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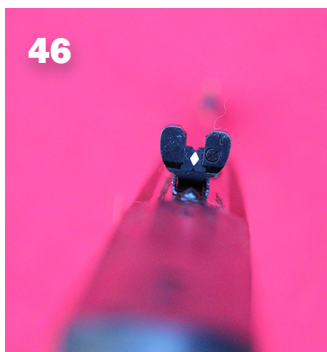
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PFI-M425	384x288	25mm	800 x 600 12 um 25 NETD mk	8 hours internal	1300m	\$1,650

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To create a better environment and community understanding of all forms of hunting and shooting sports.

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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.

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Hunting crucial for wildlife conservation

The Federal Election has been run and won and is now old news. As far as shooting went, with most firearms regulation happening at state level there wasn't a lot to interest us until late in the campaign, when a press release landed from the Australian Alliance for Animals.

In short they were trumpeting commitments from The Greens, Animal Justice Party and others to ban the importation of hunting trophies. The Federal Labor Party had also agreed 'in principle' to legislate the ban. We immediately contacted both the ALP and Coalition for comment with only the latter replying, and we published that reply in an email to members before the election.

This is an important issue as hunting plays a crucial role in funding wildlife conservation in many countries. In fact, for a great article and some incredible pictures on this, pick up a copy of *Australian Hunter* 93 and see how hunting is driving the conservation of rare goats in Pakistan (SSAA members qualify for a discounted subscription to *Australian Hunter*).

I've seen it for myself in South Africa where private game reserves have used limited hunting to fund conservation efforts in their parks, seeing a regeneration of native habitat and revival of threatened species. It's a brilliant success story. Oxford University published research on the matter some time ago and their conclusion was the same - hunting improves conservation.

This year, SSAA will be talking to the Federal Government to try to prevent this ban from being implemented and we're going to need your help. Soon we'll be asking you to contact the federal minister and your local federal MP to put your point of view so keep an eye out for that.

In May we celebrated some of the volunteers who make our clubs and sport possible and I'd again like to thank all our volunteers across the country for their contribution to our sport. What they do means we're all better off. When you next visit your local SSAA range, why not thank one of the volunteers when you have the chance or, better still, join them and give some of your spare time to the club.

Recently we've recruited Charlotte Fox who replaces Rachael Oxborrow as our media and politics officer. Charlotte joins us from the state government in South Australia where she worked with two police ministers and, before that, with the Victorian Farmers' Federation and Livestock Australia. She grew up in regional South Australia and will be a valuable addition to our editorial team.



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Patience pays off

THE FIRST TIME I set eyes on an old mate's BSA Hunter in .222 it was immediately on my 'wish-list'. It'd been his work gun in the early 1970s when he was doing contract kangaroo harvesting for the CSIRO in western Queensland and, as such, was in poor condition. I loved the compact design and rather different bolt configuration, it 'fitted' me well, came easily to the shoulder and pointed naturally.

Nearly 10 years passed and only a handful of BSA Hunters appeared on the market, all in poor to very poor condition, then my 'Holy Grail' turned up at a local dealer. A totally original rifle in good used condition (I suspect it had been in storage for years). So why a BSA Hunter? I love British and European-style firearms as they have a certain style and handling which suit my small-medium build, while quality of manufacture and the history associated with the marque are all part of the mystique.

At first glance the BSA Hunter .222 looks like a slightly larger version of the renowned Brno Model 2 .22 rifle. I'm no technical expert, so my descriptions are that of a layman shooter. It has a massive bolt, short action with a Mauser-type extractor, well-positioned safety and an equally impressive receiver. The 24" barrel is tapered with flip-up leaf sights, while the stock is really neat with a pistol grip, Monte Carlo comb and fine checkering. The magazine has a hinged floor plate with the release in the trigger guard. The trigger is an interesting three-lever and on mine was scratchy and heavy until a gunsmith cleaned it up and it's set at around 2lbs, which suits my field shooting.

At the SSAA Belmont range, known for its crosswinds, the Hunter .222 and my handloads can still put five shots in a 10c piece at 100m, even with my 82-year-old eyes. Definitely worth the 10-year wait!

Blade Johnstone, Qld.

A 17 worth its salt

I WRITE TO back up Barry Washington's comments in your February issue regarding the lack of praise which should've been given to 17 WSM round, which is far superior to the HMR and was undoubtedly worthy of inclusion in the original article about the best rimfire varmint cartridges. I eventually got rid of my 17 HMR because it wasn't powerful enough to drop foxes on the spot like the 17 WSM can. The latter is every bit as accurate and has more than double the power. Give me a 17 WSM any day of the week.

Ray Collins, via email

Feral cat damage understated

JUST WANTED TO thank Matthew Godson for his article on the serious impact cats have on our environment (*Shooter*, November 2024). Delighted to see our governments are finally removing the blindfold on just how damaging these animals are and talking about reclassifying strays and 'homeless' cats as ferals. Still no luck for landholders in Victoria to shoot them on sight but it looks like we're getting there. With a bit of luck the political wheels will start turning on this before we lose another native species for good. Thanks again for bringing this into public view.

Peter Aspin, via email

Let's broaden our appeal

I HAVE OF course read with concern what occurred in WA and mused with my best friend, the most avid of shooters, about what can be done to protect the interests of the shooting community. We both agree the answer is to broaden the base. Firearm ownership and use, to be frank, has a serious image problem and for too long has alienated the inner city, suburban and other members of society.

My friend and I are probably not your average shooters, me being a sitting Tribunal member and practising lawyer and he a dentist, yet we both have the advantage of having been raised in the regions, although I spent almost a decade living in inner-city Melbourne.

Half the week I work in what's known as a community legal centre, running their family law practice. I hate the word 'woke' as again, I think it alienates people we should be drawing in, though it would be hard to find a more woke place to be employed. Yet I've no qualms about openly discussing my interest in firearms and feel it's only a matter of time before I convince some of my colleagues to have a go at clay target shooting.

My point is, I believe the SSAA should make a concerted effort to bring the sizeable section of the community who've not been exposed to the many benefits of being part of a shooting community into the fold. The sport needs to be 'marketed' to some degree to appeal to the inner-city and professional set, in order to protect ourselves but also improve the shooting community and help prevent the sort thing which occurred in WA happening elsewhere. I'm certainly trying to do my bit to change hearts and minds.

Peter C, via email

Key findings from 2025 National Feral Pig Conference

In late March leading experts, land managers, researchers, government representatives and community stakeholders gathered in Queensland for the 2025 National Feral Pig Conference (NFPC), in a landmark event aimed at drawing national attention to one of Australia's most damaging invasive pests. With their destructive impact on agriculture, native biodiversity and cultural heritage, feral pigs pose a growing threat which demands coordinated, sustained and innovative responses.

The conference provided a platform to showcase current knowledge, share success stories and explore the technologies and partnerships proving effective on the ground. The traditional control methods (shooting, trapping, baiting) remain essential, though innovation and integration are crucial for long-term success.

Day One: Setting the scene

The conference opened with keynote addresses which established a sense of urgency and direction. A video message from Minister for Agriculture, Julie Collins, reaffirmed the federal government's support for national coordination in feral pig management and outlined key priorities for action.

Professor Jim Hone delivered a compelling overview of the ecological and economic impacts of feral pigs, tracing decades of research to highlight the scale and complexity of the challenge. Sheridan Morris, Chair of the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia, emphasised the importance of integrated pest management and called for reliable funding to ensure the continuity of long-term programs.

A strong message emerged from day one: Solving the feral pig problem requires national unity, strategic coordination and sustained investment, before the day concluded with a networking reception hosted by the ACT Government, fostering connections across sectors.

Day Two: Collaboration and community

The second day highlighted successful collaborative and community-led approaches to feral pig control. Presenters shared how partnerships between governments,



The feral pig is one of the country's most damaging invasive species.

landholders, indigenous ranger groups and private industry are producing results. Notable examples included cross-tenure coordination between local councils, state agencies and farmers; a decade-long program supported by Santos in gas production areas; and grassroots initiatives using local knowledge to tailor management strategies to regional conditions.

Technology was another recurring theme. Innovations such as long-life toxic baits, spatially assisted aerial shooting and automated bait stations with remote monitoring are changing the game. These tools improve efficiency, humaneness and safety while reducing labour intensity. The day ended with a panel discussion featuring landholders, pest officers and agency reps tackling the practical complexities of managing pigs at scale, a key takeaway being shared responsibility and open communication are vital for lasting success.

Day Three: Looking ahead

The final day turned to future risks and emerging solutions with presentations focusing on how data, research and technology are shaping the next generation of feral pig management. Highlights included discussions on national mapping and disease surveillance using camera traps and passive acoustic devices, as well as predictive models which map pig distributions under changing environmental conditions. Advanced tools such as thermal imaging drones and early-stage genetic biocontrol research were also featured.

One standout concept was exploring how the Australian Carbon Credit Units Scheme

could support pig control in carbon-sensitive landscapes like wetlands, aligning pest control with climate and environmental goals.

Unified call to action

NFPC 2025 closed with a unified call to action: Ramp-up national coordination, increase investment in scalable technology and deepen community engagement. Delegates agreed that with the right tools, partnerships and political will, momentum generated at the conference could drive meaningful progress.

The NFPC proved Australia has the knowledge, capacity and commitment to act decisively against the feral pig threat. There may be no silver bullet but the path forward is clear: Collaboration, innovation and long-term planning are essential. From boots-on-the-ground programs which can include hunters to hi-tech monitoring systems, every piece of the puzzle counts and the time to act as always has been the present.

It's clear to me that many involved in pig management are welded to a government funding model as researchers, agencies and those on the ground all seek money to operate. If only more thought was put into working with hunters and ways to increase our efficiency in pest control. Maybe it's time to look outside the box as that might just lead to a win-win situation.

Send questions to:
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You'll be surprised at what's in the bag

Being lost or in a survival situation can induce stress and everyone reacts differently, as it sets up the basic 'fight or flight' mechanism.

If managed properly stress can heighten awareness, increase strength, sharpen reflexes and make your thinking clearer, yet if mismanaged it causes distress which can lead to panic and loss of rational thought.

When that happens it's time for a brew - a good old cuppa tea. While you may not carry milk, cream or sugar into the bush, I highly recommend you have a teabag or two in your micro Every Day Carry (EDC), your survival kit, Bug-Out Bag (BOB) or even your first aid kit - and here's why.

Firstly by sitting down, making a fire and preparing tea, you achieve two things. Foremost, you've made a fire and that can help in many ways as it provides warmth, allows you to cook, can attract attention and provide protection from insects. And the positive psychology of having these things should never be underestimated. Secondly, stopping what you're doing and focusing on fire-making and tea drinking slows you down which enables you to better observe the surroundings, consider your position, contemplate options and focus on the Principles of Survival (protection, rescue, water, food).

But here's why you should have more than one teabag on you. Tea has antibacterial properties as it's rich in polyphenols, tannins and catechins, chemicals which can inhibit the growth of certain bacteria. For example, studies have shown green tea and black tea can help reduce the presence of harmful bacteria like *Staphylococcus aureus*

and *Escherichia coli* (E. coli). So by drinking tea you can help kill off bacteria in the water you've procured, while it can also assist in mitigating any water contamination that may result from poor personal hygiene (hand to mouth). Beyond these there are plenty of other good reasons to keep a few teabags close at hand.

Minor wound dressing: Once the teabag has cooled, you can either place the damp bag directly on the wound or use a clean cloth soaked in the tea to gently dab the wound. This weak anti-bacterial solution helps clean and sterilise the wound.

Soothe insect bites and stings: Tannins in tea can help reduce swelling and soothe irritated skin. Simply wet the tea bag and apply it to the affected area.

Treat minor burns: A cold, damp teabag can help alleviate the pain and inflammation caused by minor burns.

Compress for eye relief: Rinsing the eye and using the bag as a compress can stave off infections like conjunctivitis. A damp, chilled teabag can also help reduce puffiness and refresh your eyes from wind-blown pollen and dust.

Skin problems: For dry rash or fungal infections, a cool teabag compress can help ease the itch and aid healing.

Lice-wash: Warm or cooled tea temporarily eases the itch from head lice and the lice don't like the bitter taste. Once you've washed, move camp so you don't become reinfested.

Worms: Drink strong tea and, if strong enough, the intestinal/gastric worms will be voided.

Dysentery or severe diarrhoea: Drinking tea as strong as possible can or may expel amoebas and kill bacteria.

Filter water: At a pinch a teabag can be used to filter out large particles from dirty water. It won't make the water completely safe to drink but it's a start until you can boil or treat it. To do this find a plastic bottle, cut off the base and stuff the teabag into the nozzle to create a drip filter.

Start a fire: Dry teabags can be used as kindling as they catch fire easily and can help get your campfire started.

Tenderise meat: Tea's natural tannins can help tenderise tough cuts of meat. Broil the cuts or jerky with tea to make a broth then add in other foraged foods you may have found.

Herbal hippy: Herbal teas like echinacea and elderberry can help boost your immune system and reduce duration of cold and flu symptoms. Teas containing turmeric and ginger have anti-inflammatory properties, while some herbal varieties like willow bark contain natural pain-relieving compounds. Willow bark has salicin, which is similar to aspirin, so drinking this type of tea can help alleviate minor aches and pains. Thyme and liquorice root teas can help soothe a sore throat and reduce inflammation if you gargle with it.

So next time you go hunting, bushwalking or are simply refurbishing your survival kit, pack a little tea for two.



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Q I've seen several people at my local club wearing electronic earmuffs when they shoot. After looking online, I noticed they're significantly more expensive than standard earmuffs, so are they worth the price tag?

Allan F., Vic.

A Great question Allan. Sounds like you're referring to those electronic earmuffs around the \$350-\$500 price point. While you can find cheaper alternatives out there, these often come with compromises in clarity and quality which can make a difference in both comfort and performance. Hearing protection is an essential yet often neglected topic among shooters.

It's no secret that, over time, exposure to loud noises can cause irreversible damage to your hearing health. Personally I don't use electronic earmuffs, not because I don't like them but because they're not allowed

in my competitive discipline, however I can definitely see the benefits of investing in a good pair for various shooting activities.

Enhanced situational awareness

One of the standout features of electronic earmuffs is their ability to enhance situational awareness. They amplify ambient sounds, allowing you to hear important cues like a referee or range officer's instructions or the sound of someone approaching, while still effectively blocking out the loud noise of a gunshot. This balance of protecting your hearing from loud noises while still being able to hear everything happening around you truly is the best of both worlds.

Effortless communication

If you're coaching someone or need to communicate frequently with fellow shooters, electronic earmuffs make the process so much smoother. You won't have to stop, remove your hearing protection then start talking. Instead, you can engage in conversation without missing a beat. This can help with real-time feedback, making coaching sessions or group activities far more efficient and enjoyable (with a lot less yelling).

Competitive advantage

For those shooting disciplines like Skeet and Sporting Clays, electronic earmuffs can provide a competitive edge, and I've noticed a growing trend of sporting shooters choosing them as their preferred hearing protection. The main advantage? They allow shooters to hear the trap's release, which helps them fine-tune their timing and track the target's initial flight path more effectively. This enhanced auditory feedback offers a strategic advantage, giving shooters

an edge over those using standard, sound-blocking earmuffs.

Hunting perspective

From this standpoint, many shy away from traditional earmuffs due to their impractical functionality, which can hinder their ability to hear what's happening in their surroundings. In this case, electronic earmuffs or even electronic earplugs are the best solution, as they provide effective noise protection while still allowing them to remain aware of any movements or sounds in the bush. This dual functionality is a game-changer in the field. Electronic earmuffs offer a perfect balance between hearing protection and environmental awareness, giving hunters peace of mind knowing they're not sacrificing their hearing health.

So are they worth the investment? I understand the price tag on electronic earmuffs may give you cause to pause, though I truly believe there's value in the product. They offer a combination of convenience and functionality which can significantly enhance both your shooting and hunting experiences. Prioritising your overall hearing is crucial, especially when dealing with repetitive loud noises. If you're looking for quality protection which also helps you stay connected to your environment, electronic earmuffs are certainly worth considering, as they provide a level of versatility and awareness which traditional earmuffs simply can't match.

Questions to:
L.scanlan@live.com.au



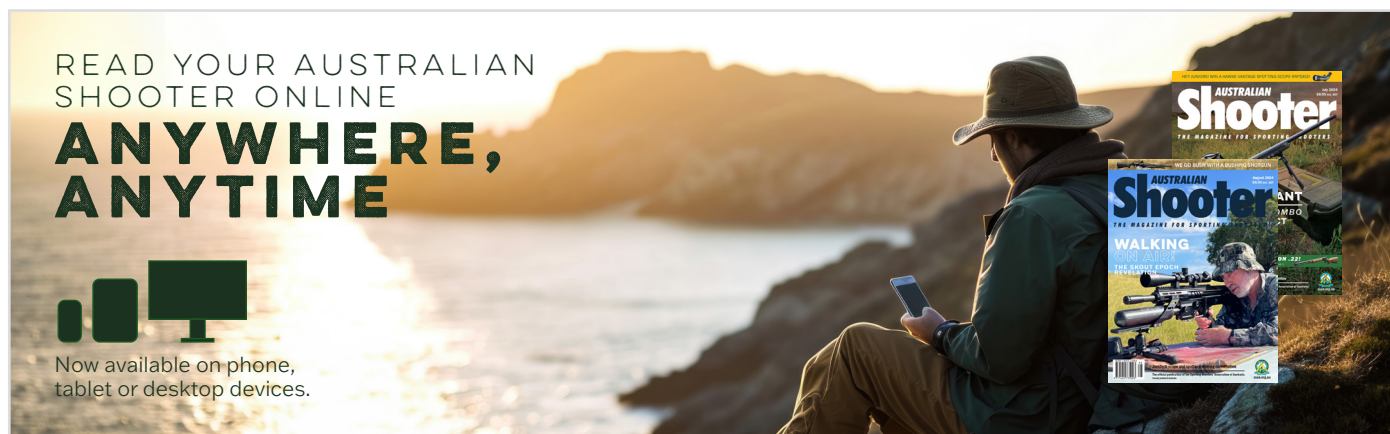
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Got a question - ask our TOP SHOTS?

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

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Because of their relative rarity, Needler shotguns don't appear for sale all that often. One I found was a cased 10-gauge hammer gun which sold at a Christie's auction in 1992 for £495, which would be substantially more now. Your gun appears to be in very good condition but hasn't been proofed for smokeless powder and does have Damascus barrels, so I'd be reluctant to risk firing it with any modern cartridges.

Geoff Smith

Q Now having grown-up grandchildren, I'd like to introduce them to small-bore target shooting, which would also be a new experience for me. Any information from your Top Shots would be much appreciated. I'm thinking of .22, 22 WMR or .17 calibre and any suggestions for a suitable firearm and scope match-up would also be most helpful.

J. Stephen, via email

A Shooting's a great family sport and introducing your grandchildren sounds like a fine idea. It'll be a lot of fun and another opportunity to spend some quality family time together. I'm assuming you've had other shooting experiences as a SSAA member, so will jump in and say there are lots of rifles and scopes available for small-bore target shooting which range in price from the inexpensive to the stratospheric.

They can be had brand new in both left and right-handed bolt-actions, though the choice for lefties is a bit limited. You can find some very fine quality secondhand single-shot target rifles for sale in gun shops around Australia and often they have a decent scope and mounts already attached by the previous owner. Rimfire rifles don't tend to cop the wear-and-tear of centrefire barrels so are a good bet on the secondhand market.

The .22 WMR and .17 rimfire cartridges aren't target rounds but meant for hunting small game, being chambered in lightweight

sporting rifles rather than rimfire target rifles. In terms of equipment, as a general rule of thumb you get what you pay for but, from my own experience, an Anschütz Match 64 single-shot and Leupold 6.5-20x40 extended focal range (EFR) scope proved very satisfying indeed.

Rimfire target shooting is carried out with .22 match ammo and it's usually a matter of experimenting with various brands to find out which one your rifle likes best. The range is usually limited to 90m and while there's a trend for shooting targets at longer distances, this is a highly specialized area. Start your family with a quality outfit on the normal small-bore range, take it from there and I think you'll be in for a great deal of family fun and friendly competition. Good luck.

Paul Miller

Q I inherited a .303 Lee-Enfield rifle from my father's estate and, as I have a licence, thought I'd put it to good use. There was no ammo with it so I bought a packet of new PPU, cleaned the bore and took for it a shoot at the range. However, I couldn't chamber the rounds. Some online searching suggested the chamber may have a build-up of rust or the bullet is seated too long. Thinking the rifle had been changed to a different calibre, I measured the bore and it was .303. Either way, I thought I'd look outside Google and ask your Top Shots if I'm missing something.

Peter S., NSW

A All that's missing here is a bit of interesting history on post-war firearms 'tampering'.

As the bore diameter is .303" I'd suggest the rifle has been re-chambered for another cartridge, most likely the 7.7 x 54R (R meaning rimmed). This is the metric way of saying a cut-down .303 British cartridge which would otherwise be described as

Q I'm interested in finding out the age and approximate value of an old shotgun I have. It's a W.S. Needler double-barrel hammerless with Deeley's 'patented' ejector.

Bernard Phillips, via email

A Your beautiful old shotgun was most likely made in the workshops of William Stevenson Needler at 27 Silver Street, Hull, east Yorkshire some time during the eight-year period between 1887 and 1895. This is based on the proof marks and the fact John Deeley who, with William Anson worked for Westley Richards & Co., had his patent granted in December 1886.

William, a third generation Needler gunsmith, was born in 1850 and was working as a gunsmith by 1871. He was also a local businessman in a variety of other areas in this famous seafaring town on England's east coast. The Needler firm was apparently also famous for making harpoon guns for whaling.

7.7 x 56R. That 2mm difference in length is why you're having trouble chambering regular .303 British ammunition.

The answer to your question is related to how you father acquired the rifle and, more importantly, when. At the end of the Second World War thousands of cheap, surplus military rifles hit Australian gun shops and military surplus stores, though up until the mid-1970s restrictions were placed on civilians using firearms which fired military ammunition. Here in Australia that included the .303 British cartridge. I'm not sure all states followed the same rules but, in NSW, only landowners and members of military-supported rifle clubs could buy military surplus .303 rifles and ammo.

As the rifles were so cheap with some as little as £15 (about \$30), gunsmiths bought them by the dozens to convert to a number of different calibres, yet still used the chamber dimensions and bolt of the .303 rifle. Companies such as Super, Riverbrand and Myra also used cheap surplus .303 ammo to make these wildcats, by simply necking down (and sometimes shortening) the original military case to hold bullets such as .22, .243, .25, .270 and so on.

However, another way to solve the problem and keep the original barrel with its sights intact, was to simply cut a couple of millimetres from the breech end of the barrel, making the chamber shorter for a new shorter cartridge. The

accompanying photo shows the difference in case length of the .303 British (left) and 7.7 x 54R. As a final note not many, if any, gunsmiths re-stamped converted rifles with the new cartridge it fired, resulting in numerous people facing exactly the same problem as you.

Rod Pascoe



It's important to remember shot placement is vital when targeting feral pigs.

Q I've just acquired a top condition Winchester Model 92 repeating rifle in .44-40 calibre and was wondering if it would be suitable to use on feral pigs.

Andrew, via email

A Yes your Winchester .44-40 rifle is suitable for hunting feral pigs, particularly at reasonable ranges. The .44-40 Winchester cartridge with its moderate power compared to more modern cartridges, is effective for taking down small to medium-sized game. Properly loaded, it can deliver adequate energy and penetration to humanely put down feral pigs, especially if you use appropriate bullets designed for hunting.

But be aware that when hunting feral pigs shot placement is crucial. Aim for the vital areas to ensure a quick and ethical kill. While the .44-40 may not have the stopping power of cartridges like the .30-30 or .44 Magnum, it can be effective if you're skilled in using it and practice good safety measures. Overall, with responsible handling and appropriate tactics, your Winchester .44-40 rifle will serve you well in pig hunting for many years to come.

Barry Wilmot

Q Reading Scott Heiman's column on multi-tools (*Shooter*, February 2025) reminded me of a knife my dad gave me 50 or 60 years ago. It was a 'souvenir' from his WWII army service but he never explained exactly how he came by it (I got the impression he 'acquired' it from an American in Darwin or Papua New Guinea). Then watching an old British TV show called *Foyle's War* recently I saw the same kind of knife shown. Are you able to tell me who made or supplied this model back in the 1930s or '40s? Any info appreciated.

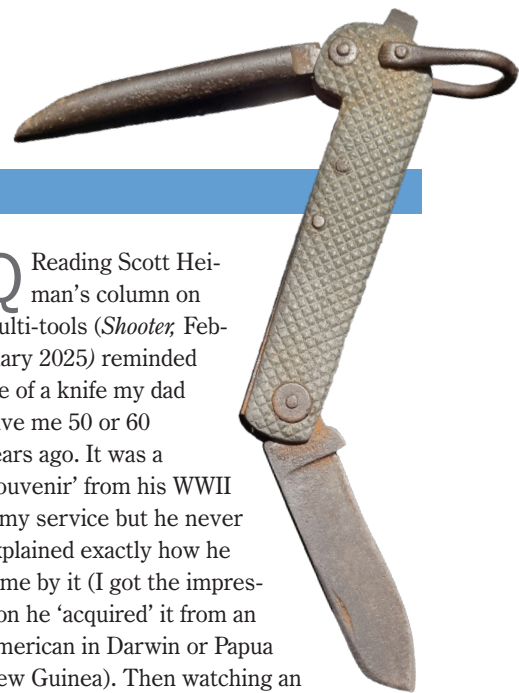
Barry Sadler, via email

A Your knife is a bosun's (or boatswain's) knife. According to the little information I was able to find online and elsewhere its history hasn't been well recorded, though the design certainly dates back to the sailing ship days when it was used for rigging and splicing ships lines. In that sense I suppose you could think of it as an early multi-tool.

The sheepsfoot cutting blade with its rounded point was probably a lot safer to operate than a pointed blade, while the tapered marlin spike was used as a lever for untying knots or separating strands of rope when splicing. As you already know your knife dates from WWII, most likely made under contract for the US military.

In the modern context the style is also known as a sailing, sailor's or jack knife and quite a few makers still produce similar for modern sailing enthusiasts (search online for bosun's knife and you'll see what I mean). I have a similar one with stag antler scales which was made by H.G. Long and Co. of Sheffield in England, the main difference being the blade and marlin spike share a common pivot pin on one end.

John Dunn



PUSHING

THE



BO

Con Kapralos hails another triumph from Springfield

When Springfield Armoury released their 2020 rifle line that year, the first models in the Waypoint and Redline were both cutting-edge long-arms suited to serious hunting, quite a departure from their traditional military, law enforcement and self-defence offerings. The latest addition is the Boundary, the most significant variation in the 2020 range, with its classic hinged floor-plate magazine filling a niche many hunters have been calling for.

The Boundary still runs with the best componentry which ensures a superbly

accurate and lightweight rifle, suited to the hunter who prefers to stalk their quarry and is prepared to go the extra dollar (or two) for the right firearm. Added to that is the fact Springfield offer a 0.75 MOA guarantee* with the Boundary, which shows complete faith in their workmanship and product.

Nioa, Australian importer and distributor for Springfield, sent *Australian Shooter* the 2020 Boundary model for review in .308 Winchester. They paired it with a fine Leupold VX-5 HD optic and some Federal Premium 165-grain Berger hunting ammunition, which had been tuned to the scope with

a custom CDS dial. This service is offered by Nioa to all Australian customers who buy a Leupold scope with CDS dial option.

At a glance

The review rifle is the Boundary with 540mm fluted stainless steel barrel, which incorporates a 50mm radial muzzle brake fitted (a carbon-wrapped barrel version is also offered). It's a push-feed action modelled on the Remington 700 pattern and comes fitted with an alloy Picatinny rail, spiral fluted bolt and over-size bolt-knob. The barrelled action is finished in a satin



UNDARY

stainless Cerakote and is mated to an AG Composites Sportsman carbon fibre stock in the Rogue camouflage pattern. The rifle measures 1040mm and weighs 3.04kg.

Barrelled action

The heart of the Boundary is the action which is identical to that offered on the Waypoint and Redline models. It's based on the Remington 700 pattern, made from steel with a cylindrical profiled receiver with integral recoil lug. A rounded front receiver ring, flat-topped rear ring, scalloped flat on the left facet (with maker's

name and model engraved) and a flat slab on the right of the rear receiver ring make for an eye-catching profile.

Single gas ports are either side of the front receiver ring to vent away hot gasses from primer ignition. A bolt-release toggle lever sits at the rear left of the receiver and makes removal of the steel fluted bolt easy, while the Boundary is fitted with an alloy Picatinny rail from the factory to make optic mounting straightforward. The bolt is of a push-feed design with dually-opposing locking lugs, with a plunger-style ejector and extractor positioned within the face

of one of the lugs. It's spiral fluted which reduces weight and is nitride-coated for slick bolt travel. The bolt-handle is nicely profiled with removable bolt-knob in case a larger unit is required, though I found it ideal.

The barrel's well thought-out for the rifle's intended use. Being of stainless steel it's of a semi-heavy sporter contour measuring 540mm, which incorporates a 50mm radial muzzle brake as standard. By way of reducing weight, it has six flutes measuring 340mm x 5mm wide along its length and is finished in satin stainless Cerakote as is the receiver. The brake is $\frac{5}{8}$



Springfield Armoury 2020 Boundary in disassembled form.

x 24 and could be removed and the provided thread-cap installed.

Magazine

This harks back to the 'tried and tested' internal box style with a hinged floor-plate for removal of loaded rounds. The bottom metal, which consists of triggerguard, floor-plate and internal magazine box are aluminium, with the follower, magazine spring and floor-plate release actuator being steel. The entire unit is beautifully made and easy to remove and replace for maintenance. Magazine capacity is 4+1 which for a hunting calibre such as the .308 Winchester is perfect, rounds loading easily in a double-stack manner and picked up by the push-feed bolt without issue. Releasing the floor-plate is done by pressing the small actuator inside the trigger-guard, which doesn't impinge on trigger function and worked positively. In a world of detachable box magazines, it's nice to see Springfield offer this arrangement on the Boundary.

Trigger

It's super-pleasing to see a premium trigger fitted in the TriggerTech Field unit. It features their patented 'frictionless release' technology and is adjustable for pull weight from 2½-5lbs with a patented free-floating roller, ensuring clean and consistent pulls (the test rifle was set at 3lbs which was excellent). The TriggerTech Field trigger also uses

a two-position lever safety which worked as expected, though doesn't lock the bolt down when in 'safe' position.

Stock

As you'd expect on a rifle of this quality, Springfield didn't skimp and went the carbon-fibre route with the AG Composites Sportsman stock in Rogue camouflage pattern. It has a wide array of features to set it apart from other hi-tech synthetic offerings. Firstly, each one is hand-painted and in this case the Rogue pattern suited the satin stainless Cerakote of the barrelled action perfectly. Texture of the painted finish gave excellent grip, even in summer with sweaty hands.

The design with slender, reverse-comb stock and classic hunting rifle lines is fit for purpose as a serious hunting rifle. The pistol grip is super-comfortable and length of pull at 348mm was spot-on, while a premium Pachmayr Decelerator recoil pad ensured a non-slip mount when shouldering. Sling swivel attachments are done quite differently on the Sportsman stock, using flush-mounted cups as opposed to standard studs, a nice touch.

Further to that the fore-end has provision for integral M-Lok slots for mounting bipod, another excellent feature and proof AG Composites certainly think outside the square where design is concerned. Bedding of the Sportsman is superb, with alloy pillars installed as standard and the



Radial muzzle brake comes fitted as standard but can be removed; Alloy Picatinny rail fitted as standard makes scope-fitting a breeze; Pachmayr Decelerator pad is another nice feature.



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Pushing the Boundary

barrel free-floating its entire length, attributing to excellent accuracy and 0.75 MOA guarantee.

Range and field testing

The rifle came sighted-in at 100m (thanks Nioa) and I tested it and the scope out to 300m. The rifle shot superbly as expected with the Federal ammo, all groups at all distances hovering between the 0.5-1 MOA mark. Now I'm far from a benchrest shooter, yet the 2020 Boundary and I seemed to 'click'. It's one of the best I've reviewed in a long time and pairing it with the Leupold optic made for an unbeatable combination.

If I was in the market for a dedicated hunting rifle this would be top of the podium. I intended to take the Boundary into the field for a pre-rut deer hunt in February until a family bereavement meant the trip was called off. Sometimes as much as we love our hunting, things beyond our control have the final say.

Who is it for?

The Springfield Armoury 2020 Boundary is squarely aimed at those who demand a lightweight hunting rifle, engineered and manufactured from top-grade components and made to perform in all environments. It's offered in serious hunting calibres 6.5CM, 6.5PRC, 7mm PRC, 7mm Rem Mag, .308 Win, .300 Win Mag and .300 PRC and, with that 0.75 MOA guarantee, is a rifle the serious hunter will gladly pay a bit more for. More at nioa.com.au

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Specifications

Manufacturer: Springfield Armoury, Illinois, US

Action: Two-lug 2020 (M700-pattern) with sliding claw extractor

Stock: AG Composites Sportsman in Rogue camouflage

Magazine capacity: 4+1 (.308 Win) internal box with hinge floor-plate.

Weight: 3.04kg

Length: 1040mm

Barrel: 540mm stainless steel threaded x24 with radial muzzle brake fitted.

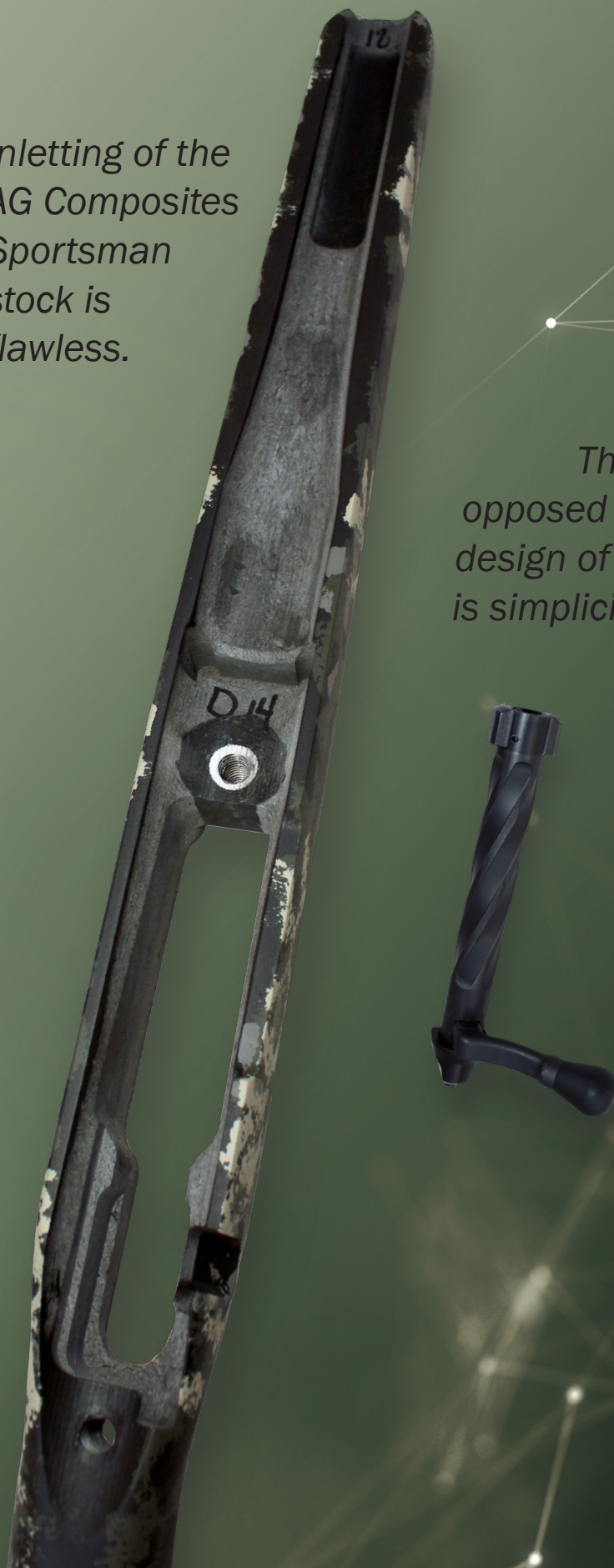
Finish: Satin stainless Cerakote

Trigger: TriggerTech Field, adjustable 2½-5lbs.

RRP: About \$4195 but shop around

Inletting of the AG Composites Sportsman stock is flawless.

The dually opposed twin-lug design of the bolt is simplicity itself.



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REFLEX ACTION

ZeroTech red dot gave **Chris Redlich** the upper hand

Close-quarters shooting requires fast reaction which means three key ingredients: Awareness of surroundings, speed of rifle operation and correct sight alignment on the target, the latter holding most importance. Open sights have always laid claim to being the best traditional reactive sights, particularly for short-range shooting, yet as soon as you add a battery it's no longer deemed traditional. Or is it?

Battery-operated red dot-style sights aren't new and are now seen on many traditional rifles like pump and lever-actions as the preferred aiming device. Reflex sights are meant for no-fuss sighting, where all a shooter need do is point the dot at the target (static or moving) and fire. Thankfully the reflex sights of today have increased in usability and reduced dramatically in size to earlier variants, leaving me with no apprehension on accepting an invite to review ZeroTech's new Trace 1x28 aspherical reflex sight.

Although aptly named 'reflex', the moniker actually refers to the 'reflective' internal lens arrangement of the sight. Unlike a normal scope which aligns an aiming mark or reticle over a magnified image of the target, ZeroTech's reflex sight uses a partially reflecting aspherical lens to view an illuminated projection of a red dot over a non-magnified target image.

They market this one as the H.A.L.O. (Heavy-duty Aspherical Lens Optic), highlighting its fog-proof, waterproof and shockproof design. At first glance the 7075 aluminium body looks and feels entirely of high-strength construction. It's as compact as you'll see in a modern reflex sight and I find it hard to believe they can get any smaller. Measuring just 40mm and weighing a mere 78g, they make an entirely negligible addition to a competition pistol or fast-wielding pig gun, which is exactly why we mounted it on our new Rossi .357 lever rifle.

Once securely fitted using the supplied screws, the dovetail base appears integral to the main body and is precisely machined to suit standard Picatinny rails and most Weaver-style bases, while the addition of a supplied 'shim' takes care of any spacing issues. The single Torx screw ensured a noticeably solid fit to the not-so-solid Picatinny rail we'd bought.

Red dot sights require a power source and cleverly housed within the top of the unit sits a CR2032 flat battery. A large slot provides easy access for the supplied tool to remove the battery cap and, once tightened, it sits nicely contoured with the top. If efficiency's your thing you'll be surprised to know, as I was, a single battery life will provide roughly 50,000 hours on a mid-range setting.

I can't imagine how all the electronic components are housed around the unit, but they've done an amazing job making the little Trace as small and user-friendly as possible. On each side are two rubber finger pads, identified by + (left) and - (right). The plus button turns on the unit and a three-second hold shuts it down. Additionally, there's an inbuilt motion detector which activates 'shake-awake'



Battery is removed using the supplied tool.



After work western hunting with the Rossi and ZT reflex sight.



Above: The Trace reflex sight makes a handy addition to any fast-wielding pig rifle; Several pigs have fallen to the lever and Trace H.A.L.O. combination.



Reflex action



Red dot shown using our own taxidermy for example.

and 'auto-sleep' functions to help preserve battery life even further.

Obviously the symbols representing plus or minus enable exactly that for the 10 brightness settings and, as brightness increases, so does (rather noticeably) the red dot reticle. The specs say the reticle's worth 3MOA, though that would be dependent on which brightness level was selected. As is often the case however, ambient light plays a major role in brightness selection and we found level five suitable for our conditions. Interestingly, ZeroTech mentions

the H.A.L.O. system is compatible with night-vision equipment though sadly I didn't have any at my disposal.

Having already enjoyed substantial success using the Rossi's open sights, my son Carl (who recently acquired the rifle) took some convincing to fit the alternate optic. The sweetener came in me supplying the Picatinny rail and, once fitted, we were keen to test it. Sighting in was a breeze and at 50m each click of 1.5MOA had the little Puma shooting surprisingly straight in no time. Although not needed, both windage and elevation dials allow for a whopping 80MOA of adjustment, the dials sitting flush and clearly labelled at their usual places on the sights. They turned easily with the supplied flat-blade tool and each click felt firm during the zeroing process.

Zeroing took place on a work trip out west where the owner had granted us permission to hunt after hours. Numerous water holes provided plenty of opportunity and although adequately



Elevation and windage adjusted easily using the supplied tool.

armed, Carl found no wild pigs within the acceptable engagement range of 30-50m for the .357 Magnum.

Fortunately the properties back home gave us the chance we'd been seeking and, for the local feral population, it wasn't good news. On one afternoon armed with the lever and ZT sight, success arrived for Carl while hunting a confined area of creek line. The long grassy banks swayed to a favourable breeze until, on approach, it began dancing in all directions as the pigs caught his scent and began to scatter.

Shirking all responsibility to usher the main mob away, two larger sows and a boar fled in a different direction to save their own hides, not such a smart move as it turned out. As they showed themselves the .357 Magnum dropped all three cleanly, two close together and the third a little further on.

Conclusion

It's rewarding when a product demonstrates its worth out field, especially after first impressions are positive. This compact reflex sight mounted to our .357 Magnum lever proved a lethal combination for close-quarters shooting, while our practical field test results should be evidence enough for anyone considering a red dot sight such as the Trace H.A.L.O.

Carl and I both found the 28mm aspherical lens provided exceptional field of view, while the multi-coated optics ensured a crisp target image. The red dot enabled rapid acquisition at various distances and, for those reasons, we reckon the Trace is worth every bit of its \$499 price tag (at time of writing). Boosting customer confidence even further is ZeroTech's trademark 'any owner, any problem' lifetime guarantee. More at tsaoutdoors.com.au



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Same name, new face

Rod Pascoe on a fresh start for Magnum Sports

One of New South Wales' longest-established and respected firearms businesses, Magnum Sports, is under new management. Dealer and director Aubrey Sonnenberg, decorated shooter and well-known importer of specialised firearms and accessories, will manage the new enterprise from its Roseville headquarters in Sydney's northern suburbs.

He and his long-time shooting buddy and owner of the business at the time, Andrew Peter, sat down for a get-together late last year and the conversation led to a discussion about a new direction for the venture. Sonnenberg recalls the exchange being along the lines of: "Andrew said: I think I'm going to sell the business, to which I replied: How can I help?" To cut a long story short, Aubrey walked away from that meeting as new owner of Magnum Sports.

Following their friendly chat the transition was quick. By December a new dealers' licence was issued and on February 8 this year the (new) doors opened. The transition included the whole business as a going concern with stock, goodwill, building and staff and while the store itself isn't large, there's still a lot of activity and noticeable throughput of product.

Staff are on the phone constantly taking orders and organising shipping while also dealing with walk-in customers. "We have a facility here which, per square metre, probably outperforms any gun shop, certainly in Australia, in terms of turnover," Sonnenberg told *Australian Shooter*. "As far as our customers are concerned they'll see little change initially, same shop, same staff, same stock, same prices but there is a small change to the brand's logo."



New beginning: Aubrey Sonnenberg (left) with shop manager Michael Streeter.

Not forgetting the primary role of the gun shop, Sonnenberg is realistic about the value of the shop-front. "We're a service centre and, as a dealer, we need the premises for face-to-face transactions such as firearms exchanges and transfers. We have to physically handle ammunition, powder and primers, things that can't be done any other way, and further to that we're a display area for our products," he said.

As well as recognising the value of face-to-face service, he sees the future through the ever-expanding online trade. "Direct mailing is important to us as we have a very large mailing list and receive lots of feedback from people as to what they're interested in," he said. "We want to become the home of precision reloading and precision long-range. We've a massive catalogue, possibly one of the biggest online, and can fulfill customers' requests from our storage facilities and shop and dispatch to them directly and quickly."

One of the ways the new business wants to differentiate itself from similar dealerships is to use Sonnenberg's vast experience and contacts to offer a special service to Australian shooters, particularly in the specialised long-range and precision areas. He hopes his background as a target

shooter, representing Australia in Service shooting and Full Bore rifle, will add value to the business.

"I think in the target shooting area we can do more by sourcing the more exotic things which aren't always readily available," he explains. "As part of Impact Sports Australia, the new identity trading as Magnum Sports, we also have a working collaboration with Impact Sports New Zealand and Impact Sports USA, so what we're looking to do is offer products which are difficult to find."

"I'm talking about the things which aren't being stocked by suppliers, some of the more unusual things mainly from the US and Europe. That way we can augment our services for target shooters, large volume shooters and specialist imports which is a little bit new and a little bit different but nevertheless important."

Having said that, Sonnenberg claims the relationship with the Australian industry is a very healthy one and they've all been encouraging. "The firearms industry, importers and distributors want to see Magnum Sports succeed and have been amazingly supportive during the transition." ●

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Matthew Godson enjoys
electronic hearing protection

Earmor bring you the latest in earmuff technology providing high-performance active hearing protection with Bluetooth capability. The new integrated chip in their M300T uses advanced digital signal processing technology to produce optimised noise cancellation and clear audio. They've been designed for tactical use in military, law enforcement, hunting and shooting, offering effective noise reduction, advanced communication features and enhanced situational awareness, making them an ideal choice for both hunters and shooters on the range.

In terms of build quality the Earmor M300T stand out with their ergonomic and user-friendly design, the slim earcups being lightweight and comfortable when wearing for extended periods, while the compact design enhances visual appeal for those who

don't like bulky earmuffs. Gel earpads and a textured and adjustable headband make for superior comfort when wearing them for many hours, while intuitive control features with a multi-functional button and rotary control make for ease of operation.

But the most important feature in any earmuff is noise reduction and active hearing protection. The M300T are engineered to safeguard your hearing while maintaining situational awareness and their noise suppression ability is first class. Sounds exceeding 82dB are reduced in less than one millisecond, effectively protecting the user against hazardous noise levels from firearms and machinery. At the range during testing, constant fire from various calibres on the line was suppressed to an extremely comfortable level, well below noise which could lead to hearing impairment.

The sound amplification feature clearly picks up surrounding sounds and, if hunting, you can effectively maintain situational awareness wearing the M300Ts. Multiple modes including ambient/clear and voice/focus are there for your changing needs, be that for maintaining conversations at the range or slowly moving through the bush listening for game. Three modes allow for enhancing low-level sounds, ensuring clear communication and awareness of ambient noise around you. With precise directional noise detection you'll have no problem identifying any sound source and, while testing one night, I could easily pinpoint mosquitos flying around me.

The headset is powered by two AAA batteries offering several hours of continuous use and with built-in Bluetooth 5.4, the M300T allow for seamless connectivity. Wireless connection means you can easily pair with your smartphone to receive calls and listen to music and, while making a test call, I had crystal-clear call quality with excellent clarity.

In operation the multiple function key lets you choose which mode you need with a long press. After Bluetooth connection to a smartphone, simply open the relevant app and start enjoying your playlist, while pressing the function key swiftly lets you play, pause or skip to the next track. You can also answer an incoming call, end the call or reject it with a press of the key, while the simplicity of a rotating power and volume adjustment button makes the headset quick to respond to your needs.

Earmor M300T electronic Bluetooth earmuffs are a versatile and dependable choice for target shooters and hunters or for protection in other high-noise environments. They combine advanced noise reduction, Bluetooth connectivity and a comfortable, user-friendly design. With a Noise Reduction Rating (NRR) of 22dB, they deliver excellent hearing protection with communication capability. Whether at the range or in the field, the M300T provide the protection and performance you'll need for years to come. They're available in three colour choices of coyote brown, tactical bland and foliage green and have an RRP of \$149. More at protactical.com.au





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A CUT ABOVE

Senior correspondent **John Dunn** profiles a one-off knifemaker

About the middle of last year a query came down the pike, asking me if I'd be interested in taking a look at a couple of San Mai knives NT master knifemaker Steve Sunk was putting together. At that stage I only had a vague idea what San Mai meant, but with two of Steve's Damascus knives already in my collection I was sure they'd be interesting. That certainly proved to be the case.

Though I've never met the man, I knew of Steve through a couple of different avenues. Back in the days when I was buying and selling single-shot rifles, I had some dealings with him. We also have a mutual friend in Pete Spurgin, another mad single-shot collector, and it was through him I learned of Steve's knifemaking. His work has gone all round the world with visiting servicemen and women, travelling hunters, tourists and in special-order work for esteemed companies such as Rigby. To say his knives are good is like acknowledging cricketer Glen Maxwell can bat a bit. It really is that self-evident.

Steve began making knives in 1986 using old files as stock material, while these days they're made from 440C stainless, D2, carbon steels and San Mai. He also makes his own Damascus steel from powdered metal on a restored power hammer, which takes all the hard work out of the hammering that's an integral part of Damascus steel production. For all of that he considers knife-making a hobby, albeit one that's grown in line with his recognised expertise.

He's a member of the Australian Knifemakers Guild and professionally was a senior lecturer in cooking at Charles Darwin University's Palmerston Campus. In 2010 he was awarded an A.O.M. for his work around nutrition in Aboriginal communities and is co-author of *Walkabout Chef*.

San Mai steel

According to my research, San Mai steel originated in Japan around 1300AD. Generally it consists of three layers, being a hard inner core fused with a jacket of softer steel on either side. The core retains a

sharp edge which holds its shape well, while the outer layers add a little bulk and make the steel more durable and rust-resistant.

To make a billet the component pieces of steel are stacked, edge-welded together to keep them in place, then fused together at welding heat and hammer-drawn out to the required thickness. Unlike Damascus the steel doesn't need to be folded over again and again to create the pattern on the blade. If Damascus is used for the outer layers of the San Mai as it should be, the pattern's already there.

During the forging process it's essential the hard inner core remains central to the softer outside layers on either side. This is

Above: Spines showing the laminated structure of San Mai steel. The inner layer is VG10 steel, the outer stainless-steel Damascus. The wavy edge on the smaller blade is part of the pattern created by the forging process.



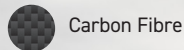
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A cut above

achieved by striking the steel with an even number of blows on each side as it passes under the hammer during the drawing process. On the knives sent to me, a dark central line was visible along the spine of each blade, indicating proper care had been taken during the forging process. This was further verified by a bright cutting edge below the Damascus patterns on the face of each blade.

Steve's San Mai knives

These have a core of VG10 steel with the outer layers made of J2 and 904 stainless steel Damascus. The review knives each have a different blade length, one 73mm and the other 115mm, both having what I'd call a multi-purpose shape, very much alike



Roger Matthews with a small Steve Sunk San Mai knife he uses for processing crocodiles. Photo courtesy R. Matthews



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A cut above



San Mai knives as they arrived. The pattern on the face of the blades is unique to each knife.

with a slight drop point. Each has a different textured pattern on its faces, a nice touch that's both tactile and decorative and truly makes them unique.

Both blades have a partial tang glued into the handle, the larger knife with a stainless-steel bolster while the smaller one's is made from stainless Damascus. Both have handles made from crocodile femurs which I initially thought looked a little primitive. Despite that, each knife sits remarkably well in the hand and is comfortable to use, the femur joint acting as a hand-stop at the back of the handle, the bone retaining its natural patina. At the front the bone's ground down to match the size and shape of the bolster/finger guard.

The crocodile femurs come from animals legally culled under a government approved conservation programme. Each knife comes with a numbered tag issued by the Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory which verifies the bones' origins. Inside each tag is a script that reads: *'Crocodiles are living remnants of a group of reptiles that roamed the Earth during the 'Dinosaur Age.' In 1971 all crocodiles in the Northern Territory became protected by law and since then have recovered substantially from previously uncontrolled exploitation. The product you have purchased has been derived from a carefully researched management program designed to ensure the long-term conservation of crocodiles.'*

Other handle materials Steve uses include buffalo horn (of course), stag antler and camel bone, as apparently most wooden

handles don't last too well in the heat and humidity of the NT. Crocodile femurs come from the Triple C Crocodile Catching Company. This enterprise is owned and run by Roger Matthews, a long-term Territorian who grew up at Warilla on the south coast of NSW, about five kilometres from where I spent my childhood at Oak Flats. Sometimes it really is a small world.

Roger has lived in the NT since 1985 and worked with crocodiles since '89. These days he's a licenced freelance hunter who deals with problem crocs on cattle stations and mining leases across the Territory. The animals he targets are trapped or taken with a harpoon from a small boat then humanely put down with a firearm. Most are larger animals more than four metres long and wherever possible their skins, skulls, meat (for pet food) and leg bones are used rather than left to rot.

Though he makes a living from crocodiles, Roger has no delusions about the animals, knows what they're capable of and respects them accordingly. Having talked to him about his work, I rather doubt he takes any great pleasure in putting them down, not an uncommon attitude for a true hunter to have regardless of what our detractors like to believe.

Not surprisingly, Roger uses Steve's San Mai knives for processing and has nothing but praise for the way they work and hold an edge. From someone who processes around 250 wild-caught crocodiles a year as well as buffalo, that's no small recommendation. The workout I gave them pales into

insignificance alongside provenance like that, though I can report they also work and handle well on smaller game and fish.

Though simple in construction, there's a level of complexity in their making that goes way beyond the ordinary. The forging of the steel itself is an art form and mating of the finished blade with an exotic handle material such as crocodile femur provides a frontier connection which may well be unique. A leather sheath is provided for each knife.

Territorians have long been noted for their 'can do' attitude to life, with both Steve's knives and Roger's crocodile work being good examples of what's achievable by those prepared to think outside the square (we should be so lucky). For anyone interested in adding one of Steve's San Mai knives to their kit or collection, he can be contacted by email at s_sunk@bigpond.com



Each knife has a numbered tag from the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission, verifying the handle material was legally taken as part of an ongoing crocodile management programme.

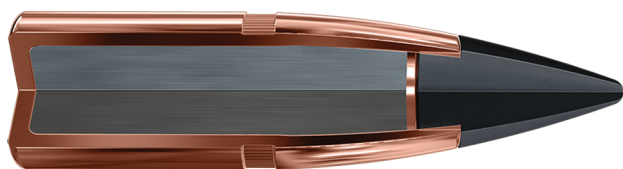


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SIFA



Brothers in arms

Leon Wright conducts
some good pest control
with his grandsons

School holidays in our family are greeted with mixed reactions. The kids are happy to have a break from their studies, nana delighted with grandchildren to dote on while for me, the holidays are met with some trepidation as I'm often on hunting duties. In the past with one grandson in tow things progress smoothly, but this time it was going to be two. To make things a little more complicated, instead of taking them both rabbit hunting I was taking Hamish for rabbits and William for deer.

Hamish's arrival had me a little worried as with the amount of gear he was unloading I thought he might be moving in, though my wife reassured me it was only there for rabbit hunting. With all the necessary phone calls made to obtain permission, we were on our way. The properties we were going to hunt were only 90 minutes away but I still got that age old question: "How far is it Pa?"

On arrival it didn't take long to set up camp in our usual spot among pine trees and rabbit burrows. Hamish was told the campfire and gate opening were to be his priorities and with that he set about gathering firewood. He remembered what I told him about taking kindling from dead standing trees as dead timber wouldn't hold water and we were expecting a shower or two.

We had along three firearms in a Savage 17HMR with thumbhole stock, a CZ .22 rimfire also with thumbhole stock and a Yildiz 410 under-and-over for Hamish to use under supervision. Having had previous instruction in safe firearm handling, Hamish under fellow hunter Blake's directions went through a quick refresher course to convince me he'd the basics under control and was safe to take hunting.

Leon and grandson Hamish with a bag of game mostly taken with the 410.







Hamish was happy to be in charge of campfire duties; Grandson William with a young sambar stag that fell to the Ruger .300 Win Mag.

Surprisingly there weren't too many rabbits about, though the tally in the back of the ute slowly started to climb as the night progressed. Instead of finding them scattered all over, as was the norm, this time we were seeing them in small clusters not too far from a warren. I was keen to give the 410 a bit of a workout and while I didn't extend the range of shots beyond 30m, the little gun was giving a good account of itself.

In one open paddock the spotlight picked up several hares hopping about, as Blake fired at one which stopped long enough for him to line it up. Hares have the annoying habit of always being on the move and these were doing just that. I got out of the ute and went to investigate with Hamish, carrying the broken 410 and with Blake's guidance found the hare unharmed in a thick patch of grass.

At 30m it was time for Hamish to try his luck, so I loaded the 410 and handed it to him while pointing out the target. At first he was hesitant so I asked what the problem was. "I'm scared I'll miss," he whispered. I said: "Mate, I've yet to meet the hunter who hasn't missed and that includes me," and with that he closed the gun and took the hare as cleanly as a seasoned pro. As the night wore on we slowly added to our tally, though the highlight was a fox I took at full stretch with No.5 shot while standing in the back of the ute to clear high grass.

Our couple of days away passed too quickly as I dropped a happy grandson at home and prepared to pick up the next one to go deer hunting. As Hamish staggered inside under the weight of his camping gear and stories of rabbit hunting, his brother William was coming the other way, equally loaded.

The drive to the high country passed quickly and before long we'd set up camp on the leeseide of a hill out the wind. We decided to forgo the tent and rolled our swags out under a tarp, before Will and I headed to a nearby paddock to check for sign of sambar grazing on the thick clover. Engrossed in the search I didn't notice the three wild dogs until Will alerted me to their presence and, as they hadn't detected us, we quietly backtracked to collect the rifle and electronic caller.

By the time we returned the dogs were gone though I was sure they were youngsters, so we'd a good chance of luring them back. The call sounded good for a couple of minutes until on the third attempt the batteries died. Typical! So I decided to howl them up and soon enough three dogs came trotting back down the opposite hillside. I knocked the first one over which sent the others scurrying behind a series of bushes.

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Brothers in arms



The dog was quick to make itself at home when Blake wasn't looking.



The 410 is a good shotgun for beginners; The Savage 17HMR is perfect when ranges extend further than the usual .22 rimfire.

We sat watching for any movement that might betray them and after 10 minutes another one started trotting away from us on a game trail. A loud shout had the desired effect and as the dog stopped to look around, a 180-grain projectile from the Ruger .300 Win Mag flattened it. There was no doubt in my mind these were the predators I'd seen previously and I was equally sure our farmer friend would be pleased they were gone.

When we returned to camp, my mate Greg had arrived to help us set up the blind before dark. Making sure the rifle, night vision and everything we needed was in order, we headed to the paddock where roos were already down and feeding. With Will and I set up, Greg left us to it and headed back to camp.

Deer usually wander into the paddock an hour after dark, though a few weeks earlier I'd scored five sambar in a couple of hours and while this may seem quite a few, at one stage we had about 20 feeding around us. At 8.30 we were about to call it quits until a lone sambar appeared from the tree line. By the time I had the night vision set up and rifle on the shooting sticks the deer was gone, until a quick scan with the handheld thermal identified six others feeding about 75m away.

A stag went down to the first shot and our decision to sit in the blind for a while longer paid dividends as half a dozen more appeared further down the paddock. Too far to shoot from the blind we decided to go straight at them, the plan being if we got close enough Will was to take a standing

shot and, if they headed off, I'd handle it. All was going well with us stopping every dozen steps or so to check things through the thermal. We closed to within 100m before a big hind suspected all was not well and started honking.

Yet the others kept feeding so we tried our luck and pushed on as the hind kept honking. At 50m all heads were up so we knelt down and set Will up for the shot. Their nerves finally breaking, the deer headed off so Will handed me the rifle and, with time for just one shot, I gave a spiker a bit of lead and fired. Down it went as I quickly reloaded but the rest were already in thick cover. Leaving the two where they fell, we walked back to camp for a cup of tea before field dressing the deer.

We planned on sitting in the blind for a couple of hours the following night but the weather closed in so we broke camp, though there will be other opportunities for Will without a doubt. With seven grandsons and four granddaughters I dare say I'll have a lot more company on school holiday hunting trips in the years ahead. ●



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 **SCAN ME**

Steady as she goes

Joseph Nugent on a versatile shooting aid

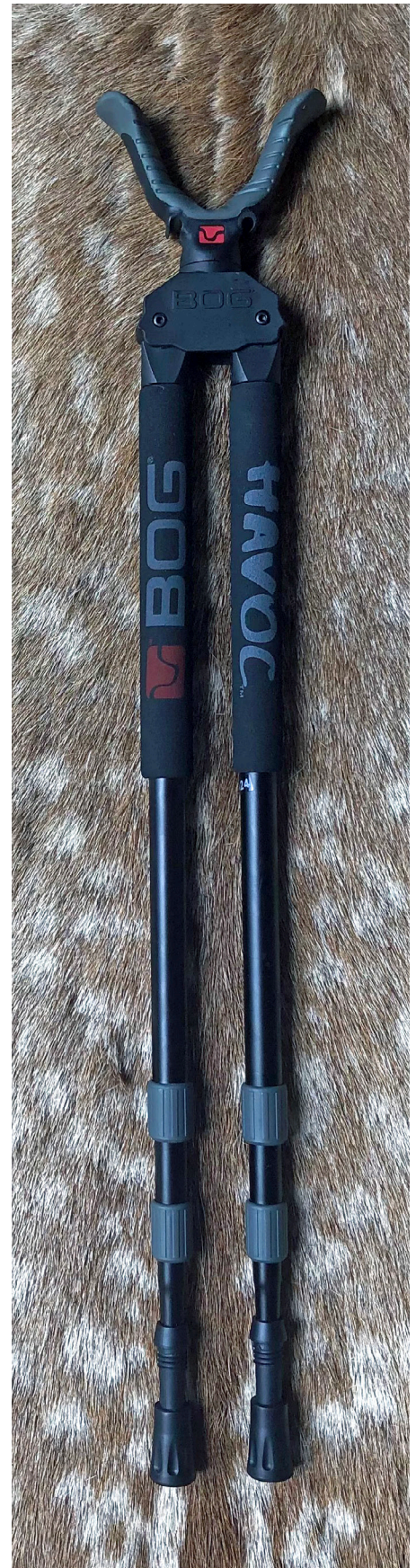
One of several important factors to any successful shot is the position and hold from which it's released. Like many hunters, for much of my shooting career I opted to go without a portable shooting system, rather practicing from unsupported positions or using nearby trees and stumps as improvised rests. To this day, the majority of my shots in the field are still unsupported or from a makeshift rest.

In all honesty it's quite rare for a hunting situation to allow for the use of a bipod, and my recent need for a portable shooting system came about after buying a thermal scope. In order to constantly scan my surroundings throughout the duration of a hunt and accurately engage targets at night, I needed to support my rifle in a rest.

The style of hunting I generally conduct with thermal optics involves controlling

pests and predators on rural properties on foot. As such, I needed a highly portable shooting rest which would allow me to set up from a sitting, kneeling and standing position quickly and easily. I spent quite some time visiting gun shops and browsing online before making my decision, and soon discovered it was harder than I thought to find a product which would service my specific needs.

A lot of companies are moving away from selling typical standing bipods and safari sticks, preferring to offer more sophisticated systems. Often in a tripod platform they can be quite expensive and far less portable than a simple bipod. On the other hand some outlets sell monopods, something I found not quite fit for purpose as they lack adjustment for alternative positions and aren't as stable as a bipod.



The BOG Havoc bipod.



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Steady as she goes



Joseph demonstrates the versatility of the BOG Havoc in standing, kneeling and sitting position.

Eventually I stumbled across the Havoc bipod by BOG, a US-based hunting accessory firm which specialises in portable shooting rests. They offer a wide variety of products which differ in style and sophistication, the most advanced being their line of Deathgrip tripods which feature a mounting system with a rubberised clamp-style device.

All tripods in this range vary in style and construction and cater to different uses and budgets. In my case I wasn't in the market for a tripod, as they seemed a little too cumbersome and required more set-up time compared to a two-legged option. The BOG Havoc is their bipod option, by far the most versatile product they sell and suits my needs perfectly.

The Havoc features telescopic legs capable of adjusting from 50cm to about 125cm, 360 degrees of swivel and weighs just 500 grams. Being such a lightweight device it's easy to carry in the field or keep in a backpack, though its most important feature is the ability to adjust the legs, an issue I often encountered when searching for an adequate bipod.

Some other options on the market did feature adjustable legs but were more of a 'tent-pole' design, meaning they have the ability to fold out to two or three pre-designated heights yet can't be moved between these levels. Being able to adjust the legs to any desired height allows me to use the device from a sitting, kneeling or standing position. I've found this most useful when sitting for extended periods calling predators and when standing, to support my rifle while scanning a paddock.

All BOG products are available on their website boghunt.com, but be aware prices are in US dollars and need to be converted prior to purchase. I chose to buy mine from a Queensland bricks and mortar store, though unfortunately they didn't have any in stock. However, it was quick and easy to have it back ordered and sent to my home and with postage the Havoc cost \$120 and arrived in three weeks.

I wasted no time taking the bipod out in the field and have used it most in pest control. It's perfect to set up in a sitting position while working a predator caller and, when used with my thermal scope at night, provides a stable platform to scan the landscape and an excellent rest when engaging targets at practical shooting distances. In summary, the BOG Havoc is an excellent piece of equipment, being versatile and has fulfilled my specific needs as required. It has performed as advertised and provided me with a fit for purpose solution to an everyday shooting situation. ●

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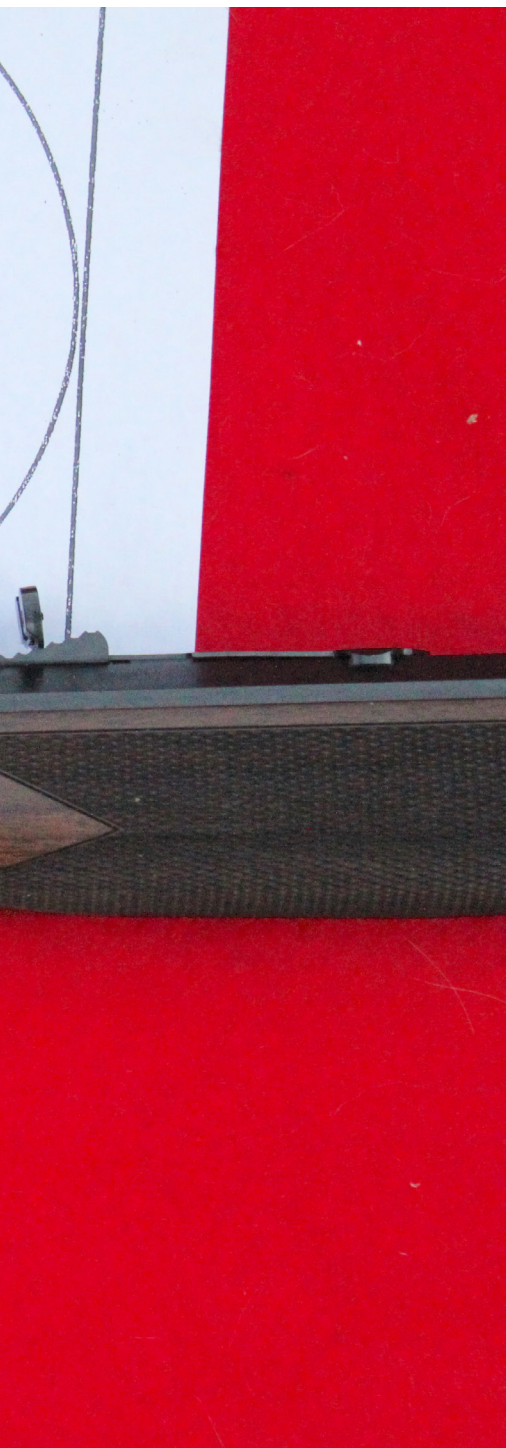
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TRIED AND



TESTED

Jim Dickson on
the 45-70 Henry
lever-action



Of all the 45-70 lever-action rifles made today I consider this version of the octagon barrel Henry the best for several reasons. The workmanship, fit and finish is just a little better than the rest which translates into total reliability. Lever-actions are a simple design but must be as carefully timed at the factory as a revolver. The rifle is powerful yet with very little recoil and, even more importantly, is the steadiest to hold on target of all the currently made 45-70 lever-actions.

The value of being able to shoot tight groups offhand at 100 yards with the Henry, instead of just being able to keep your shots in a 10" circle with its rivals, can't be overstated. Remember, a gun that'll shoot tight groups from a benchrest may not hold still enough for accurate off-hand shooting. Not all guns lend themselves to offhand shooting but this one does.

Ever since the 45-70 was first chambered in the Marlin lever-action of 1881, the combination of that cartridge and the fast-firing lever-action rifle has been a hit. Winchester unveiled theirs in 1886 and today the modern versions of the Marlin and Winchester rifles are the only two choices. The Marlin action has the advantage of a solid top receiver, enabling easy mounting of riflescopes along with a side ejection, which avoids hot brass going down your collar as can happen with the top-ejecting Winchester design. The Henry is of the Marlin type.

The 45-70 Henry is an accurate and easy-to-hit-with gun.

Rapid repeat shots endeared 45-70 lever-actions to generations of hunters, especially those facing dangerous game, as an Alaskan grizzly bear is just as threatening as an African cape buffalo in thick cover. The rapidity of firing a lever-action is the result of two things. The simple down and up of the operating lever contrasts sharply with the far slower lift up, pull back, shove forward then turn down of a bolt-action rifle. Furthermore, the long bolt throw of a bolt-action coupled with the short factory stocks means most shooters drop the rifle from their shoulder when working the bolt to protect their eyes.

The Henry has a little higher standard of workmanship than its competitors, which is extremely important as lever-action rifles may be simple in design but must be as carefully timed as any revolver. If the magazine spring is too strong and the relationship between the cam surfaces of the lever and cartridge carrier aren't just right, you can end up with a round fed into the carrier and another sticking out the magazine tube, locking the action open. You can clear this only by unscrewing the magazine cap and dumping the ammo, something I've experienced in brand new guns from famous names but never a Henry.

The Henry also features an easy loading option. There's the standard King's patent loading gate in the side of the receiver, though the magazine tube features a cutout which allows cartridges to be more easily loaded by simply dropping them in the magazine tube when the end cap is unscrewed and pulled out.

The 22" octagon barrel brings the overall weight to around 3.6kg, with the extra

Tried and tested



From Top: Short bolt throw of the lever-action means the shooter doesn't take their eye off the target as many do with a bolt-action;

The Henry is unique in allowing direct loading of cartridges by unscrewing the end of the magazine tube and withdrawing it to open the loading port;

The receiver is already drilled and tapped for a Weaver 63B scope mount;

The only safety is the hammer block which prevents the rifle from firing unless the trigger is pulled.

weight being all in the barrel which makes the rifle steadier to hold. Overall length is 41" and magazine capacity is four rounds with another one in the chamber. Sights are the traditional lever-action of a semi-buckhorn rear with diamond insert and a brass-bead front sight. The rifle comes already drilled and tapped for a Weaver 63B scope mount.

The Henry has a hammer block safety which insures the gun won't fire unless the trigger is pulled. You can carry it hammer

down or safely carry it cocked when navigating dangerous game habitat, a feature which makes the Henry a good choice in that scenario.

The 45-70 cartridge is another reason for the effectiveness of this rifle. Despite being an 1873 round, the standard Remington 405-grain load has more 'Taylor knock-out' value at 300 yards than the 180-grain 30-06 has at the muzzle! The 45-70 has 34.3 at the muzzle and 25.7 at 300 yards, compared to the 30-06s 20.8 at the muzzle and 15.7 at 300 yards. While both have roughly the same kick in guns of similar weight, felt recoil of the slower 45-70 is far less.

The standard 45-70 load transmits energy better into thin targets like deer, though there are stronger loads for those who want more power to tackle big game. Yet before moving up in power and recoil, it's worth noting Alaskan hunters found the standard 45-70 load stops a charging grizzly bear just as effectively as a .375 H&H magnum and fires repeat shots faster with less recoil. Remington also makes a 405-grain Core-Lokt jacketed bullet at 1600fps with a Taylor knock-out factor of 42.39, which tops the 40.1 of the 300-grain .375 H&H.

For those after a flat-shooting high velocity round there's Hornady's LEVERevolution 325-grain FTX. This has

The right of the 45-70 Henry shows the traditional King's patent loading gate that's been a fixture on lever-actions since 1866, while the left of the 45-70 Henry shows the solid case-hardened steel receiver to best advantage.

a soft plastic ballistic tip which enables a more aerodynamic pointed bullet to be safely loaded in a tubular magazine, where the soft plastic point can't set off the primer of the cartridge in front of it. This round travels at 2050fps with a Taylor knock-out factor of 43.59 and all these loads functioned perfectly in the Henry.

For fans of the flattest shooting cartridges I should point out 19th century hunters learned to estimate range accurately and adjusted their shots accordingly. Today's hunters have laser rangefinders so what's the problem? The 45-70 may not have a modern flat trajectory but it was and is extremely accurate at long range.

I still have a 45-70 National Match round the US Army loaded in the 1920s for 1000-yard matches, when the old Trapdoor Springfields were still successfully competing with Krag and Springfield rifles. The 45-70 is an old round but still a popular one and the octagon barrel, case-hardened steel-frame Henry is perhaps the best hunting rifle made for it. ●



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Hang 'em high!

Derek Nugent on the advantages
of Sicut's butchering kit

I was browsing a secondhand bookshop when an interesting volume caught my eye. The book's entitled *The Lost Skills of Humanity* and looks at those arts, skills and trades which are either in decline or completely gone from our repertoire of essential 'life skills'. Now I've always been an ardent admirer of those talented folk who can take a piece of wood, a length of metal, a gathering of glass or a blank canvas and, with skill and vision, produce either a functional tool, a thing of beauty or both.

With this in mind I even gave blacksmithing a go and while I enjoyed the experience, let's just say enthusiasm clearly outweighed skill. Yet as I watched the farrier conducting the course, a man with some 60 years' experience, I was amazed at the level of skill he was so nonchalantly displaying and equally aghast at the thought of such skills eventually disappearing.

It confirmed my belief that many of the skills and traditions of our forebears, far from being irrelevant and outdated, are in

fact harbingers of our humanity and therefore well worth the effort of keeping alive. One such tradition, from the hunter's point of view, is the 'hunter-gatherer' mentality and skill set which facilitates it.

Hail the hunter-gatherer

It's a fact that in our modern world we take food security for granted and, when the supply chain breaks down or is disrupted, all manner of panic ensues. Just consider what happened to supermarket shelves during Covid lockdowns and more recently in Queensland courtesy of Cyclone Alfred.

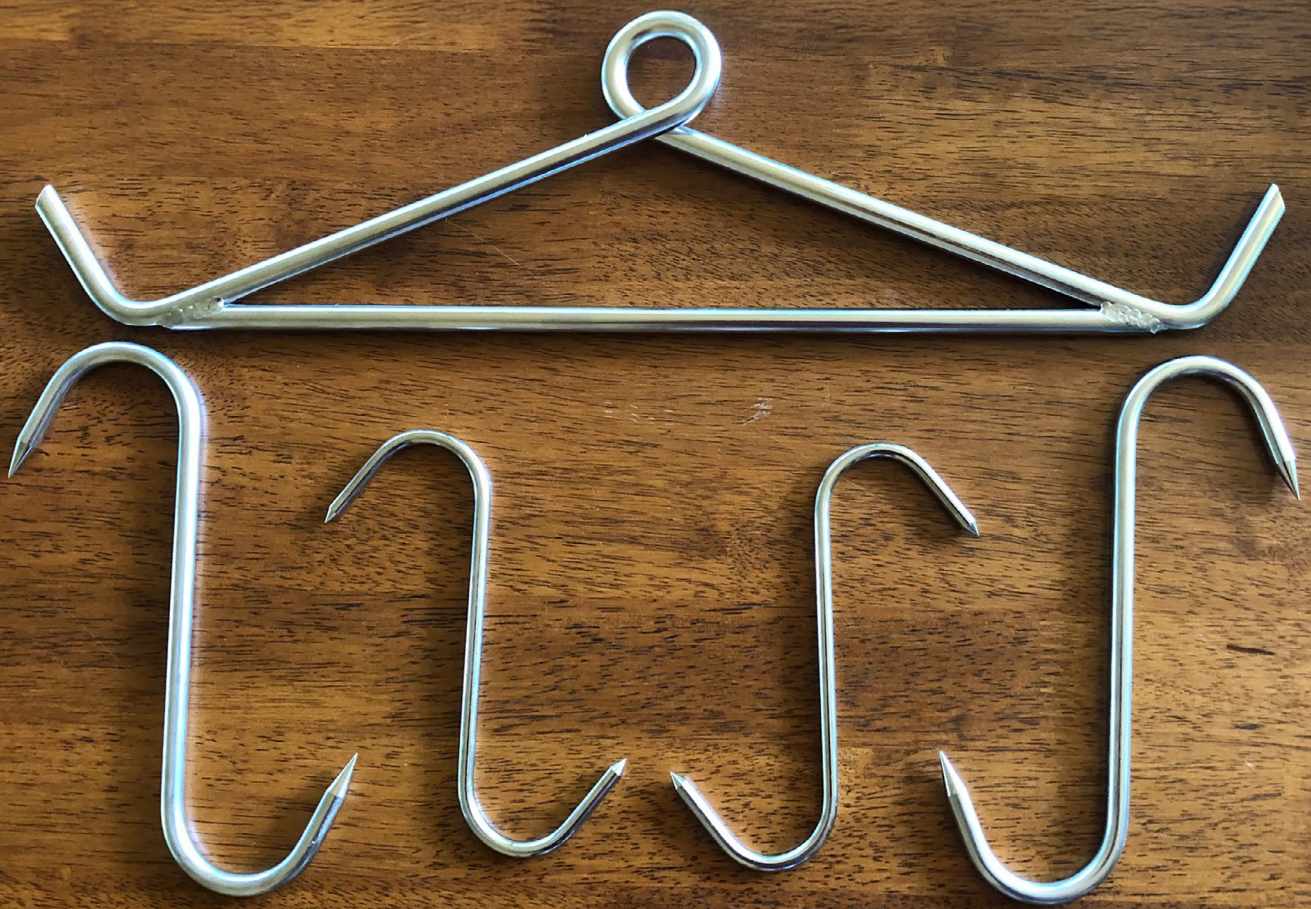
In an age where our food is presented conveniently and neatly portioned and packaged in a bewildering variety, large segments of society are divorced from the processes associated with filling their trolleys, particularly with respect to meat. For most of us it's a staple and the reality is animals die to provide it. My position is quite simple: I eat what I shoot (deer) and compared to beef, lamb or pork, the venison I harvest is leaner with a finer texture.

It's higher in moisture and protein, contains a more diverse range of amino acids and is lower in calories, cholesterol and fat. In short it's very good for you. I also habitually share the spoils of a hunt with up to five other families. I find it refreshing to be part of a pragmatic community of likeminded individuals who embrace that hunter-gatherer ethos, a modern echo of a human tradition which sustained development of our species for eons.

Aussie Outback Supplies

One company which understands and supports the needs of the game meat harvester is Aussie Outback Supplies, a Perth-based family business long associated with a range of quality products serving the needs of the outdoors person, miner, farmer and 4WD enthusiast. In this respect they're purveyors of an extensive range of equipment which aptly serves the needs of any hunter seeking to 'bring home the bacon' so to speak.

Recently *Australian Shooter* was given the



Sicut 45cm SS gambrel
and meat hooks as
provided for review.

Hang 'em high!



chance to field test part of the Sicut range of butchering implements in the form of a gambrel, meat hooks and four-piece knife package. By way of a brief summary all were admirably fit for purpose, performed well in the field and augmented the venison harvesting process greatly. Anyone who routinely butchers their own fare be they farmer, hunter or fisher, would be more than happy to have them in their kit.

The review items represent just a fraction of the Sicut branded range which is actually owned by Aussie Outback Supplies and for which they are global distributors. Sicut (Spencer innovative cutlery) was developed by Keith Spencer in 1994 with 100 per cent emphasis on function. The product line is now designed and operated by Darren and Brayden Spencer, safely in the stewardship of a third generation of the family.

In addition to being thoughtfully designed and exceptionally well crafted from the highest grade materials, all prototypes are extensively field tested before being endorsed for production as Sicut-branded models. The range is Australian designed for Australian usage, a highly desirable pedigree.

Aussie Outback Supplies carries 117 Sicut products including sharpeners and knives, pigging/butchering/filleting kits, sheathes, canvas knife rolls and more novel items like stubby holders, bottle openers and caps. The full range is at aussieoutbacksupplies.com and taking time to assess their offerings before you splash your cash elsewhere is well worth the effort.

Butcher gambrel SS 45cm: RRP \$39.95

A gambrel is an implement used to elevate a slaughtered animal while keeping its legs separated (a coat hanger for meat). This is done to assist in gutting, skinning and sectioning of a carcass, all essential steps in game meat recovery whether afield or in camp. Its origin is Norman from 'gambier' meaning forked stick, hence 'gamberel' or 'gambereau', a pole or fork used by butchers.

The need for a gambrel is very much dependent on what (and how) you intend to harvest from the animal. Some hunters won't gut the beast, preferring to remove just the front legs, haunches and backstraps, though if you have a need to skin it or maximize meat recovery then a gambrel is essential kit. Elevating the carcass has definite advantages as it allows you to work

more safely and efficiently, particularly with respect to skinning and gralloching, as gravity becomes your friend when removing innards.

This cuts the risk of contaminating meat with gut or rectal contents and tainting by blood as it all naturally drains from the chest cavity. Similarly, working on an elevated carcass makes sectioning easier and keeps the meat free of any ground contaminants. It also helps cool the carcass and allows the trained eye to check for signs of disease, both in the carcass itself and internal organs.

The gambrel under review is the 45cm version, made using 10mm 304 stainless steel rod for maximum corrosion resistance. Since my crew hunts afoot we used manpower to hoist the deer, after first positioning the upright ends of the gambrel through two slots cut behind its knees. You need to affix your own chain or rope for this, though be aware there are practical limitations on the size of animal you can hoist by manpower alone.

Our initial attempt on a solid stag was beyond us, not an issue with quality or design of the gambrel, more an indicator of practical realities, yet when a more appropriate animal was taken (a yearling doe) things worked perfectly. Of course access to a quadbike, ATV or ute would render this factor moot, as would investing in a simple pulley system to use the mechanical advantage of a block and tackle-style arrangement if far from your chariot.

Although we had access to both 6" and 8" Sicut stainless steel butcher's hooks (two-pack \$9.96 and \$18.95 respectively), I wouldn't advocate their use with a gambrel in the field. I found they allowed for movement (swivel) when working on a whole carcass which I didn't find particularly appealing. Indeed, the carcass was more than adequately retained in position just using the 'hooks' built into the body of the gambrel itself.

We only used the butcher's hooks back at camp when we hung sectioned haunches on the gambrel for skinning and final processing. It was then they came into their own by allowing two of us to work simultaneously to get the job done, saving time and energy. In this situation the swivel afforded by the hooks actually allowed the haunches to be easily manhandled into a variety of positions at will, to facilitate ease of skinning and final butchering of each cut.



Sicut butchering kits offer no-nonsense tools ready for work.

Butcher knife pack (glow handle): RRP \$135

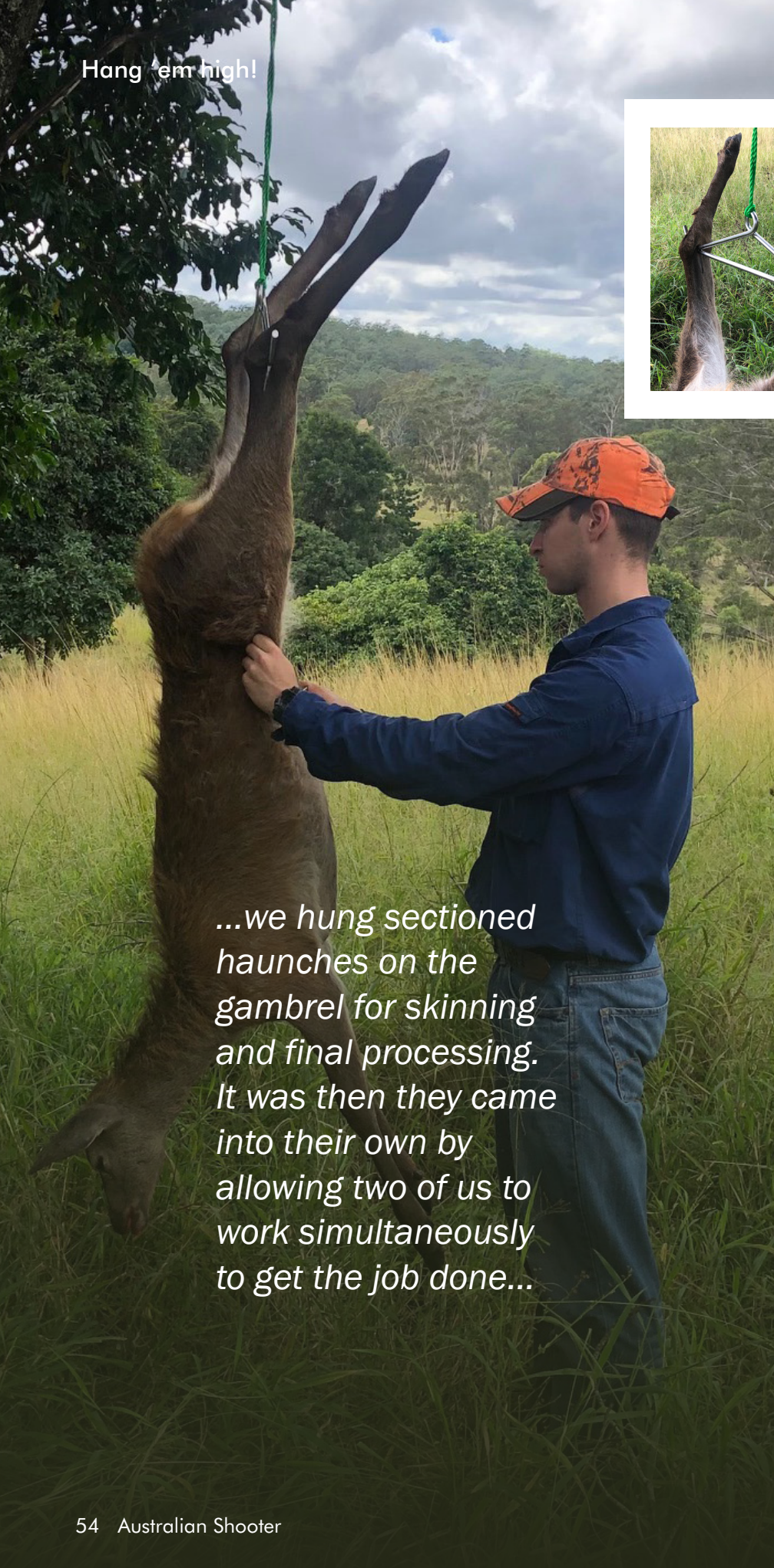
This is a four-piece offering of three knives and a sharpening steel, the knives made using a stain-free high carbon steel which equates to 55 Rockwell Hardness. They feature an individually ground and honed edge at a 25 degree angle, making them easy to sharpen and facilitate flexibility of use. They're made with an ergonomic, textured and slip-resistant polypropylene injected handle, for an impervious blade-to-handle seal which promotes hygiene and is easy to clean.

The handles withstand both high and low temperatures and glow in the dark, making them hard to miss in low light. The kit's neatly and securely presented in a wholly Australian-made wrap comprised of 14oz heavy-duty poly/cotton rip-stop canvas with a clear PVC front. This arrangement makes it simple to identify and select the appropriate blade, while alerting you immediately if you've misplaced one during the butchering process.

I found the kit a well-conceived and flexible arrangement, lightweight and well secured in the roll, so carrying it afield was

Left: Grassed but too big to be manhandled on to the gambrel; Sicut knives making short work of sectioning the stag.

Hang 'em high!



...we hung sectioned haunches on the gambrel for skinning and final processing. It was then they came into their own by allowing two of us to work simultaneously to get the job done...



A successful hunter ready to begin field processing of a yearling doe; The carcass was securely held by the gambrel alone so no need for butcher's hooks at this stage.

effortless. For test purposes we used it in-situ during hunts and for more precise butchering at camp and, in all honesty, I feel the latter scenario was more appropriate. The blades were sharp out the box, retained their edge and were easy to touch up with the steel provided. With three to choose from (6" skinner, 6" boner and 8" utility), there was no task which couldn't be efficiently and safely completed.

All three sat comfortably and securely in my hand, promoting confidence with the degree of grip as I worked. I appreciated the flat surface moulded into the handles just behind the spine of each blade, which made for a convenient thumb ramp and added control when making more delicate and precise cuts. My experience of this kit was one of complete satisfaction, a feeling echoed by hunting companions who assisted with several deer taken as pre-Roar meat animals.

Final analysis

I've been lucky enough to review a few Aussie Outback Supplies products during the past year or so. All have struck me as being quality items, well designed and of impeccable manufacture using quality materials and eminently fit for purpose. These Sicut butchery offerings are no exception as my experience was first rate with no hesitation in recommending them.

However if you do hunt on foot without ready access to a vehicle, you'd be wise to invest in a pulley system or be selective in terms of the size of animal harvested to extract the best from the gambrel. Collectively speaking these Sicut products are quality, no-frills tools designed to complement the efforts of farmers, hunters and fishers in perpetuating the ethos of the hunter-gatherer. ●

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REVIEWED ON PAGE 50



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Ammo checking made easy

Dick Eussen



It's frustrating to make a batch of ammo only to find they won't chamber on the range or, worse still, in the field on a hunting trip as once happened to me, when I found a batch of 100 newly-reloaded 30-30W ammunition wouldn't chamber. Back in my reloading den I carefully measured the faulty rounds and discovered they were slightly bulged on the shoulder, the reason being these were new shells and a tad longer than they should've been. When I crimped them the downward pressure bulged the case a little on the shoulder, just enough to stop them from chambering. Lesson: Check new case length as even manufacturers make mistakes.

I use two progressive presses for reloading rifles cases, a Redding T-7 and Lyman All-American. The dies are set up ready for use, thus hundreds of rounds are reloaded without checking if they chamber in the firearm, providing the same bullet and case is used. Only when reloading with new projectiles do I check to ensure rounds will chamber and set the die accordingly. I also measure fired cases and keep them trimmed to the correct length.

However, there are risks involved when chambering a loaded round and closing the bolt on it (because it's ready to fire) and remember Murphy's Law states things can

go wrong. A mate had a new round go off in his living room which left a hole in the floor, though thankfully no-one was hurt. The probable reason is he prefers a light trigger and this one failed to link when he closed the bolt. He reloads in his living room because he's nowhere else to do it.

Some shooters cycle their reloads through a rifle to make sure they feed properly, a tedious task with a certain element of danger involved. But there's an answer to this problem and that is to use a purpose Lyman Ammo Checker, a precision block gauge which allows reloaders to safely and positively check ammunition without having to chamber it in a firearm. The tools are machined from solid blocks of aircraft-grade aluminium and custom-cut to SAAMI minimum chamber dimensions.

Available in three block designs which cover most common handgun and rifle calibres, each block works for different calibres. For instance the Handgun Ammo Checker is used for checking the .380 Auto, 9mm Luger, .38 Super, .40 ACP, .45 ACP, .38/357, .44 Mag/Special and .45 Colt. The Small Rifle Ammo Checker works for .204 Ruger, .22 Hornet, .223 R, .22-250, .300 AAC Blackout and 7.62x39mm, while the Large Rifle Ammo Checker is cut for the .243W, .270W, .30-30W, .308W, .30-06 and

.300 WSM. Each calibre is clearly engraved on the blocks which are orange anodised, making them stand out and easy to locate on a busy reloading bench.

The blocks are simple to use, just drop a loaded round in the designated chamber of the Ammo Checker and if it fits it'll match the firearm chamber. I love mine as it makes it so easy to check new cases, projectiles, seating and crimping lengths when preparing new ammunition. I'm in the habit of testing a round from a batch every so often for quality control and consistency.

These devices can also be used to check new ammunition, for peace of mind the rounds will chamber during an important must-win match or extended hunting trip. The blocks are for shooters who reload for multiple calibres, rifles and handguns and are by far the easiest and cheapest method for measuring ammo. If the ammunition fits the block it'll chamber in any SAAMI-specified rifle or handgun.

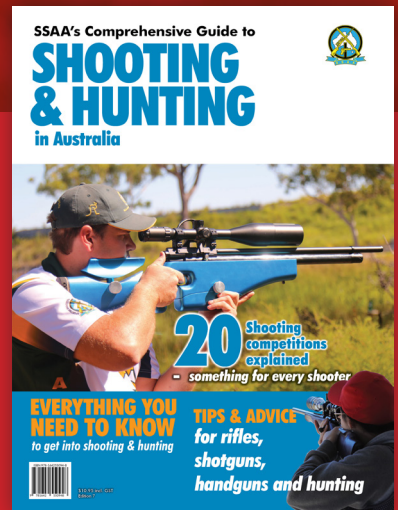
They do away with those single and expensive 'No/Go' and other measuring gauges when checking for overall length and exterior case thickness. My Handgun Ammo Checker cost \$86 from my local dealer. For more details visit lymanproducts.com

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Put it there!

Rod Pascoe visits a new custom holster-maker

A brand new start-up industry has appeared in suburban Canberra and can boast of being the first to manufacture Kydex holsters in Australia. What's Kydex? It's a polycarbonate material which can be easily moulded and shaped to snugly fit anything, including handguns and magazines. Not only is Airborne Customs the first to manufacture these products, they'll also make holsters and magazine pouches to fit some of the more unusual pistols, including vintage military and police firearms for the 'classic handgun' style of matches.

The business name is based on proprietor Sam Miller's former employment. He spent 10 years in the Australian Army as a rifleman, posted to the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR), which at one time was Australia's only light-infantry battalion with parachute-insertion capability. Inspired by his service, the Airborne Customs logo consists of stylised wings based on 3 RAR's parachute qualification badge, magpie wings and .45 ACP cartridge in the risers at the top of a parachute.

Sam and business partner Luc researched similar products made from the same materials and found they mainly originated in the US. Prices out of the US for holsters were high enough even before Covid and now, along with the exorbitant postage rates, an American-made holster becomes an expensive proposition.

So it's a great thing for Aussie shooters to be able to not only source holsters, but have them custom-made to their specific handgun. As Sam says: "There's more than one 1911," referring to the multitude of pistols based on the Colt 1911 shape, yet with minor variations which require individual holster fitting. Pistols with accessory rails and torches attached can also be accommodated.

Sam ran me through the process as he creates a holster from scratch. A mould is made by first taking a 3D image of the pistol, that image split in two for each side of the handgun then laid out to make a mould from which the holster will be formed. A sheet of Kydex, roughly 300mm square, is heated in a device resembling a sandwich

maker to a temperature which makes it soft and floppy, then the sheet's laid over the mould which itself is lying on a perfectly flat steel table with a vacuum pump beneath.

When the Kydex is positioned over the moulds the vacuum pump is turned on and the soft Kydex sucked into every detailed shape, the sheet then removed and allowed to cool down in a fridge. Another template is placed over the cooled sheet and a router used to shape the final holster, still in one piece, laid out flat. During this stage the guard height is cut to the customer's request, leaving the desired height of holster material between the handgun and shooter's body.

Then comes the final process in the shaping, which folds the material along the line of the top of the slide following the front sight channel, concentrating heat down the middle of the material this time to fold the holster in half then shape it to make sharp edges. Once the Airborne Customs logo is attached, the tensioning screws and belt attachment hardware are fitted and the holster's complete.



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Customers can request colours or patterns outside the current range and they'll try their best to source Kydex to make them, though this may incur a surcharge, such as those with sublimated images or patterns. When ordering, use the drop-down menu on the website to select from the current colour range.

The supplied belt attachments are from Blade-Tech and range from the adjustable Stingray loop holster mount to the more complex and versatile Tek-Mount 360 Quick Connect Mounting System, which incorporates a belt attachment and removable disk that permits various holster angles. All Airborne holsters have multiple holes in the back to accommodate other belt attachment brands, such as Safariland for those who want to use their own attachment hardware. There's also a mini-disc system for magazine pouches, again permitting several angles.

Apart from the Blade-Tech mounting belt attachment systems, the other logical accessory for Airborne Customs to stock are the belts themselves. Kore's belts aren't new yet not particularly well known in Australia. There are a couple of different models, however the Competition version includes a

ratchet belt buckle with an inner that'll take up the slack when the outer belt is tightened. The belt comes in one size and users are given guidelines on how to customise the length to suit themselves, while a QR code will take you to an instructional video.

As well as holsters, magazine pouches and belts, Airborne Customs has a Cerakoting service along with a laser cutting system capable of fancy work on pistol grips and other objects not necessarily associated with shooting and firearms. The company's Facebook page provides additional imagery to complement their website.

Airborne Customs is slowly building on its library of moulds for all sorts of handguns and magazine pouches, as more and more shooters request holsters, some of them for weird and wonderful pistols no other manufacturer has attempted to make. As a postscript, people buying handguns often ask the question: "Can I buy a holster for this pistol?" This has happened to me a couple of times since working on this story and now, thanks to Airborne Customs, the answer will always be, and without hesitation: "Yes you can." More at airbornecustoms.com.au ●



Optic sight pistols are easily accommodated; Kore Competition belts have ratchet adjustment and the inner takes up the slack when tightening; Cerakote and laser-cutting treatment makes for fancy work on pistol grips and slides.



CZ

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CONQUERING THE DARK

A beginner's guide to thermal and night vision optics

In the world of hunting, pest control and outdoor shooting, visibility after dark has always been a major challenge. Thanks to advances in technology however, shooters now have a wide range of tools available to help them conquer the night - thermal imaging and night vision devices. Whether mounted on a rifle, 4WD or carried by hand, these optics are revolutionising how Australians operate after sunset.

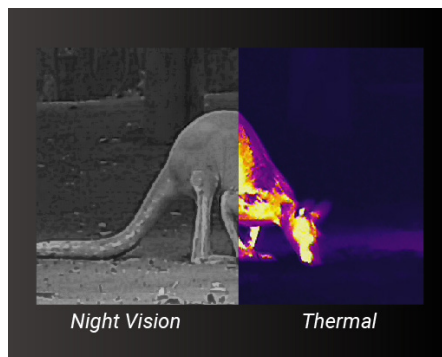
This is the first of an informative, four-part series that'll introduce thermal and night vision equipment to beginners, demystify some of the jargon, guide you through each type and help choose the right device for your needs. On top of that, each month we have a competition where you could win a great prize.

What are these devices?

While often grouped together, thermal and night vision devices operate very differently.

Thermal devices detect heat, the infrared radiation naturally emitted by humans, animals and objects and display it as a visible image, day or night.

Night vision devices amplify existing light whether moonlight, starlight or ambient artificial light, making dark scenes appear visible in a monochrome view (usually green or greyscale). Both have



their strengths depending on the environment and target you're observing and we'll cover these in the next few articles.

Common types

Shooters and hunters commonly encounter three types of thermal and night vision devices.

Monoculars: Single eyepiece devices ideal for handheld spotting. Lightweight and versatile, monoculars are often a starting point for beginners but also serve seasoned hunters and shooters well.

Binoculars: Offering the comfort and depth perception of two eyepieces, binoculars have added features but are slightly heavier. They offer a better experience overall, providing their extra bulk isn't an issue.

Rifle scopes: Mounted directly to a firearm, these allow shooters to acquire and engage targets after dark with precision. Thermal and night vision scopes have become increasingly popular among professional pest controllers and serious hunters.

Where to start

For beginners, the first step is understanding your needs. Are you primarily spotting or do you intend to shoot? Will you be operating in open fields, dense bushland or both? Answering these questions will narrow the options considerably.

What's next?

Next month we'll take a deeper dive into thermal imaging devices and how they work, where they excel and what to look for when choosing one. After that we'll focus on night vision equipment, discussing the differences between older-generation units and modern digital options. Our final article will tie it all together, offering advice on selecting the best tool for your shooting style and answering some of the most common questions from readers. The night doesn't have to stop your adventures as, with the right gear and knowledge, you can turn darkness into opportunity. ●

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*SOURCE: Yole Group Report on 2020 Share of Global Thermal Manufacturers.

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Thar trek!

Joe Norris has an NZ fitness check in the Southern Alps

I negotiated a leave pass from my wife to go hunting in New Zealand and looked for an outfitter to take me in search of thar and chamois. I eventually found one with a vacancy in the time-frame which suited us both so booked with Four Seasons. I waited anxiously for the travel date to arrive and had packed and repacked my hunting gear several times before I left for the airport. Because this was organised at relatively short notice

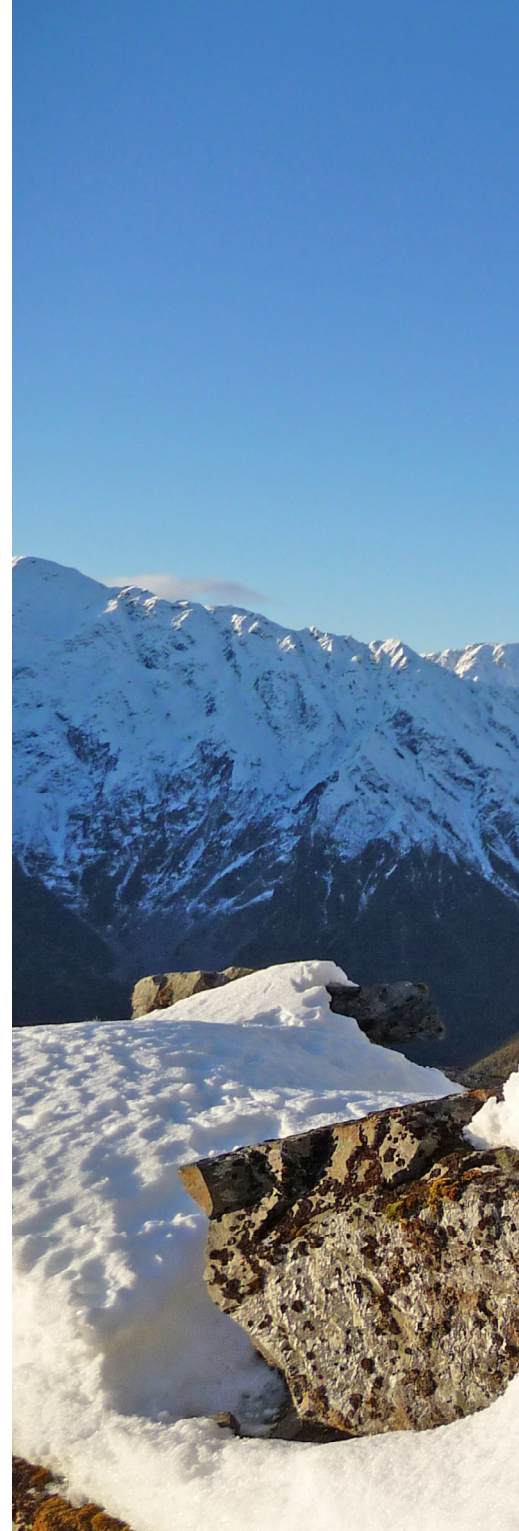
I wasn't going to take any of my rifles, as the export/import permits couldn't be arranged in time. I'd use one of the outfitters and they'd supply all camping gear except sleeping bag and clothes so I was travelling relatively light.

I arrived in Christchurch late in the afternoon and after sorting out my temporary firearms licence and picking up a hire car, booked into a motel for the night. After contacting Shane for directions to his place

I settled in for a fitful night's attempt at sleep, as I was just too excited at the prospect of hunting the Southern Alps. The view from the aircraft on the way in had shown the mountains well covered in snow so I was in for a treat as I'd never hunted in snow like that before.

Early next morning well before daylight, I drove to the Four Season's HQ to meet Shane who introduced me to Kelvin Williams who'd be my guide and we hit it off

Joe feeling on top of the world.





immediately. The plan was for me to follow Kelvin in my hire car to the west coast where I'd leave it at one of his mate's places while we hunted, so I'd have a car when we got back from the mountains. The drive was a first for me as they'd put graders down to shift the snow and make the roads passable, something I hadn't experienced.

On arrival we collected paperwork for the ballot block we'd drawn for the hunt. We'd be in the Landsborough River area in a

block called Shelter Hollow and a helicopter was arranged to fly us in the next day. We went to a creek where I was able to try out the Sako 7mm Remington Magnum rifle Shane lent me, and had no trouble busting rocks out to 300m so was happy it would do the job if the chance of a thar presented.

The flight was incredible with the pilot flying over a sheer precipice just to see me react to the ground dropping away thousands of feet below us. My stomach gave

a lurch and it was all I could do to remain unmoved on the outside, much to the disappointment of the pilot and Kelvin. We also saw several thar and I had a real taste of just how suited they are to the mountains. The way they run around sheer cliffs and drop-offs is incredible and at one point we flew closer to take a look at a trophy bull, only to have him take off down the face of the mountain flat-out while we tried to keep up. The pilot told me a thar can run down

Thar trek!



Above: Joe seconds after taking his one-shot tahr trophy.

Left: Kelvin glassing the bull under the cliff on the far side; A kea makes a meal of Joe's rifle sling.



a mountain faster than a helicopter can descend without diving.

The Shelter Hollow landing area is just big enough for a helicopter to place its skids on solid ground on the bank of the creek to allow unloading. During ballot periods there's no chopper access except for the designated landing areas at each block, to minimise disturbance to the hunting areas.

After setting up the big tent in the shelter of trees and sorting out our gear, we went for a walk to scout out the area. I'm from central Queensland so not used to hills let alone mountains, and while I didn't think I was in bad shape it soon became apparent I was no match for these slopes. Before long I was huffing and puffing as I struggled through snow-covered boulders on the way up, while Kelvin climbed like there was nothing to it. When we reached a point that would allow us to glass the surrounding faces we sat in the snow and put the binoculars to work.

Well Kelvin did as I was still trying to put my lungs back in my chest. Once I'd regained breath I too started looking for thar but couldn't see any in the monkey scrub on the opposite face. It wasn't until Kelvin identified several and pointed them out that I actually got to see wild thar from the ground. They blend into the background so well I wasn't able to spot them at first, and it took a while until I started to pick them up by looking for those grey/brown coats and back lines in the scrub. Kelvin spotted more over the river on the other side of the block but no trophy bulls so we started back to camp as the day was getting away from us.

Next morning I was better prepared mentally for the climb and didn't struggle nearly as much, though it was still tough going for a flatlander like me. We chose a different area from the previous day, one with lots of bluffs and chutes. Some of these had sections of ice which the sun couldn't

reach and were treacherous to negotiate, particularly since I didn't have crampons on my boots. On gaining as much height as we could on the ridge we scanned the next watershed and started to glass the whole area. I was sitting in the snow but couldn't see any animals, so it came as a surprise when Kelvin said he'd spotted a good bull thar lying in snow-covered tussocks on the other side of the gully. It took a while before I could locate him despite Kelvin's directions and it wasn't until he moved his head and I saw his horns I could pinpoint him.

The bull was lying with just his head showing above the foliage and I couldn't see much of his body so there was no chance of a shot. There was no way to get closer without showing ourselves to his excellent vision, so we'd have to take him from where we were if we decided to shoot at all. One of the challenges with thar is the fact they're often in areas which make recovery nigh impossible after the shot, something which must be carefully considered. So after studying the area closely, Kelvin reckoned we'd be able to recover him without too much trouble if we took him.

Our target was just over 300m away and while I'd have been confident of breaking his neck using one of my own rifles at this distance, I wasn't going to try with the borrowed Sako. We decided to wait until he got up before attempting a shot so just sat in the snow and waited. By this time the keas had found us and homed in to try their luck on our gear in search of something edible, these mountain parrots being fearless and highly destructive.

After waiting more than an hour, having a bite to eat and trying to melt snow for a drink, the bull started to show signs of movement so I prepared to shoot by lying prone with the rifle resting on my pack. I'd plenty of time to steady myself and had the crosshairs on the area where the bull's shoulder would be when he climbed to his

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Thar trek!



Above: The bull thar had been suffering pink eye disease.

Left: You need faith in the chopper pilot to land in this stuff.

feet. As he stood up I placed the crosshairs behind his shoulder and squeezed the big Sako's excellent trigger.

The rifle roared and leapt in my hands as the shot echoed down the mountain and we watched the bull crumple back into his bed and, for a moment, it looked like he'd stay where he fell. Then on giving a few sporadic kicks, he rolled and started to tumble down the mountain, gaining speed with each bounce. I watched helplessly as he fell, hoping he wouldn't break his horns in the process. Eventually he came to a halt just before a sheer drop which would've meant we'd lost him, so it was with much relief we climbed down.

I'd been wondering why he was on his own in the middle of May as it was breeding season, then on reaching him I discovered why. He was blind from a condition called pink eye, a highly contagious disease affecting the thar population in this area. In a way I'd actually done the poor thing a favour by putting him out of his misery, as he'd have eventually starved or taken a fall which would've injured him to the point he couldn't survive.

We caped him out and as he wasn't in great condition didn't take any meat, though he was sporting a set of horns Kelvin measured at 12½". I've no interest in measuring trophies as the hunt is the important part for me, not the score, so I only know his size because Kelvin got the tape out. I was thrilled to have taken a wild free-ranging bull thar and have a representative head for my trophy room. After some soul-searching I decided to buy a better cape from the taxidermist and am glad I did as the resulting mount is excellent.

Kelvin and I have become good friends since this trip and have stayed at each other's places when in our respective countries. I know I'd never have been able to collect a bull thar if he hadn't dragged me up and down those mountains and will always be grateful for that. I also know if I ever hunt the Southern Alps of New Zealand again I'm going to have to do some serious training, as it's no joke once you get there and find yourself struggling on one of those slopes. ●



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AMBIDEXTROUS!

As **Daniel O'Dea** discovered, the Beretta BRX1 swings both ways



Last year when I covered the US SHOT Show I reported on the Beretta BRX1. Newly launched to the US market at the time, it was my 'pick for the most interesting new bolt gun'. My overview read: "A straight pull bolt-action rifle featuring a reversible linear bolt allowing for conversion to left-handed operation in moments without tools. An eight-lug bolt head (16 in Magnum calibres) provides strong lock-up, an interchangeable barrel system for calibre change and an adjustable trigger and stock." On returning home one of the first things I did was contact Beretta Australia with the view of taking a better look at the BRX1 when one became available, which it duly did.

The BRX1 is a truly modular rifle and at the show the Beretta rep run through all its USPs (unique selling points), demonstrating in moments how the rifle could be converted from right to left-hand operation.

And not just on which side the bolt handle would be, but which side the cases would eject. The rifle has a pretty much open-top receiver with the bolt riding in a carrier on rails machined into the chassis.

As such when the bolt and carrier are drawn to the rear, the breech and magazine are completely exposed except for a short extension of the receiver on which scope rail interface is mounted. This open design means you can top off the magazine from either side, easily inspect the chamber and/or potentially clear obstructions should one occur. The design vaguely reminded me of another famous Beretta in their 92 Series pistol, also noted for its open slide design.

Anyway, as there's no receiver tube as such there's nothing to stop cases ejecting to the left or right, it's just a matter of how you set up the bolt. Right-to-left conversion is straightforward. Removing the bolt and carrier assembly, locate the cam pin on the top side of the assembly just reward of the bolt head itself. The pin is spring-loaded and while pressing down, draw the bolt forward out of the carrier. In turn the bolt head and body separate by sliding the head sideways (either direction), separating two sides of a keyway. Rotating the bolthead 180 degrees and sliding the two halves back together re-orientates both the ejector and extractor on the bolt face, so when all put back together cases will now eject from the left.

But before you put it all back together you can also swap the bolt handle over. To do this just flip the carrier assembly over and locate a small press stud which resembles a flat-headed screw about level with the bolt handle shaft. Pressing this down with a pen, screwdriver, bullet tip or whatever's handy, slide the bolt handle out the carrier and reinsert it on the other side. Hey presto, your right-handed gun is now completely left-handed.



The Beretta BRX1 comes with a three-round MOA guarantee, readily replicated with several ammo types.

I had little trouble replicating the sub-MOA three-shot factory accuracy guarantee

If you like you can also mix and match. Say for instance you're spotlighting from a truck solo and want to work the bolt right-handed, though it would be handy for cases to eject to the left back into the cab. Likewise, if shooting off a fixed rest or bipod, the idea of working the bolt on the left and keeping your strong hand on the grip and trigger might appeal. No problem with the BRX1.

Another neat modular feature is the three-position adjustable trigger pack. This is done by first removing the bolt assembly which exposes a small tab at the rear of the action, the trigger latch. Using a small screwdriver or similar, depress a latch lever while lifting the trigger latch tab upwards. Once in the 'up' position you can slide the whole trigger pack forward and out through the magazine well. On the side of the trigger pack is a button which can be manipulated into three separate slots. According to the factory, the top slot gives trigger pressure of 1kg, middle 1.25kg and lowest 1.5kg, which translates as roughly 2, 3 and 4lbs in old language. It appears to me manipulation of the button downward simply increases spring tension on the trigger spring, in turn increasing the trigger pressure. Simple but effective and I assume most will set it on 2lbs and forget it.

Barrels on the BRX1 are interchangeable via two 6mm Hex bolts accessed via the underside of the fore-end. The barrel beds with precision directly on to the rifle's aircraft-grade aluminum chassis, mating a generous recoil lug, this fit ensuring consistent bedding geography. "Keeps the barrel in the same place at all times," according to factory literature. At time of writing, barrels are available in five chamberings: 300 Win Mag, 30/06, .308 Win, .243 Win and 6.5CM. Those last four share the same bolt head but a beefed up 16-lug unit needs to be swapped for the .300 Win Mag. Swapping the bolt head is basically the same process as outlined earlier for changing the ejection direction, simple and without tools.

Still on the barrels, all are cold-hammer forged and importantly both chamber and bore (rifling) are forged at the same time, as opposed to chambers being reamed in a separate process, this said to provide "perfect coaxiality and accuracy". Spellcheck didn't like 'coaxiality' which basically means a measurement of how closely aligned the axes of two or more components are. The factory guarantees accuracy for all calibres of 1MOA for a three-shot group.

The magazine has a five-round capacity in all calibres including the .300 Win Mag big boy. It's a flush-fitting unit, again in all calibres, and there's little chance you'll lose it based on the fact it has dual opposing catches to hold it in and is blaze orange in colour. There are four (calibre dependent) magazine option stamps A-D on the front edge, A for the .300WM, B the 30/06, C the .308 and D for both the .243 and 6.5 Creedmoor.

First released with synthetic furniture, the rifle sent for testing coincided with the local release of new wooden furniture variants available in two grades of timber. Chambered in .308 Winchester the rifle supplied had Grade 1 oiled walnut, straight-grained with little figure yet attractive all the same. The pistol grip features fine checkering with a light palm-swell to both sides in keeping with the ambidextrous theme.

The Beretta logo is embossed on the grip cap and length of pull is adjustable via polymer spacers which conveniently have their thickness printed on the side. A Beretta 'Extralight' recoil pad, a technology well developed on their shotguns, finishes the buttstock and QD sling studs are present for sling attachment.

The rifle has a three-position safety catch on the rear of the bolt carrier for operation with the thumb. It's one of those set-ups where you push a thumb tab forward with a tilting thumb piece locking it in position, so you need to push and tilt up to lock and push and tilt down to release.

Safety is 'on' with the tab to the rear, at which point both bolt and trigger are locked (we'll call this Position 1). Pushing the tab forward about 4mm reveals a white bar (Position 2), where the trigger is still locked but the bolt can be opened to reload or clear the gun. Pushing the thumb piece a further 8-10mm reveals a red bar (Position 3) the fire position.

Just my opinion but I'm not a fan of this safety at all. I can't fault its operation, it

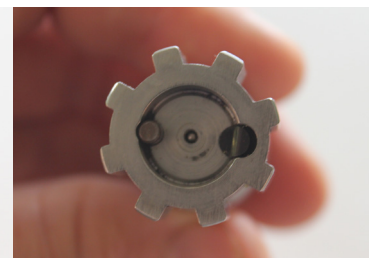
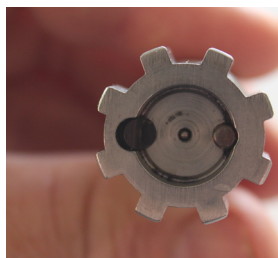


works perfectly as designed, but I find it both awkward and difficult to use. Rather than instinctive, to me it's a trained exercise to release (activate) the safety with the thumb-tilting business. Likewise, forward pressure to the fire position is very heavy. I tried measuring it with my Lyman trigger gauge which stops at 12lbs and it topped out, so heavier than that.

If you were using it a lot you might need some thumb exercises. Joking of course and having said that, the safety would be far from a deal-breaker for this otherwise excellent rifle. In fact I feel much the same



The bolt handle can be swapped from left to right.



From top: The removable trigger pack features three-position adjustment from roughly 2-4lbs; The multi-lugged bolt head changing the orientation by 180 degrees switches the side to which the rifle ejects (cases always eject away from the plunger towards the extractor); With the exception of the scope rail interface the action is totally open. You can see through one side to the other.

about the similar safety catch on the Blazer R8 straight-pull, so the BRX1 enjoys good company in that respect.

At the range I tried several factory ammo brands of different projectile weight and construction. I had little trouble replicating the sub-MOA three-shot factory accuracy guarantee with more than one brand and a few more just creeping over. Most groups presented as three-shot triangles spaced apart yet within or close to that one-inch mark centre to centre, excellent accuracy for a hunting rifle with a sporting weight and profiled barrel. I

also had little issue consistently ringing steel on my 200m hanging plate rack with 300mm discs.

The action is slick and fast to operate, making follow-up shots a breeze and the rifle's well balanced as you might expect from a company in the business of building fine competition shotguns. As one of Beretta Australia's test rifles it came mounted with Steiner 4-16 Predator 4 scope with its bright optics and excellent clarity, making a very befitting partnership.

The whole package weighed 3.8kg unloaded, not the lightest but definitely

in the 'if you think it's too heavy, man up' category. I did manage one outing afield after pigs, lugging my heavy frame up hill and down dale for four kilometers, only to spot some likely characters dashing across the nearby hillside just as I returned home, disappearing into a sea of berry and bush. My overall impression is if I were to be tasked with carrying a BRX1 afield on a more permanent basis, I'd in no way be unsatisfied. Another very fine product from the Beretta stable for sure. ●



National champs mark muzzleloading milestone

Townsville was the venue for 50th anniversary of the SSAA Muzzleloading National Championships in April, an event first staged back in 1976 and marked this year by the firing of a cannon on the opening day of the four-day weekend.

Handgun and pistol matches were first on the agenda, where Michael Nicholas (SA) claimed victory in the Class 1 Revolver Aggregate with a score of 155.2, while Shayne Barnsley (NSW) took top honours in Class 2 with an impressive 178.1. Other notable performances came from Frank Verdini (SA) who won the Firelock Smoothbore Pistol event (using a matchlock) with a score of 89, and fellow SA shooter Michael Nicholas who scored 86 in 50m Class 3 Open Pistol. Elsewhere, Des Prowse of Queensland showed his experience by winning both the Firelock Musket and Open Musket events with scores of 89 and 83 respectively.

Saturday saw competitors line up for the Class 1 Military Rifle, Class 2 Traditional Rifle and 50m Vetterli matches. Michael Nicholas continued his winning ways by securing the Class 1 Rifle Aggregate with a score of 355.1, while Barnsley won the Class 2 Traditional Rifle Aggregate on 354.1. In a tightly-contested MLAIC Vetterli match (offhand 50m Open Rifle), Barnsley came emerged victorious with a 96.3 using his Class 2 traditional rifle, followed closely by Anthony Wilson (Qld) on 95.2 and Michael Nicholas with 95.1.

Sunday brought more fierce competition with the Class 3 Open Rifle, Black Powder Cartridge Rifle and Firelock Rifle events. Humid conditions made for challenging shooting in the Firelock Aggregate, but Verdini persevered to claim victory with a score of 236. Steve Nicholas (SA) was a close second on 231 and Queensland's Gordon Gentle celebrated his first national medal with a solid 219.

The Open Rifle Benchrest matches saw an incredibly tight contest after the 100m Class 3 Bench event, with just a single point separating the top five shooters. Paul White (WA) led with 96.3, narrowly ahead of Steve Nicholas and Michael Nicholas both on 95.3, followed by Vlad Potezney (SA) on 95.2 and Wilson on 95.1. As the competition moved to 200m, White stretched his lead by winning the Class 3 Open Rifle Aggregate with a combined score of 191.3, Potezney placed second on 186.2 while Bruce Finlay (SA) rounded out the top three on 184.2.

In the Black Powder Cartridge Rifle event, Barnsley shot a strong offhand score at 100m to take first place in the aggregate with 616 points, ahead of Dan MacDonald (NSW) on 605 and Wilson on 564.1.

Monday featured the 300m Prone and Shotgun events, where Mark Sobierajski (NSW) lifted the 300m Prone title with a score of 79. In Percussion Shotgun, Barnsley smashed 20 clays to win with Gentle and Verdini filling the minor places on 18 and 17 respectively. In the Firelock Shotgun

event, Verdini came out on top with 14 clays, Wilson hit 12 and Ian Hanlon (NSW) 10.

In the Grand Aggregate comprising a competitor's best Class 1 or 2 Pistol, Class 1 or 2 Rifle and best Shotgun score, Barnsley once again proved too good for the rest with a total of 732.2 points, comfortably beating Verdini with 647.2 and Wilson on 642.2.

In the ultimate challenge of endurance, the Super Grand Aggregate adding together every event, Barnsley achieved a strong total of 2950.11, Verdini finished second on 2740.7 and Wilson third with 2619.7. Frank Verdini was the only shooter to complete all 32 events this year, not a bad effort for someone who had open heart surgery last year.

Congratulations go to competitors from around the country for making this 50th anniversary championship one to remember, on a range with a spectacular backdrop. Of course none of it would be possible without the tireless efforts of the volunteers and SSAA Townsville members whose spirit and teamwork are remarkable. It's rare to see a branch where multiple disciplines come together to make an event such a success. The Chief Range Officer competed in Air Rifle Field Target, target changers took part in Combined Services and Metallic Silhouette, scorers joined the Lever Action Rifle matches and even the catering team competed in Benchrest!

Between July and December will be the SSAA Muzzleloading Postal Shoot and from July to September is the Pacific Zone Postal Shoot against New Zealand, USA, Canada, South Africa, Brazil, Japan and Argentina. ●

Shooters benefitted from a spectacular Townsville backdrop.

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With this ring . . .

Chris Redlich remains faithful to Warne



You don't have to be top of the science class to understand recoil generates a force which requires strong resistance to absorb such action. Understanding this should play a role in deciding the right rings for your rifle and, more importantly, the right ones for your chosen calibre. There are several excellent brands of scope rings out there and many do the job equally well, with one I've used reliably for years now made by Warne.

Horses for courses as the saying goes so I bought some Warne 'Vapor' medium aluminium rings to help tame my wife Sue-Ann's 'Shetland pony' of a rifle in (7mm 08 Rem) and Warne 'Maxima' medium steel rings to break in my 'brumby' in 6.5 Creedmoor. Ok so I hear you exclaim: "What - a 6.5 'Needmoor' kicks like a wild horse?" I realise there may be perhaps a

slight contradiction in this instance but, for the purpose of review, both Warne rings are compatible with a Picatinny rail or Weaver-style mounts as fitted to my test rifles.

I know the 6.5 Creedmoor has very little kick but let's imagine for a moment I'm testing them on the more powerful 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge). All joking aside though, both sets of rings are designed to easily handle the energy of medium and heavy-recoiling calibres.

Years ago I bought Warne Maxima QD rings in both 30mm and one-inch diameter for my .284 rifle. Since then they've endured tumbles and been knocked by rocks and while my Swarovski scopes have borne the brunt of the most serious impact (with scars to prove it), accuracy has remained true. The 284 Win cartridge is no lion but no pussycat either and shot after

shot the mounts have remained solid.

Vapor and Maxima rings are vastly different by composite and just as different by appearance. CNC-machined from high grade sintered steel, the Maxima are Warne's premier mounts and by far their biggest seller. They include two Torx-head screws for each base clamp and four ring-cap screws (two either side). The user manual gives the torque for them all and they're to be tightened in accordance with the supplied pattern in the mounting instructions.

These rings are ergonomically profiled and precision machined to exact tolerances. While finished to a standard which provides rock-solid clamping strength, they won't crush or pinch your favourite scope tube, providing you align and tighten correctly. Every Maxima ring I've owned



Left: Sue-Ann using Vapor rings while deer hunting. They're easily distinguished by the bold 'W' on the base.

Below: Maxima rings on the 6.5 tightened to the correct torque using supplied instructions; The Vapor's large diameter single screws and thread; Maxima rings have remained accurate with many scopes at varying ranges (photo taken by remote means using tripod and timer).



With this ring . . .



Shot after shot of reliable accuracy.

has tightened true to the bases and never left a mark on my scopes. They're available in low, medium and high configuration to match varying profiles.

Ring diameters are available to suit 1" and 30mm tubes, with the latter edging out the former due to the rising popularity of 30mm scopes. As per standard across the Maxima range, the steel surface is protected by a Ceracote-style matt black finish which wears well and pairs nicely with most scopes of similar colour.

Taking on a more cylindrical shape with a bold 'W' emblazoned on the base, the Vapor rings are noticeably different in appearance to the Maxima and, while dimensionally similar to their steel cousin, are machined from 6061 aluminium alloy. This not only reduces weight for the potential mountain hunter where every gram counts, but also because it's the cheaper of the two metals which has helped lower the price. In fact the Vapors at 41g for medium profile weigh less than half the Maxima by comparable size.

Measuring a tad over 3mm (1/8") wider than the Maxima, the band width of the rings has plenty of surface area to grip the scope tube and remain solid during repetitive recoil of numerous shots. Vapor rings use large diameter singular Torx-head screws to fasten both the base and rings. The size of these screws is necessary for sufficient thread grip in the aluminium components and, after tightening to the

Vapor and Maxima rings are supplied with a Torx tool.

correct torque, I'd complete confidence in their design.

Unlike the Maximas which incorporate a steel recoil key for mating against the Picatinny rail, the Vapor's steel base cross bolt doubles up to achieve the same purpose. Vapor rings are also available to suit scope tube diameters of 1" and 30mm in low, medium and high configuration. Once again a matt black coating protects all metallic surfaces but, more importantly, without it we'd have a deer-alerting reflective finish.

At the range and afield

Both these rings have had their fair share of chances to prove themselves out bush and on paper, and so far neither have let me down. Although being used to support a variety of scopes, most shots have been shared across the two rifles mentioned earlier, helping take all manner of targets

including wild dogs, numerous pigs and deer in the mountains.

I've heard horror stories where hunters or target shooters have fallen foul due to loose scope rings or bases, though I can't recall ever experiencing this. The Vapor's large cap screws and Maxima's four smaller ones reinforced trust that, when fastened to the correct torque, they're never going to fail. More recently I used Warne Maxima rings for testing on other review rifles including .30-cal chamberings and in all cases, accuracy at short and long range remained sound.

Proudly made in the US instils the confidence I've come to expect from Warne and, depending on your budget, both Maxima steel or Vapor aluminium scope rings will do the job. Check your local retailer for pricing and availability. More at tsaoutdoors.com.au ●

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Learn from your mistakes

You'll be a better hunter for it,
says **Derek Nugent**

Award-winning British author Terry Pratchett once made the observation that "wisdom comes of experience and experience comes from mistakes" and I'm sure I'm not alone in being able to relate to the accuracy of his contention. Indeed my early years as a would-be hunter were dogged by consistent 'bad luck' which, with the benefit of hindsight, I can now more correctly identify as lack of hunting wisdom.

A litany of basic mistakes characterized my enthusiastic but rarely successful attempts to master the art of hunting in general and deer hunting in particular. It wasn't until a far more experienced hunter adopted me as his apprentice my success rate improved. Over several years I was able to develop the skills and understandings (wisdom if you like) to become a comfortably proficient hunter. The price of such wisdom was and remains to this day first-hand, basic field experience: making mistakes, learning from them and applying those learnings to ensure success on future hunts.

Terrain and fieldcraft

In spite of what our detractors may argue, hunting's a skill which encapsulates many diverse elements, among them a good knowledge of your hunting ground and the fieldcraft required to successfully hunt it. Familiarity with the lie of the land

is essential for success and I've come to realise that regular pre hunt/season reconnaissance pays handsome dividends.

Simply being out and about on the ground, confirming a mental image of the terrain and its potential is time well spent. Knowing the locations of prime watering and feeding points, game trails, bedding sites, access and escape routes is essential information, as is having an understanding of how best to work and monitor such areas in response to any scenario which might present. In this respect good fieldcraft is paramount.

Fieldcraft is simply awareness of how to take advantage of the terrain to outwit your quarry and, when implemented, is known as stalking. All game animals possess acute senses of sight, hearing and smell which gives them an advantage which hunters must work to negate. In this respect, managing the wind is absolutely vital as human scent alone is enough to betray you, alert your quarry and encourage them to relocate post-haste.

When stalking wild game you must always have the wind in your face or at least quartering across you away from the direction of the hunt. This ensures your scent doesn't saturate the area ahead of you, thereby alerting animals to your presence. If the wind should change, so too should the direction of your stalk. It may even be

you have to reevaluate and change hunting tactics to accommodate the fickleness of the breeze.

In ridge country consideration should also be given to the time of day, as in early morning your scent is likely to be rising on the warming air and likewise descending as the air cools into the afternoon. Each scenario requires a different stalking line to be adopted by the hunter to maximise the likelihood of encountering game, while being able to move silently and purposefully through the terrain is also vital.

With this in mind the best approach is to take your time, slow down and thoroughly examine the terrain ahead of you. You'll note that while the bush is never wholly devoid of sound, barging through scrub, haphazardly grabbing saplings and brushing against bushes will create unnecessary noise and movement, both dead giveaways when stalking.

Indeed, pausing to consider the most advantageous way to negotiate a stand of thick brush or lantana is a good investment of time and effort. Similarly, never stand on something which might slip, move or fall from under you, as avoiding traversing

Inspecting a sizable rub tree.





A mob of pigs using an established game trail to access a dam; Dried mud on a sapling indicates wild pigs frequenting the area; Pig diggings on a Far North Queensland watering hole.

loose rocks or weak logs is highly advisable for both safety and stealth. A good practice is to test the stability of suspect ground first by partially applying your weight and, if satisfied, proceeding with caution.

One of the most effective forms of cover available when stalking is dead ground. This simply refers to parts of the landscape which allow you to be out the line of sight of your quarry. Dead ground can take the form of a creek line or gully, undulating ridge lines or the lee side of spurs and ridges. It provides an almost failsafe avenue by which to approach a target as your movements are entirely hidden. Being spotted is nigh impossible. I also strongly advocate taking common sense advantage of game trails which exist because animals use them regularly and also allow for brisk, purposeful and silent movement through the bush.

When you pause during a stalk - which you should do regularly to glass the terrain,

assess movement of game, find your bearings or just for water - take advantage of the landscape to mask your presence. Always stop in cover, never in the open. Use thicker stands of timber, deep shadow and larger beds of lantana to keep your presence unnoticed and consciously avoid being silhouetted on ridgelines.

In the same vein consideration needs to be given to camouflage, as while animals are reputed not to see in colour, they're well attuned to shape and contrast. Taking time pre-stalk to disguise any telltale or 'unnatural' visuals, like your general outline or the flash from a wrist-watch or stainless steel rifle barrel is also advisable. It ultimately doesn't matter how well you manage the wind, how silently you're stalking or how much you know about your target species, if they see you first it's usually game over.

Rigorously hunt those areas with higher concentrations of sign



Know your quarry

It's essential to have a good understanding of the habits and behaviours of every species you hunt, as without this you're at a distinct disadvantage. To determine the best tactics when planning and conducting a hunt you must have an acute awareness of factors such as the seasonal behaviours of the animal, any aspects of the terrain likely to attract game, the importance of timing and influence of weather conditions.

Having the ability to read and understand any sign evident is also an advantage. Game animals are creatures of habit and notwithstanding the impact of hunting pressure, will usually follow a fairly predictable pattern of behaviour. For instance all hunters acknowledge and exploit the primacy of early morning and late afternoon as highly productive times to hunt. Similarly in the heat of the day, most animals will be found comfortably

bedded in cool shade, often in the vicinity of a water source.

Winter will see animals afield later in the day as they take advantage of rising temperatures after a cold night and vice-versa with the onset of summer. Hunting after a storm, in light drizzle or mist can also be highly productive as, in the aftermath, the bush is quite noisy thanks to settling water droplets which mask your own movements and deaden your scent. Hunting a recent burn several days after rain is also highly productive, as animals are drawn to the succulent grass regrowth.

Deer and pigs love to wallow and will habitually use the same established game trails to access water and feeding sites, perfect for an ambush. My own experience in relation to hunting red deer is to take my cues from what stock are doing. If cattle are out grazing, heading for water or bedded, I assume the resident deer

are doing the same and hunt accordingly, usually with success.

Being able to identify and age sign is crucial and can give an indication of the type of game in an area, their numbers, feeding habits and movement patterns. Sign can take a myriad of different forms including diggings, grass beds, hair on fences and wallows, though the most regularly seen and perhaps most useful examples of sign are droppings, tracks and rub trees.

Droppings are widely used to suggest the feeding and roaming patterns of wild animals and are regularly found along active game trails, bedding areas and feeding zones. Size and frequency of droppings can be indicative of both the numbers and maturity of game animals concerned and the regularity with which they're accessing that area. Fresh droppings are moist and soft but over time will dry out, harden and lose their colour. The extent of these changes



Exploit the primacy of dawn hunting.



Sows and piglets raid an avocado orchard using a known access point.

are suggestive of the age of the droppings and thus the likely proximity of animals and frequency of their visits.

Game can't help but leave tracks which are a natural consequence of an animal's movements and a real asset to the observant hunter. Tracks can be found virtually anywhere around dams, on creek and fence lines, near wallows, melon holes, game trails, on road verges or soft dirt. By examining them and considering their age, a determination can be made in respect to the direction of travel, speed and to a lesser extent, the number of animals moving through.

A roaming or grazing animal's tracks will have a clean crisp shape, show even weight distribution and the prints will be

close together. Those of a running or fleeing beast will often be slightly larger and deeper towards the front edge and the prints will usually be slightly splayed and further apart.

Tracks can also be helpful when 'guess-timating' the maturity of an animal, for example the prints of a youngster are naturally smaller than those of an adult. Two factors contribute to ageing tracks: condition and setting. Fresh ones will be sharp, well-defined, be unaffected by wind, rain or the passage of time and will often be free of debris such as leaves or sticks.

When looking at tracks around water sources, check for water in the base of the track, as if it's brown and muddy this can be an indication it's very recently made, perhaps within the hour. The actual setting in which tracks are found can also help a hunter. For example, if you find them on the side of a dirt road you should check for other prints in the vicinity and compare them, to gauge how frequently and recently animals may have been there.

Tracks on top of tyre marks or boot prints made by your hunting party are indicative of an animal having crossed that path since your last circuit of the area, interesting to know. Ones in mud are also helpful as they can be accurately dated to the last known fall of rain and potentially allow you to age the prints almost to the day.

Many species of game animals leave



Who goes there!

*Drizzly
or misty
conditions
shouldn't be
dismissed
as being
without
potential.*

their mark on trees and bushes. Feral goats will strip bark and leave a clearly defined browse line, wild pigs can cover trees in mud and rough them up with their scratching, while male deer will thrash their antlers on small trees or bushes to mark their territory, strip velvet and add colour to their antlers.

Freshly rubbed or browsed vegetation will often have a thin layer of tacky, wet sap on exposed parts of the trunk or branches or indeed a layer of wet mud. If you locate such a tree or shrub, you can conclude an animal has recently passed through the area. However, if leaves are brittle or the mud has dried the sign is very old. The degree to which leaves, bark and mud have died off or dried out clearly ages the rub.

It's a good idea to rigorously hunt those areas with higher concentrations of any and all types of sign, as you stand a much better chance of harvesting an animal by being in the territory they're shown to be frequenting. As an aside I can't recommend highly enough the use of trail cameras as a means of confirming the existence and habits of game in your hunting areas. Physical sign suggests their presence but trail camera images prove it.

Learn your lessons

Albert Einstein is reputed to have said "insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". This logic can be applied to any human endeavour including hunting, as if we're not prepared to learn from our mistakes and garner some wisdom from our peers, we're encouraging failure in the field.

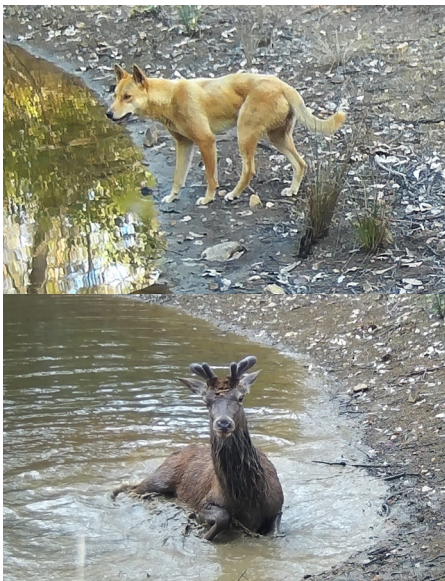
For example, I know from experience I tend to aim high, so have to actively

remind myself to drop my sights slightly prior to taking a shot. I also know I don't stop often enough to glass the terrain and have, as a consequence, lost the chance to take quality animals.

Most annoyingly, I still find myself breaking the golden rule of 'hunting all the way home' and can't count the number of times I've stumbled, unprepared, across game at the most unlikely time and place on the trek back to camp 'after' a hunt. Conversely though, I can also state with confidence I'm both a competent stalker and interpreter of sign and consequently a 'luckier' hunter.

The hints and suggestions advocated here are by no means exhaustive or definitive and aren't meant to be, yet they do represent the accumulated learnings of several decades. I'm sure some readers will nod their heads in agreement while others are thinking of considerations I've missed. Fair enough.

But I'm sure we'd all agree hunting's a craft which must be learned and the best way to do that is through firsthand, practical experience, preferably under the watchful eye of an 'old hand'. By way of confirmation I'll quote Vasily Zaitsev, the crack Red Army sniper of the battle of Stalingrad: "We are hunters - come and see how we work." ●



Confirmed by trail cam: A wild dog has its regular morning drink on a dam; A stag enjoys a wallow in the heat of summer.

National

Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

July 1-December 31, 2025
Events: Military 50m offhand Class 1; Traditional 50m offhand Class 2; Flintlock 50m offhand; 100m Benchrest Class 1 & 2; 100m Benchrest Class 3; 25m Precision Revolver Class 1 & 3; 25m Precision Pistol Class 2; 25m Snap Pistol Class 1 & 2; Percussion Shotgun (25 clays); 100m Benchrest Black Powder Cartridge Rifle (ASSRA Target). All scores to Muzzleloading chairman by December 31. Prizes: Medals for first three in each event. Contact: Steve Nicholas 0419 805 299. Full details on National website.

SSAA National Junior Challenge

July 10-13, 2025
Wodonga Rifle Range, Vic
Program: See SSAA National website for full event details. Contact: Arwen Casley-Porter 0456 127 000.

Action Match Steel Challenge National Championships

August 1-3, 2025
Kukerin Practical Pistol Club, WA
Program: July 31: Practice. August 1: Rimfire match. August 2 Centrefire matches Day 1. August 3: Centrefire matches Day 2 and presentation. Facilities: Camping with toilets, local accommodation nearby, pre-booked Friday and Saturday dinner \$40 each night. See National website for full details. Contact: Steve Marris - ssmarris@westnet.com.au

Rifle Metallic Silhouette National Championships

August 28-September 2, 2025
Monarto Shooting Complex, SA
Program: Thursday: Practice. Friday: 80 shots Air Rifle. Saturday: 80 shots Rimfire. Sunday: 80 shots Centrefire. Monday: 40 shots Centrefire Hunting Rifle, 40 shots Rimfire Hunting Rifle. Tuesday: Overrun day if needed. Prizes: Medals all grades including juniors, two-gun and teams trophy. Nomination form on National website. Facilities: Camping with showers and toilets, breakfast and lunch available. Contact: Mark West at rsmns2025@gmail.com or 0421 775 101.

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@ssaaql.org.au or PO Box 101, Inglewood Qld 4387.

Combined Services National Championships

September 19-21, 2025
Windamere Shooting Complex, 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. Cudgong caravan park nearby with cabins, vans and powered sites, phone (02) 6358 8462. Event contacts: Ian Crabbe crabbes1@telstra.com or 0428 862 378; Anthony Gatti info@nswcsd.com.au or 0499 987 899; Ben Doherty bfjdoherty@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@ssaaql.org.au or Brian Leach (07) 5488 0159, Brett Whiting 0467 332 303 or Chris Dale 0418 255 874. Full details on National website.

BPCR Silhouette National Championships

October 3-6, 2025
Monarto Silhouette Range, SA
Program: October 3: Set-up and practice. 4: 40-shot BPCR iron sights. 5: 40-shot BPCR any sights. 6: 40-shot BPCR smallbore iron sights. Facilities: Camping available on range, barbecue on Saturday night. Contact: John Visnyai johnviz@hotmail.com or 0421 117 391.

International

Pacific Zone Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

July 1-September 30, 2025
Program: The MLAC Pacific Zone Postal Shoot is held every two years with participation from Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, USA, Canada, Brazil, Japan and Argentina. SSAA members interested in representing Australia this year can register by contacting the Muzzleloading Awards Secretary, registration open from April 30 to June 1. Shooting will take place from July 1 to September 30, all matches must be shot on registered dates in each state and can only be attempted once, youth (U-21) and women's events also available. For more details, contact: Michael Nicholas 0467 763 716 or secretary@ssaapara.org.au

ACT

ACT Rifle Metallic Silhouette Snowball Shoot

June 7-9, 2025
SSAA Majura Range, ACT
Program: Saturday: 80 shots Rimfire, 40 shots Air Rifle; Sunday: 80 shots Centrefire; Monday: 40 shots Rimfire Hunting Rifle, 40 shots Centrefire Hunting Rifle. Prizes: Trophies all grades including juniors, two-gun trophies and teams event. Facilities: Camping on range with water and showers (\$10 per person per night), fires allowed if no ban, canteen facilities for the weekend. Contact: Mark Lovell 0401 867 839 ml1@live.com.au or Scott 0411 465 254 (if unattended leave message).

NSW

NSW Centrefire Benchrest Four Gun State Championships

August 13-17, 2025
Dairyville Range, Coffs Harbour, NSW
Program: Wednesday: Practice; Thursday: Unlimited 100/200; Friday: Sporter 100/200; Saturday: Light 100/200; Sunday: Heavy 100/200. Facilities: Camping at neighbouring farm, swags at range (\$10 a night, juniors free), breakfast and lunch included in nomination fee. Entry form and details on National website. Contact: Ian Thompson ianbenchrest@gmail.com

SA

SA Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

June 21-22, 2025
Monarto Shooting Complex, SA
Program: Saturday: 80 shots Rimfire and 40 shots Air Rifle; Sunday: 80 shots Centrefire. Range open 8.30am for practice and weigh-in, first match 10am and afternoon match around 2pm. Facilities: Barbecue catering, hot showers, toilets and cooking facilities to support on-site camping. Contact: Mark West markwest@kentcivil.com.au or 0421 775 101.

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.

SA Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

August 2-3, 2025
SSAA Para Range, SA
Program: Saturday: 40-shot Rifle Calibre Lever Action Silhouette. Sunday: 40-shot Pistol Cartridge Lever Action Silhouette; 40-shot Smallbore Lever Action Rifle Silhouette. Facilities: Camping on range, canteen. Contact: John Visnyai johnviz@hotmail.com or 0421 117 391.

SA Air Rifle State Championships

September 13-14, 2025
SSAA Para Range, SA
Program: Saturday: 10m Precision Air Rifle (40 shots), 10m 3-Positional Air Rifle (60 shots). Sunday: Field Target Air Rifle open (30 shots), Benchrest Air Rifle (75 shots). Prizes: State medals for all grades including U15 and U18. Facilities: Canteen, light meals, snacks, tea, coffee, drinks available all day. Camping on range with showers, toilets and power available. Contact: Paul Rawlings paullee06@bigpond.net.au or 0403 436 905.

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.

SA Gallery Rifle State Championships

September 27-28, 2025
SSAA Para Range, SA
Program: Saturday: T&P 30-shot GRFC or Classic; 1500 150-shot GRFC or Classic; 50m Precision 30-shot GRFC or Classic; Multi-target 24-shot GRFC or Classic. Sunday: T&P 30-shot GRFC or Classic; 1500 150-shot GRFC or Classic; 50m Precision 30-shot GRFC or Classic; Multi-target 24-shot GRFC or Classic. Facilities: Camping available, canteen, barbecue on Saturday night. Contact: Dave McCarthy atm3855@yahoo.com.au

WA

SSAA (WA) Shotgun Skeet State Championships

June 8, 2025
Jarrahdale Sporting Shooters, 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.

WA IRB State Championships

June 14-15, 2025
Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA
Program: Six-card match across two days. This is a selection match for the WA state team. Prizes: Perpetual trophies, medals for first three each day (incl. juniors) and grand aggregate. Facilities: Bottled water, tea and coffee for gold coin donation. Contact: William Barrett 0422 744 901 or email william.barrett@outlook.com.au. Full details on National website.

WA Lever Action Silhouette State Championships

July 3-6, 2025
Narrogin Sporting Shooters, WA
Program: Thursday: Practice 7am-5pm. Friday: Rifle match (80 shots). Saturday: Pistol Cartridge (80 shots). Sunday: Small bore (80 shots). Prizes: Medals in all grades for top three, trophies for two-gun, three-gun and juniors, four \$50 gift vouchers. Facilities: Camping with showers, toilets, limited power. SSAA Narrogin will supply a Saturday night meal. Contact: David Brougham 0432 748 703 or laswa2011@gmail.com

Vic

SSAA (Vic) Single Action Black Powder State Championship

July 18-20, 2025
Little River Raiders, Eagle Park, Vic
Program: Friday: Long Range, Plainsman Match. Saturday: Side events, Four main stages, Dusk shoot. Sunday: Six main stages, presentation. Facilities: Free camping at range with limited powered sites, toilets and showers. Contact: Tony Diablo 0419 187 980 or diablo6@bigpond.com

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 msrsc.secretary@gmail.com. Medals for first three in all grades. Contact: Mark Butler on 0409 135 740.

Victorian Muzzleloading State Championships

November 15-16, 2025

SSAA Eagle Park, Vic

Program: Class 1 and 2 Muzzle Loading Rifles, Breech Loading Rifle 200m, Handgun Precision, Muzzle Loading Shotgun. Facilities: Limited onsite camping. See National website for full program of events. Contact: Craig Kinder.

SSAA Inc Event Cancellation / Postponement Policy

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

SSAA Victoria 2025 AGM notice

2025 Annual General Meeting and postal ballot declaration

The AGM will be held from 2pm to 4pm Sunday, September 28, 2025 - details and any changes to be advised at www.ssaavic.com.au and on your ballot paper (if held).

Nominations to fill three Board vacancies will open May 12, 2025 and close June 13, 2025. Nominations to be posted to **Returning Officer SSAA (Victoria), PO Box 336, Nth Melbourne, VIC 3051**; or emailed to jim@ybg.com.au

Results of the postal ballot, which opens July 21, 2025 and closes August 22, 2025, will be announced at the 2025 AGM.

Financial accounts for the year ending April 2025 will be available at www.ssaavic.com.au prior to the meeting or upon written request.

For details contact the State Office by
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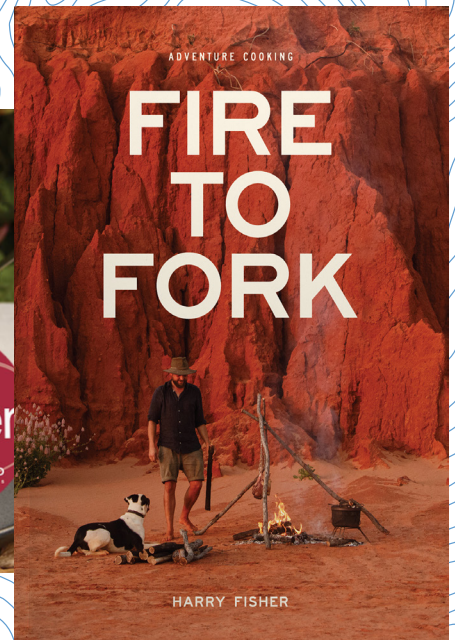
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AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER is published monthly and is printed by IVE,
83 Derby St, Silverwater, NSW 2128.

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Maybe we can learn from our detractors

As I write this, Cyclone Alfred is deciding if it'll head towards the Queensland coast or linger offshore, though it's odds-on to make landfall. We can only watch, stay informed and prepare as there's no reasoning with Alfred, no logic will change its course, it's a force unto itself. Our colleagues in Western Australia are facing a very similar fate with scandalous antigun laws imminent and, while there's hope they may pass by or land somewhere out of harm's way, we won't know until the day after the election - landfall day.

Now while both have since been overtaken by events, I say 'similar' as they're not the same. Alfred is a force of nature while what's happening in WA is entirely human. I also say 'scandalous' because what's happening WA is nothing short of a scandal. Words like rigid, draconian, authoritarian may be dangerous, as at times they can be used to justify an action. A scandal is an improper act, committed with little or no benefit other than to those behind it.

In the case of WA and the myriad other situations like the bow-hunting ban in South Australia, we're essentially battling logic with the illogical. It's become clear facts don't matter, facts like licenced firearm owners are some of the safest and most law-abiding in our community now hold no sway. Then there's the strange case of the opposition to public land hunting. Public land hunters pay to participate in an activity which benefits the wider community without reward or recognition and, at times, considerable personal cost.

Both points are facts, well considered, expressed through thoughtful action and backed by longitudinal data indicating positive results. Yet our detractors don't care as we're dealing with a combination of eco-theocracy, unadulterated political egotism and an otherwise laughable rewriting of nature and natural history.

So: What Is To Be Done? And for the historians out there, yes, I did just quote Lenin. Now it's something I give almost constant thought to, as I have sons who deserve to experience an outdoor life. Consequently I've an idea which in some ways



It's for him we need the shooting sports to flourish.

pushes against conventional wisdom. It's in two parts with the first being the need of a stated, united objective. Growth: That is growth of the shooting, hunting and outdoor lifestyle. Those who oppose us see no acceptable line, so should we move beyond the idea of consolidation to growth? As they say, it's hard to go broke when you're making a profit.

The second part is I believe a united front doesn't require a singular entity. The argument in favour of a singular voice is too many voices can split the vote and, on voting day, I agree. But this isn't a vote, it's a daily attack which occurs across electoral boundaries. Voting is critical but we must move the needle every day.

We should play to our strengths and push in the same direction, as many hands make light work if we all lift together. A case in point of a strength-based approach is the work of the Australian Pig Doggers and Hunters Association (APDHA), a small outfit which lifts large for the benefit of its members and wider hunting community.

In speaking with the APDHA they know their allies, know who they must ally with and the gamebook of those who oppose them. They also know what they can and can't achieve and focus on that. During the past year they've enacted a series of activities to strengthen their alliances, while building a stronger case against their detractors, those who've long argued pig

hunter aren't experts so their opinions are just that, opinions.

Rather than logically argue their bonafides they commissioned the Great Australian Pig Hunt, a year-long program engaging hunters as citizen scientists with the intention of collecting and correlating data on the multi-faceted benefits of pig hunting. As an adjunct to the Great Pig Hunt they've also undertaken, in partnership with universities, the largest single collection of pig DNA to date. They've effectively changed the paradigm so while the smart people might dismiss the knowledge of a pig hunter, it's hard for them to dismiss university-validated findings.

Most recently the APDHA have worked with a NSW farmers' association to pilot a successful 'pig bounty' program, which challenged the assumption a bounty wouldn't work. But guess what? It looks like it does, or so the farmers reckon. Consequently the APDHA's media presence has increased and matured, as they're presenting a case which seeks to defy the illogical. They don't argue it down they present a better case which builds, little by little, a social licence for hunting. Our detractors use their strengths against us so maybe we should learn from them, apply ours and be the columns which lift our shooting, hunting and outdoor lifestyles.



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