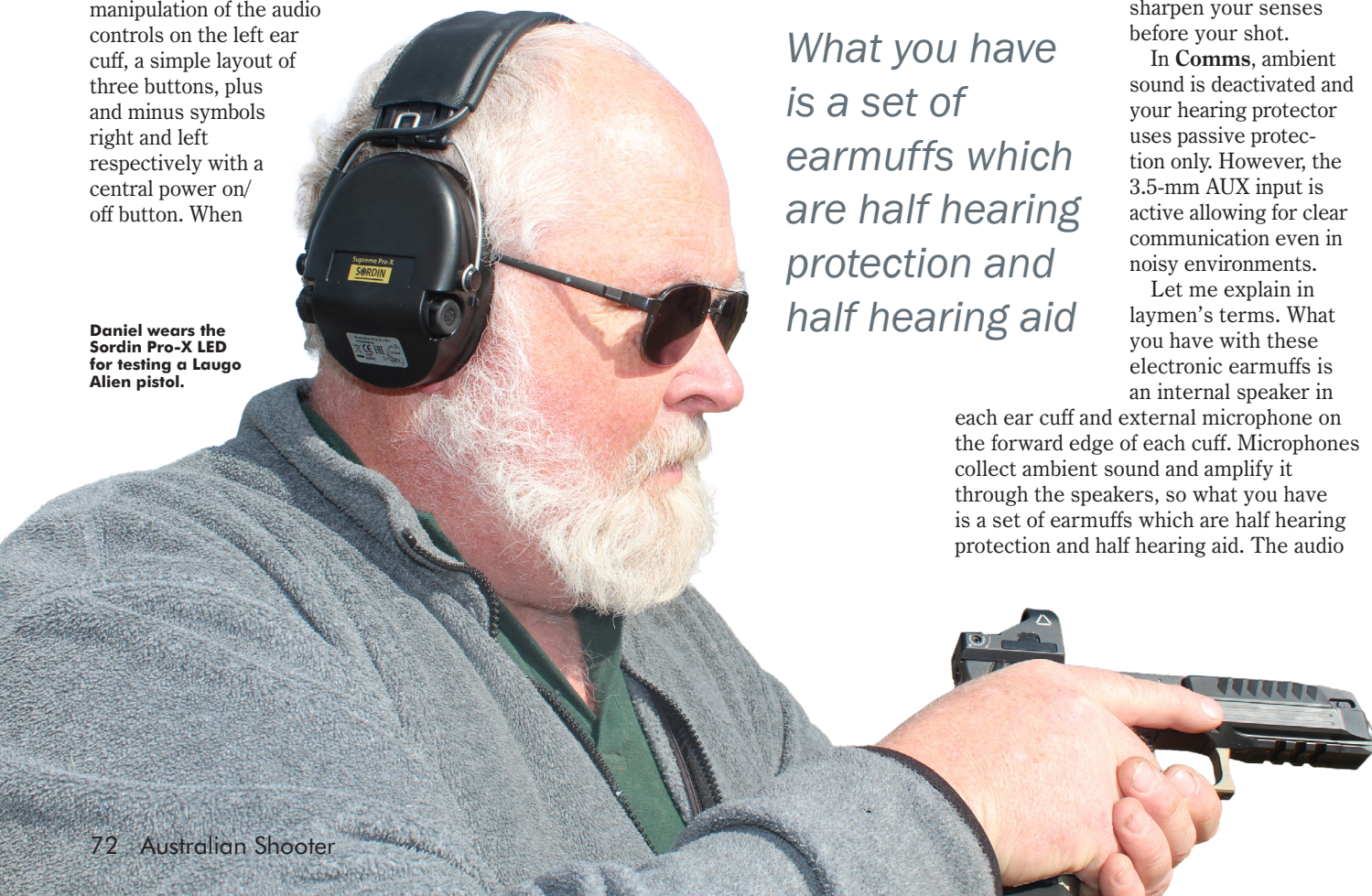
the hunting tower to sharpen your senses before your shot.

In **Comms**, ambient sound is deactivated and your hearing protector uses passive protection only. However, the 3.5-mm AUX input is active allowing for clear communication even in noisy environments.

Let me explain in laymen's terms. What you have with these electronic earmuffs is an internal speaker in

each ear cuff and external microphone on the forward edge of each cuff. Microphones collect ambient sound and amplify it through the speakers, so what you have is a set of earmuffs which are half hearing protection and half hearing aid. The audio

*What you have is a set of earmuffs which are half hearing protection and half hearing aid*





**CZ**

For those  
who know

**CZ 600**

# **ERGO**

**CENTERFIRE RIFLE WITH  
ERGONOMIC THUMBHOLE  
STOCK**



This premium model with a light profile barrel is equipped with a specially designed, fiber-reinforced polymer stock with sophisticated ergonomics, which not only provides maximum shooting comfort but also contributes to its high accuracy. Five of the most popular calibers are offered, ranging from 223 Rem. to the 300 Win Mag. Optics can be mounted on standardized rails that are integrated on the durable, aluminum receiver. When the magazine lock is activated, the firearm changes to a fixed magazine configuration. A simple modification to the safety mechanism for decocking operation is currently being developed. The CZ 600 ERGO model has a guaranteed, factory-tested sub-MOA at 100 meters (three-shot groups with match-grade factory ammunition).

Calibres available:  
223REM, 30-06SPRG, 308WIN, 300WM, 6.5CM

[WWW.WINCHESTERAUSTRALIA.COM.AU](http://WWW.WINCHESTERAUSTRALIA.COM.AU)



**SIFA**



## Silence is golden



profiles as outlined above provide solutions best suited to different applications.

When using the Hunting mode it's like turning the volume up on life, with sounds louder and more distinct. In Shooting mode the amplification (to my hearing at least) seems somewhat deadened, ambient sounds, voices and commands still heard clearly but not at the same level of hi-fidelity experience as Hunting. In practice this one's good on the range when you want to hear commands of your RO, though perhaps not every word from other shooters at the back of the range.

Focus mode is like an extreme version of Hunting, perhaps like going from good stereo to full surround sound almost. I'd likely use this when 'still' hunting or sitting

in ambush on a dam, perhaps even whistling foxes. Finally Comms mode basically turns the microphones off and just uses the speakers to amplify whatever sound is being relayed through the AUX cable, be that connected to a radio, phone or other audio device. In all modes the plus and minus buttons act as volume controls, while in ambient amplified modes, sound is automatically modulate with sharp impulse noises (like gunshots) compressed to never exceed more than 82 decibels (82dB).

The microphones as noted are on the front edges of the ear cuffs and point forward to aid in directional sensitivity. Likewise, they seemed to incorporate small foam windsocks protected by rubber overcups. At the back of the left ear cuff

you'll find the AUX port, while the back of the right cuff contains the battery compartment with two AAA batteries stated to provide power for up to 400 hours. A low battery warning sounds with about 40 hours remaining.

Perhaps given away in the name, the Sordin Pro-X LED earmuffs also feature an LED torch light, incorporated into the left ear cuff above the speaker where the hinge frame attaches. This is a fantastic idea as anyone who's juggled EarPro over a headlamp or vice-versa when hunting or shooting at night will know.

Cleverly, although located on the left cuff, the LED is specifically focused to centre. I can literally cup my hands in front of my chest and when I look down at them the

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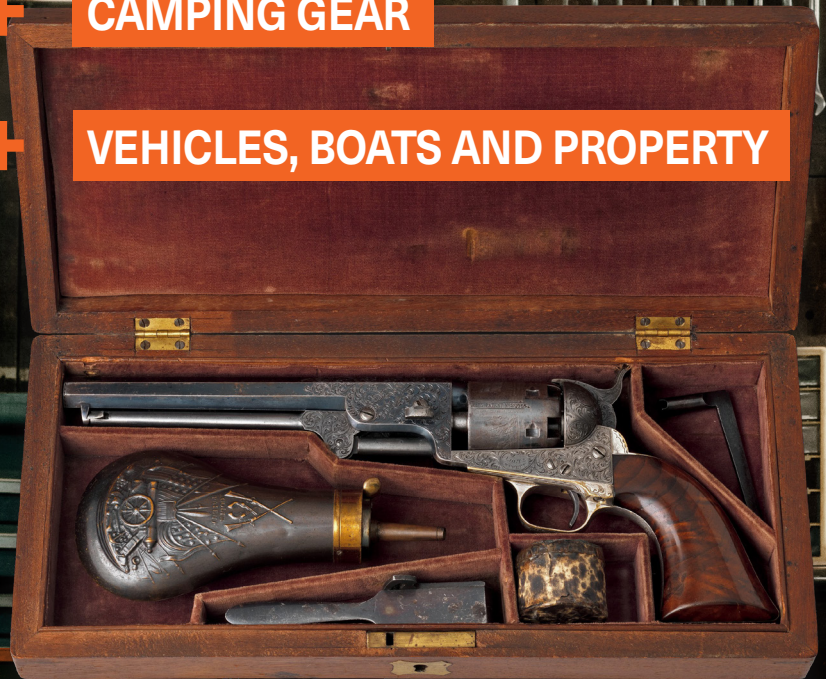
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Thanks for your help! Ad went through today without a hitch.

It was so straight forward! I am 82

y.o. and not the full bottle on I.T.

Thanks again. - Ken



## Silence is golden

light is dead centre. This is perfect for topping up your magazine or checking safe chamber condition while spotlighting from a truck for instance. The LED is turned on and off by pressing the plus and minus buttons simultaneously with an auto-off feature activating after three minutes.

In appearance these earmuffs exude quality, the adjustable metal and polymer frame covered by a genuine leather band and the hinge points where frame meets cuff also metal (all metal parts are made from noncorrosive materials such as stainless steel or brass). The cuffs themselves are slim and relatively compact. The extremely comfortable gel rings seal well around the ear even when wearing glasses, with hygiene kits available for replacement if needed eventually.

The stainless-steel screw cap on the battery compartment seals it to be completely waterproof, the microphones also waterproof and the whole headset meets an IP67 standard for water and dust ingress, technically making them waterproof over water-resistant (IP67 is 1m immersion up to 30 minutes).

To date I've given the Sordin Pro-X LED a good run both in the field and on the range and have been delighted with both performance and comfort. The slim cuff design doesn't foul on rifle or shotgun stocks, while sound suppression is more than sufficient for a lengthy day at the range with your favourite handgun. Sordin products carry a five-year warranty and are distributed by Beretta Australia [berettaaustralia.com.au](http://berettaaustralia.com.au), with the Sordin Pro-X series available in a range of colours and variants. ●



Daniel has been wearing the Sordin Pro-X during range testing.

An advertisement for a book titled "SSAA's Comprehensive Guide to SHOOTING &amp; HUNTING in Australia". The background features a man in a red cap and safety vest aiming a rifle. The text "OUT NOW" is prominently displayed in large white letters on a red background. A QR code is located in the bottom left corner. The book cover on the right shows a shooter and lists "20 Shooting competitions explained - something for every shooter" and "EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW to get into shooting &amp; hunting" along with "TIPS &amp; ADVICE for rifles, shotguns, handguns and hunting".

# RED HOT!



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# Lose some, win some

**Alby Adams** enjoys the fickle nature of hunting

One of the things I love about hunting is the unpredictability. Even if you know the country fairly well and think you've a pretty good handle on the local game, once you're out in the bush you never know exactly what's going to happen. You can't predict where, when or even if you'll see anything at all, which is what happened when I took a day excursion to a property in the New England area of New South Wales.

We live in East Gippsland in Victoria, more than 12 hours' drive from where our youngest daughter and her partner live. A couple of times a year we take a leisurely trip to catch up and socialise for a few days, playing tourists before heading home. Then as we were preparing for the latest trip her partner mentioned they'd been seeing a few foxes on his family property in the New England High Country and, knowing I did a bit of hunting, asked if I'd like to bring a rifle and try my luck?

I don't do a lot of hunting these days but when I retired I did splash out and buy a new Tikka .223, specifically to go after the odd fox, though at that point I'd barely used it so was keen to take up his offer. You may scoff but over the decades I've found hunting and stalking foxes on foot can be more challenging, hence more enjoyable than some of the bigger game I've pursued.

They can do some incredibly clever things (and some incredibly dumb things) but stalking foxes is never dull so I thought why not and anyway, I'd get to spend time on the land itself. While I'd never been I'd seen plenty photos of the property, several hundred hectares of natural clearings with scattered tussocks, timber and crystal-clear mountain streams. It looked idyllic and great fox country.

So a month later my wife, daughter, her partner and I are in his ute, driving slowly through the property and admiring the scenery. We're watching scattered mobs

of kangaroos, checking the cattle as it was calving season and stopping at likely spots where they'd recently seen foxes. A couple of times we did some hikes along the edge of the timber and while we found the odd scat, the redcoats themselves eluded us. What we did come across though was some old rooting and signs that pigs had been here at some point in the recent past.

Our host told us that occasionally they'd spot pigs on the property, blow-ins from the nearby state forest, and some locals did a bit of pig hunting on their land. Yet this certainly wasn't fresh sign so we weren't too excited and besides, I was still focused on those darn foxes.

So we pushed on and made another few stops and walks, keeping the breeze in our faces as much as possible, creeping along fence lines and stands of timber but still no foxes. I even tried the whistle a few times but to no avail. Eventually it was getting on towards lunchtime and the sun was well up,

**The New England High Country is ideal for cattle, foxes . . . and pigs apparently.**



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Alby with his Tikka in .223 and the unexpected haul of feral pigs.

so I figured we'd call it quits and write it off to the vagaries of hunting.

Yet I wasn't disappointed as from the time we'd arrived I was taken with the High Country scenery and, as we headed for the family farm, I couldn't stop enthusing about the place. The cattle and wildlife we'd seen and the boggy, bumpy track we were on had more than distracted my attention from anything game-wise when the more attentive parties in the back seat (wife and daughter) suddenly yelled out to stop. About 500m away across the gully on a rise below the timber line were some black dots and, as you'd expect when you're not expecting them, these were pigs.

Now pigs don't have particularly good eyesight and have better hearing yet, as we were only in first gear crawling around the paddocks, they hadn't heard us either. Watching them through the scope I could see they were in no rush, slowly rooting the ground and gradually making their way to a patch of scrub and timber higher up the hill.

The country between us was boggy and tussocky but I thought if I kept low, I could probably sneak up behind them. So after about 15 minutes of cautious stalking I managed to close to within about 100m and was still unseen. Lining one up in the crosshairs there was a brief thump and, with the report of the gun, the pig

collapsed. The rest of the mob weren't initially sure what had happened so I was able to send down a second shot and drop another, before they realised the danger and high-tailed it for cover.

So there I was, from starting the day hopeful of taking a fox or two and reaching the point where I'd resigned myself to the hunt being a washout, a few minutes later I was standing over a couple of dead pigs. But as I said at the start, I think one of the real attractions of hunting is its unpredictability, though next time I really want to account for some of those foxes. ●



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# A touch of class

**Con Kapralos** applauds Howa's deluxe walnut stocks



The partnership between Howa of Japan and the Fuller Global consortium has propelled the Howa M1500 barrelled action to legendary status worldwide. Howa's ability to produce the M1500 in a wide variety of actions and platforms and mate them up with some fantastic rifle-stock options has made the model hugely popular. This is especially true in Australia where they're imported and distributed by Outdoor Sporting Agencies (OSA), a subsidiary of Fuller Global.

Early models of the M1500 were only available with a well-designed and proportioned walnut rifle stock. Yet with advances in modern materials and manufacturing, the Hogue rubber over-moulded unit became the entry-level option. Howa's 'Dream it, Build it' campaign introduced several more options and prospective purchasers could choose a barrelled action and mate it to a rifle stock of their liking, while recent chassis-style and carbon-fibre options have spoiled Howa M1500 hunters and shooters even more.

While the standard walnut rifle stock is still available, OSA and Fuller Global decided to introduce a more opulent deluxe walnut option to suit Howa M1500 barrelled actions in both short and long in 'sporter' and 'varmint' profiles. Never one to shy away from a nice piece of walnut, for review OSA sent *Australian Shooter* one of the new deluxe stocks to suit the Howa M1500 short-action sporter rifle.



Aluminium strengthening braces and pillars are a wise move on a walnut stock.

The pistol grip is laser chequered (as is the fore-end) and executed very well.

#### Rifle stock in detail

The one sent for review is for the Howa M1500 short-action sporter barrelled action and was mated up to my .223 Remington and 6.5 Creedmoor rifles for assessment. Initial impressions were very positive with the Turkish-made stock adorned with some fine walnut. The stock is patterned on a classic sporter with pronounced cheek-piece on the left of the buttstock, making it suitable for right-handed shooters.

Two prominent external features are a fore-end tip made of Jacaranda-patterned laminate inletted into the walnut fore-end and a matching laminate pistol grip base, further enhanced by the Howa logo machined from aluminum inletted into the grip base itself. Checkering on the pistol grip and fore-end is laser machine-cut and perfectly executed. To the rear of the buttstock a 20mm red sorbothane-style recoil pad is fitted, which perfectly complements the aesthetic of the stock. Quick-detachable sling swivel studs are fitted as standard and the entire stock carries a satin oil finish.

Two aluminium strengthening braces are fitted into the walnut bedding mortises, one immediately behind the recoil lug recess and one in the area between the rear of the magazine cut-out and front of the trigger cut-out. The walnut in these areas did seem quite 'open-pored' and not properly sealed so could be prone to cracking, hence the addition of the aluminium braces. Aluminium pillars are fitted as standard, allowing the action screws to pass through



The Jacaranda-coloured laminate fore-end tip sets off the stock nicely.

and the barrelled action to be torqued down securely to the stock and bottom metal, while the barrel remains free-floating.

One downside was the inletting on the underside of the stock where the bottom metal/magazine floorplate mates with the walnut. The one-piece bottom metal didn't sit flush with the profile of the underside of the stock, sitting proud by a several millimetres and on raising this with the importer, I was advised it was manufactured in this manner and wouldn't affect the function of the rifle.

While I accept the reason given it looked fairly average to my eye, considering the original Hogue stock that came with the rifle didn't have the same appearance, the bottom metal sitting flush with the underside of the stock. Stock dimensions are 750mm long, a weight of 1.17kg and length-of-pull at 345mm.

#### On test

The Howa Deluxe walnut rifle-stock was fitted to two Howa M1500 rifles

in a .223 Remington blued sporter and 6.5 Creedmoor stainless sporter. Both barrelled actions were drop-in fits with the action screws torqued to a moderate 35 inch-pounds. Both rifles functioned perfectly with the only drawback being that bottom metal fitment issue. If the stock was mine I'd look at having the action, recoil lug and first 30mm of the barrel channel epoxy bedded and remainder of the barrel free-floating, which would ensure perfect fit and accuracy.

#### Summary

Howa Deluxe walnut stocks are offered on new rifles or can be bought to retro-fit to your existing Howa M1500. With an RRP of around \$600 (stock only) it offers an excellent alternative for the shooter or hunter after something a little different when it comes to a traditional walnut rifle stock. For more, ask your local firearms retailer or visit [osaaustralia.com.au](http://osaaustralia.com.au) ●

# Babic and Sullivan take Australia Day honours

**Brendan Atkinson**

The SSAA Majura complex in the ACT was the venue for this year's Australia Day Benchrest matches. This event, which began in 1980, has always ranked highly with the group-shooting fraternity, being the first major Benchrest match of the year.

Light Benchrest for rifles up to 4.763kg was first on the agenda and on the 'A' targets, Ray Beavis from Coffs Harbour sent down a .134 in challenging conditions which proved to be the smallest of the morning (Ray also shot the smallest groups on the 'C' and 'D' targets). The 100-yard aggregate was a tight battle which went down to the last relay, but South Australia's Milan Morrell prevailed with a nice group to finish on .2290 ahead of Paul Sullivan and Ray Beavis.

Conditions were again tricky at 200 yards though some very tidy groups were shot, the best of them being a .258 by Alistair McMillan, also from Coffs Harbour. The 200-yard aggregate was eventually won by Newcastle's Darren Parsons with .3094 from Sullivan and Ean Parsons. When it was all added up, the grand aggregate win went to Sullivan on .2760 with Darren Parsons and Morrell filling the minor placings.

Heavy Benchrest on Sunday saw some outstanding groups shot in what can only be described as average conditions of wind

and mirage. The 100-yard competition started with a 'screamer' group of .085 by Paul Sullivan who was indeed on a mission, with no-one else coming close to matching it. However, after shooting three point one groups and a couple in the twos, it was John Babic who emerged victorious on .1972 from Ean Parsons and Darren Parsons.

The final yardage contest was highly anticipated and, as it turned out, a high degree of concentration would be called for. Darren Parsons rose to the occasion with a tidy .202 group on his 'A' target which earned him not only the smallest group honour but a 'screamer' patch into the bargain. All small groups in the relays came in below .350 to further underline the quality of the competition. Winner of

the longer yardage was Sullivan with .2517 ahead of Babic and Darren Parsons.

Heavy Benchrest honours went to Babic who shot astutely to record .2338 and edge out Sullivan and Darren Parsons, the trio enjoying a highly successful weekend. Two-Gun aggregate for the Bob Daniels Memorial Shield went to Sullivan who repeated his success of 2022, second place going to Darren Parsons with Babic third.

The event was another roaring success, superbly run by the Tobler family with support from Caroline Rae (target crew chief) and Ian Thompson and Darius Krivanek (scoring and checking). Others pitched in as needed including Les Fraser and his wife and, of course, Aiden the chief Range Officer. Thanks and well done to all. ●



Heavy Benchrest winner John Babic, left, receives his prize from Robert Tobler.



Robert Tobler presents the Bob Daniels Memorial Shield to Two-Gun winner Paul Sullivan.



# Benchrest legends



Benchrest champions Ann Brummell and Herb Valerius.

## have left the range

**T**he SSAA Benchrest community lost two of its most committed and revered members earlier this year with the passing of Ann Brummell and Herb Valerius. Ann was a SSAA New South Wales life member who joined the Association in 1969 and began shooting in her chosen discipline of Benchrest in 1971.

She went on to compete in her first NSW State Championships that year and returned the following year to lift the title. In 1973 she continued her success and won her first National Benchrest title at the SSAA Para range in South Australia and, over time, collected enough national honours to become the first female shooter to gain entry to the National Benchrest Centrefire Hall of Fame in 1981.

Ann competed in America several times where she placed fourth in a Californian State Light Rifle Championship, won the New Jersey Light Rifle State Title and was runner-up in the Two-Gun event. In 2011 she was the only female in the 12-person team which represented Australia at the World Benchrest Championships in France.

She was a finalist in the NSW Sportswoman of the Year three times in the 1980s and, in 1988, had her achievements acknowledged with a Bicentennial Award for services to women's sport. In 2000 she was awarded the Queen's Australian Sports Medal and in 2018 was given the honour of carrying the baton in the Queen's Commonwealth Games Baton relay.

Herb Valerius started his shooting journey in the 1960s and was a key player in establishing the Benchrest division of the SSAA (ACT) branch as well as being instrumental in construction of the popular Majura range in its present location.

He made his National Championship debut in 1970 and the following year landed the first of many titles in the Light Varmint category. Also a Benchrest Centrefire Hall of Fame member, Herb was inducted in 1981, the same year as Ann and went on to represent Australia at the World Championships in 1995. His memory lives on to this day in the popular SSAA Fly Shoot discipline, as it was Herb's design which adorns the prestigious Fly Patch, awarded for outstanding performance. ●

## National

### Lever Action Silhouette National Championships

April 16-20, 2025

SSAA Eagle Park, Little River, Victoria  
Program: Thursday, April 16: Practice;  
Friday: Rifle calibre (80 shots); Saturday:  
Pistol calibre (80 shots); Sunday:  
Smallbore (80 shots); Monday: Overrun  
day. Medals for 1st, 2nd, 3rd each  
grade. Facilities: Camping on range with  
toilets and showers, cafe open all day.  
Contact: [msrc.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:msrc.secretary@gmail.com)

### Scoped, 3P, Field Rifle, NRA and Air Rifle National Championships

April 16-21, 2025

SSAA Gladstone, Wooderson, Qld  
Program: April 16: Practice 7am-4pm;  
17: NRA 3x40; 18: Field Rifle Rimfire;  
19: Field Rifle Centrefire, Scoped 10m  
Precision; 20: Scoped 3P Rimfire, Scoped  
Air Rifle 3P; 21: Scoped 3P Centrefire.  
Facilities: Camping at range (no power)  
with toilets and hot showers, access from  
April 15 at 1pm. Accommodation available  
nearby. Catering available, see National  
website for full details and nomination  
form. Contact: [gladstone@ssaa.org.au](mailto:gladstone@ssaa.org.au)

### Lever Action Silhouette National Championships

April 17-21, 2025

Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle  
Park, Vic.  
Program: April 17: Practice 10am-4pm;  
18: Practice 7am, start 8am; 19: Practice  
8am, start 9am; 20: Practice 8am, start  
9am. 21: Over-run day if needed.  
Nominations to Mark Butler [rebut4570@gmail.com](mailto:rebut4570@gmail.com)  
Facilities: Camping on range  
with toilets, showers, cafe open every  
day. Contact: Mark Butler as above.

### Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge National Championships

April 18-21, 2025

SSAA Townsville, Hervey Range, Qld  
Program: See National website for full  
running order. Prizes: National medals  
for first, second and third in each event.  
Facilities: Camping on range, canteen,  
see nomination form for more details.  
Contact: Des Prowse 0427 204 906.

### Benchrest Centrefire National Championships

April 16-23, 2025

Captains Mountain Complex, Millmerran, Qld  
Program: April 16-17: Practice; 18  
Unlimited Class; 19 Light Benchrest; 20  
Heavy Benchrest; 21 Sporter Class; 22  
Light Hunter Class; 23 Heavy Hunter  
Class. Facilities: Cabins and camping at  
Captains Mountain Range, bunkhouse  
with shared accommodation. Meals  
available (see National website for full  
details of this and event in general).  
Contact: Gavin benchrest@ssaaqld.org.au  
or 0438 759 162.

### Gallery Rifle National Championships

April 26-27, 2025

SSAA Para, Rifle Range Road, Greenwith, SA  
Program: Friday 25: Range open for  
practice 1-4pm; Saturday: T&P, 50

Metre Precision, 1500 Match; Sunday:  
Multi-Target 1, 1020 Match (Classic),  
Granet Match (Classic). Facilities:  
Canteen will be open. Contact: Don  
Robinson 0428 986 070 or Dave  
McCarthy 0414 880 333.

### SSAA National Junior Challenge

July 19-13, 2025

Wodonga Rifle Range, Vic  
Program: See SSAA National website for  
full event details. Contact: Arwen Casley-  
Porter 0456 127 000.

### Long Range Precision National Championships

August 29-31, 2025

SSAA Luna, Captains Mountain Complex, Qld  
Program: August 29: Rimfire 100m,  
Rimfire 200m (both mini-core target); 30:  
Centrefire 700m, Centrefire 800m (core  
target); 31: Centrefire 900m, Centrefire  
1000m (core target). Facilities: Cabins and  
camping at range, bunkhouse \$15 each  
per night, juniors \$7.50, single occupancy  
\$60 a night, double occupancy \$45 each  
a night, campsite \$15 each a night. Full  
details on National website. Contact:  
[luna@ssaaqld.org.au](mailto:luna@ssaaqld.org.au) or PO Box 101,  
Inglewood Qld 4387.

### Combined Services National Championships

September 19-21, 2025

Windamere Shooting Complex, Mudgee,  
NSW  
Program: See National website for  
extensive itinerary. Prizes: Medals for all  
pistol, rifle and team events, top gun and  
top junior. Facilities: Camping and caravans  
permitted at range from Thursday, toilets  
and hot showers at Range 2. Cudgegong  
caravan park nearby with cabins, vans and  
powered sites, phone (02) 6358 8462.  
Event contacts: [lan.Crabbe.crabbes@telstra.com](mailto:lan.Crabbe.crabbes@telstra.com)  
or 0428 862 378; Anthony  
Gatti [info@nsvcsd.com.au](mailto:info@nsvcsd.com.au) or 0499 987  
899; Ben Doherty [bfdoherty@bigpond.com](mailto:bfdoherty@bigpond.com)  
or 0409 831 258 (all after hours).

### Air Rifle Field Target National Championships

September 26-28, 2025

SSAA Tin Can Bay, Qld.  
Program: September 26: Range open  
for practice. 27: Air Rifle Field Target 100  
rounds (2 x 50). Prizes: Medals for first  
three in all grades. Facilities: Light lunch  
included with nomination fee, tea, coffee,  
cold drinks and water available. Camping  
facilities at range with showers and  
toilets, \$5 per adult per night. Contact:  
[tincanbay@ssaaqld.org.au](mailto:tincanbay@ssaaqld.org.au) or Brian Leach  
(07) 5488 0159, Brett Whiting 0467 332  
303 or Chris Dale 0418 255 874. Full  
details on National website.

## NSW

### SSAA (NSW) Big Game Rifle State Championships

May 30-June 1, 2025

SSAA Glen Innes, Emmaville, NSW  
Program: May 30: Camping set-up  
from 10am, practice 12.30-3pm, Event  
No.1. May 31: Events 2-7 from 9am.  
June 1: Events 8-11 from 9.30am.  
Medals for first three in all individual

events. Facilities: Camping and caravans  
permitted at range, toilets and hot  
showers. Contact: Gary Beling [home@gmail.com](mailto:home@gmail.com) or 0409 751 384.  
Full event details on National website.

## Qld

### SSAA (Qld) Gallery Rifle State Championships

May 17-18, 2025

SSAA Ipswich, South Ripley, Qld  
Program: Saturday 17: 50m Precision;  
Timed & Precision 1; 1500 Match.  
Sunday: Multi-target 1; Imperial  
Silhouettes; 1020 Match in Classic/  
Open Class. Facilities: Camping  
and kitchen available. Contact:  
Don Robinson 0428 986 070 or  
[galleryrifle@ssaaqld.org.au](mailto:galleryrifle@ssaaqld.org.au)

### SSAA (Qld) Long Range Precision State Championships

May 23-25, 2025

Captains Mountain Range Complex  
Program: Thursday: 100m zero check.  
Friday: 100m and 200m rimfire  
matches. Saturday: 700m and 800m  
Class A or H centrefire matches.  
Sunday: 900m and 1000m Class A or H  
centrefire matches. Facilities: Bunkhouse  
and cabins at range. Competitors  
can access camp kitchen with fridges,  
cooking appliances, crockery and  
cutlery. BYO food and drinks. Contact:  
Richard White 0417 637 694. Full  
details on National website.

## SA

### SA Fly Shoot State Championships

July 11-13, 2025

Monarto Shooting Complex, SA  
Program: July 11: Flag set-up available.  
July 12, 9am: Centrefire 500m Fly, five-  
target competition plus practice target,  
registered match counting towards  
Shooter of the Year. July 13, 9am: 200y  
Rimfire Fly, five-target competition plus  
practice target. Facilities: Barbecue  
available for use all weekend, camping  
permitted (limited power sites), hot  
showers, toilets and cooking facilities in  
clubroom. Contact: Pat 0455 280 024.

### SSAA (SA) Muzzleloading and Black Powder Cartridge Shotgun State Championships

September 21, 2025

Southern Rangers Shooting Club,  
McLaren Vale, SA  
Program: Start time 9:30am:  
Breechloading Shotgun; Percussion  
Shotgun; Flintlock Shotgun. Contact:  
Secretary on 0412 574 444.

## Tas

### SSAA (Tas) Sporting Clays State Championships

April 12-13, 2025

T42 Riddell Range, Runnymede, Tas  
Program: 100 targets each day, 9am

start. Facilities: Camping available  
with flushing toilets (no power),  
canteen for breakfast and lunch (cash  
only). Nomination form on National  
website. Contact: Dale Foggo 0408  
361 638 or [dalepest@msn.com](mailto:dalepest@msn.com) (email  
preferred).

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

April 25-27, 2025

Blue Hills Sporting Shooters' Club,  
Copping, Tas  
Program: Friday 25: Practice day.  
Saturday-Sunday: Competition with  
senior and junior medals. Facilities:  
Onsite camping with toilets and kitchen,  
other accommodation in surrounding  
area, lunch supplied Saturday and  
Sunday. Contact: [secretary@ssaabluehills.org.au](mailto:secretary@ssaabluehills.org.au)

## WA

### SSAA (WA) Shotgun Tower State Championships

April 6, 2025

Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, WA  
Program: 15 Target DB, 15 Target  
SB, 15 Target Points score and 15  
Pairs, total 75 targets. Adults \$55,  
Juniors \$30, nominations available on  
the day from 7.30am, competition  
starts 8am. Sash for overall high gun,  
must be minimum three shooters per  
category for prizes to be awarded.  
Facilities: Hot food, cold drinks for  
purchase, free tea, coffee and biscuits.  
Contact: Neil Cobb 0404 040 357  
or [neilcobb@bigpond.com](mailto:neilcobb@bigpond.com)

### SSAA (WA) Lever Action State Championships

May 30-June 1, 2025

Albany Lever Action Rifle Club, WA  
Program: May 30: Practice. 31: Practice  
7.45-9am, competition starts 9.30.  
June 1: Practice 7.45-9am, competition  
starts 9.30. Prizes: SSAA (WA) state  
medals and perpetual shields. Facilities:  
Camping and caravan area at range  
with power and water, canteen all  
weekend, breakfast and lunch available  
to buy. Contact: Tim Corby 0418 934  
666 or [leveraction@ssaawa.org.au](mailto:leveraction@ssaawa.org.au);  
Janoz Racz 0409 168 665 or [alarc@secretary.com](mailto:alarc@secretary.com)

### SSAA (WA) Shotgun Skeet State Championships

June 8, 2025

Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, Jarrahdale,  
WA  
Program: 100 targets, adults \$60 juniors  
no charge. Open to all SSAA members  
competing in the championships and any  
worker/helper on the day. Facilities: Free  
tea and coffee, cold drinks and snacks on  
sale. Contact: Nigel Youens 0466 341  
379 or Peter Kemp 0435 428 191.

**Vic**

**SSAA (Vic) Scoped Silhouette State Championships**

May 24-25, 2025  
Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle Park, Vic  
Program: Saturday 80 shots Centrefire, Sunday 80 shots Rimfire. Nominations on the day or call Mark Butler. Medals for first three in all grades. Contact: Mark Butler on 0409 135 740.

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

September 25-28, 2025  
Melbourne Sporting Rifle Club, Eagle Park, Vic  
Program: Thursday practice. Friday 80 shots rifle calibre, Saturday 80 shots pistol calibre, Sunday 80 shots smallbore. Nominations on the day or email msrc.secretary@gmail.com. Medals for first three in all grades. Contact: Mark Butler on 0409 135 740.

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

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**Australian Bowhunters Association Ltd**

**www.bowhunters.org.au**

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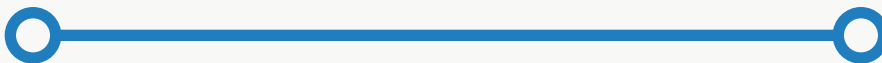


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AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER is published monthly and is printed by IVE, 83 Derby St, Silverwater, NSW 2128.

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## Closing in on his licence to thrill

It took a little longer than first thought but the good news is my eldest is now on the way to obtaining his junior shooting licence. Like most things, I over-complicated the issue and included my friend Graeme in the mix. A year older than me, Graeme decided after joining us on a few hunting trips (and enjoying venison burgers round the campfire), the hunting and shooting life is for him. Poor fool.

A little further advanced than my son, Graeme is already licenced, has his membership all squared away, bought and installed a safe and submitted his first PTA. It seems my admiration for Tikka rifles is contagious as he has a Tikka CTR on order, one of Beretta Australia's short-run models presented in Finnish Army pattern. It looks great and if it's anything like every other CTR I've owned and reviewed, it'll be a very straight shooter.

Obviously for me the gem among all this is my boy. With high school on the near horizon his confidence in all things has grown, so we decided during the past Christmas holidays it was time. After filling out the required paperwork and saving it

to my desktop for the sake of future convenience, we ventured to the range one weekday afternoon in early January.

On arrival, the three of us waited patiently for the range to open then began the signing-in process. With that done and a couple of simple paper targets in hand, we headed to the 50 and 100-yard frames. That 'young man' confidence did waiver a little as my boy mentioned he only wanted to shoot the 50 as the 100 was too far. "No problem mate, we'll see how we go," was my reply.

When the range opened I left Graeme, a licenced shooter, in charge of 'Indi' the SSAA/Beretta Australia project rifle from the May, June and July 2022 issues of this magazine. It's a fine rifle and Graeme was soon burning through my expensive Sako ammo on his way to stacking up a very nice group.

Sitting behind the firing line my boy and I just chatted, casually observing Graeme and the other shooters. With questions only a 12-year-old could possibly think of, I could tell he was ready so we waited for the ceasefire. After the all-clear we walked to the targets to check out the .30-cal holes and on counting shots and examining

their placement, I could see the cogs turning. It was finally his turn on the rifle so after securing 'Indi' we took the new rifle out the bag.

After due consideration I'd settled on a Tikka T1x Hunter though honestly, my experience with .22LR is limited. As a boy I had an air rifle, as an 18-year-old a .30-30 and didn't own a .22LR until into my second decade of shooting. It's not that I don't like them, I just never really hunted small game and, if I did, it was with shotgun.

I will say the new T1x Hunter is a mighty fine rifle and one I'll be reviewing soon. I'd already sighted-in the rifle at 50 yards during a previous range visit so with some basic instruction I had him behind the butt stock. It's a wholly different experience helping a new shooter and, knowing my boy and the way his brain would be swirling, I focused on safety and fit.

I'm not sure how many times I said: "Take your finger off the trigger," until at some point during that typically hot January afternoon, he either got it or his finger was tiring. I won't know until next time. Success at 50 yards soon removed any concerns about the 100 target and, as it filled with .22LR holes, we continued to run through the routine of safety, fit, target, aim, load, fire, make safe.

The cycle was broken every 15 minutes or so with Graeme taking the bench. Towards the end of the session I decided to try our hand at a different target. While paper might just be paper, both shooters proved that a game animal silhouette is a lot more fun than a roundel, as very quickly those small '10' and 'X' rings on the goat target became more hole than paper.

As they say, from little things big things grow, and after a successful first day our next step is finding time to attend the safety course together. From there he'll have his Junior licence then a Junior hunting licence and, with lots of practice, maybe something more suitable for medium game. Watch this space. ●



Tikka seat . . . settling in behind his new rifle.



# Australian Shooter

*Beauty...and a beast*



In many ways this rifle review has been a long time coming. It all started back in 2008 when I was thinking about buying my first 'nice' rifle and by nice, I mean my first dedicated left-hander in a calibre and model of my choosing. Previously as a lefty I'd compromised but now had almost enough money in my pocket to change that. What caught my eye was the Sauer 202 Elegance, a beautiful thing in every way with its timber, metalwork, overall appeal, calibre

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