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# AUSTRALIAN Shooter

## OUR POLICY

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

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# COST OF LIVING: THERE'S NO ESCAPING IT

WORDS:  
TOM KENYON  
SSAA CEO



**T**he fact the constant increase in costs we face in our daily lives has hit the SSAA will surprise no-one and unfortunately it means we've had to raise the price of membership from \$100 to \$105. Insurance, computing, production costs and staff salaries among others have all increased, though the biggest rise has been in Australia Post charges, up this year by 13 per cent on top of a sizeable hike last year.

It's becoming more and more expensive to produce and post Australian Shooter to those tens of thousands of members who, like me, prefer a print magazine. The increased costs of postage mean we've had to raise the charge of receiving

a printed copy of the magazine from \$15 a year to \$25, though the digital edition remains included in your base membership.

We're managing our costs as best we can and doing everything possible to minimize the impact on members yet, like so many aspects of modern life, these increases are unavoidable. Check out SSAA TV on YouTube for an explanation by our President, Andrew Judd, on how your membership fees are distributed. Despite the rise, SSAA still remains outstanding value for members who, for just \$105 a year, receive the following:

- 11 digital issues of Australian Shooter
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As part of our efforts to make your membership work better for you, we'll be introducing digital

membership cards you can store on your mobile phone. If you're like me and hate carrying too many plastic cards in your wallet (or don't use a wallet), having the membership card on your phone will make life a lot easier. This will be available as you renew your membership from October, though if you'd prefer to retain a plastic card, simply ring our membership office on (02) 8805 3900 and we'll send one out. As ever, thanks for being part of the SSAA community.

## AUGUST CLARIFICATION

In last month's article 'Bombers, bullets and bulldozers' by Chris Redlich, there was an error in the opening paragraph which should have read as follows:

*I couldn't help but be moved by the immense sadness on reading the letters from my grandfather's first wife Ethel while he was away training for war. At home and helpless due to the separation of distance, Ethel battled painful blood poisoning brought on by a serious infection of the hip.*

We apologise to Chris and are happy to make this correction.

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# OPEN SEASON

# WILD GAME MANAGEMENT: WE'VE A LOT TO LEARN

WORDS:  
MATTHEW GODSON



Over the course of my next few columns, I'll provide a summary of a Churchill Fellowship report titled *To Explore, Review and Document Wild Game Harvesting in Europe*. I've known the author, Neal Finch, for several years as he's a SSAA member, hunter, wildlife biologist, forward thinker and all-round good guy.

Chapters within this report look at how wildlife is managed in different countries and it's certainly something Australia can learn from. Hunters, both professional and non-professional (recreational) in Europe, are viewed as the same in that they offer the necessary resources to manage wildlife populations. This is something the Australian pest management industry can't understand or are simply not willing to.

First up, Neal explores the deep-rooted hunting culture and game meat industry in Spain, which is a major supplier of wild game meat in Europe. Hunting in that country is widespread with 85 per cent of land designated as such under various lease arrangements. As of 2023 around 700,000 hunting licenses were issued, down from more than a million in 2010, largely due to population shifts from rural to urban areas.

Despite the decline, hunting remains high on the list of Spain's most popular outdoor activities after football and basketball, contributing billions of euros annually to the national economy and

employing thousands of people. The country processes 15,000-20,000 tonnes of wild game meat a year, equating to around half a million animals. Ninety per cent of this is exported to other European countries, making Spain the continent's most significant exporter of game meat. Importantly, recreational hunters supply the bulk of this meat as there's minimal commercial shooting compared to Australia.

Spain's hunting system is regulated by the Ministry of Agriculture and implemented by the country's 17 autonomous communities and all hunters must be licensed and insured. Hunting is split into 'caza menor' (small game) and 'caza mayor' (big game) with increasing interest in the latter, especially wild boar (jabali), whose populations are growing rapidly. Hunters in Catalonia receive a monetary incentive (around \$40) for each wild pig harvested and processed into the registered food chain.

Most agricultural lands are either Coto Social de Caza (leased by hunting clubs) or Coto Privado de Caza (privately leased). On hunting days (usually Thursdays, Sundays and some holidays), rural Spain is visibly animated by legal and organised hunting activity, where it's common to see hunters dressed in blaze orange gathering in local cafes before heading out.

A key tradition in Spanish hunting is the 'montería', a large-scale driven hunt involving more than 100 hunters and hundreds of dogs flushing game from expansive properties known as manchas. These events are highly organised, culturally significant and provide the bulk of game meat for commercial processors. During one montería attended by Neal, 90 red deer and six wild boars were har-

vested on a 5000-hectare property, with all animals quickly processed and refrigerated according to strict hygiene standards.

Other hunting methods include 'rececho' (stalking), which is like traditional Australian recreational hunting, though animals taken this way usually don't enter the commercial meat chain due to processing logistics. 'Fincas' (dedicated hunting estates) are another important part of the industry.

Neal visited Cárnicas DIBE, a major game meat processor which handled 85,000 carcasses in 2023-24, mainly red deer and wild boar. The company employs more than 200 people during peak season and is run by the sons of the founders, who are leaders in Spain's game meat association ASICCAZA. Fundación Artemisan, a research and advocacy group for hunting and conservation, plays a vital role in policy, public engagement and scientific research, while also working to combat misinformation from anti-hunting activists and promote scientifically grounded wildlife management.

Prior to 2020, hunting was the principal form of wildlife management in most National Park areas of Spain. Since then it has been banned in National Parks with the support of urban dwellers, which has resulted in overpopulation, malnourished animals, habitat degradation and expensive state-funded culling programs which waste meat. This now parallels the inefficiencies observed here in Australia. The shift has generated much debate among the nation's conservation communities regarding the negative ecological effects of the ban on hunting.

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# IN PRAISE OF THE PIONEERS WHO WENT WILD

WORDS:  
BARRY WILMOT



**T**he .308 Winchester is one of the most popular cartridges not just in Australia but around the world. It had its beginnings shortly after WWII when the US Ordnance Corps began looking for a shorter cartridge, more suited to modern automatic and semi-automatic rifles to replace the .30-06 Springfield. The search continued and it wasn't until engineers at Frankford Arsenal began to experiment with the 300 Savage case they came up with a cartridge, which they designated the Cartridge, Ball, Cal. 30 T65 which had a similar performance to the .30-06. Many modifications later a revised cartridge, designated the T65E3, was adopted as the NATO standard in December 1953. Finally in 1957 the US themselves changed to this 7.62mm NATO cartridge for use in their M14 rifle and M60 machinegun.

While this was going on the Winchester Repeating Arms Company stole a march on its competitors and, in 1952, commercially introduced the cartridge as the .308 Winchester sporting round. Chambered initially in the Model 70 rifle, because of its popularity almost every other manufacturer in the world has followed suit and chambered their rifles in every conceivable action type.

Because of the already widespread use of the .30-06 cartridge, acceptance of this new one was slow but, as its accuracy became apparent to sporting and target shooters alike, it slowly overtook the .30-06 and today is the most-used 30 cal sporting cartridge in the world.

Its accuracy is legendary and in the US some of the standard targets had to be reduced in size as many shooters were placing all their shots inside the V-ring, a feat unheard of using the .30-06 cartridge. The military arsenals which made match and service ammo in both 7.62mm and .30-06 fired tens of thousands of both cartridges. They eventually concluded the smallest groups were always those of the 7.62mm and these were almost 50 per cent the size of those shot with the 30-06.

Ideal for handloading, the .308 Winchester cartridge is highly versatile and projectiles weighing from 100-200 grains are available to cover a whole range of game animals, with the 150, 165 and 185 grains being the most popular. Using the lighter 110-grain projectiles, velocities of around 3100fps can be achieved, giving an ideal load which can be used on most light-bodied animals hunted in Australia. The heavier 150-grain projectiles

travelling at around 2800fps would quickly put a stop to any animal which can be hunted in this country. In fact if you were restricted to owning just one firearm the .308 Winchester, suitably loaded, could be used on game ranging from small, light-bodied animals up to the largest and heaviest found anywhere in the world.

It's also a very powder-friendly cartridge and a whole range of suitable powders are available, including those made by Winchester, Hodgdon, Alliant, Norma, Vihtavuori and, of course, the popular Australian variants made by ADI. By matching these to the correct weight and style of projectile, target shooters and hunters have a cartridge as accurate and versatile as anything available.

The .308 Winchester cases have also been used as the basis for other popular commercial cartridges such as the .243 Winchester, .260 Remington, 7mm-08 Remington, .338 Federal and .358 Winchester. Furthermore, two other rimmed cartridges based on this case (the .307 Winchester and .356 Winchester) were also developed for use in the Winchester Model 94 Angle Eject rifle.



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# AIN'T NOTHING LIKE THE REAL THING

WORDS:  
LAETISHA SCANLAN



**Q** I live four hours from my nearest shooting range and have been looking at alternative ways to improve my skill retention in clay target shooting without actually going to a club to practice. What are your thoughts on dry-fire shooting simulators and are they helpful?

Bob, Qld

**A** In my experience, sadly there's no true substitute for real-world shooting experience. When it comes to developing and refining your clay target skills, nothing beats time at the range, blasting actual clays. The physical, mental and environmental aspects of shooting in real conditions are what truly prepare you for both competition and recreational shooting. So I wouldn't recommend shooting simulators or virtual reality as a total replacement for hands-on training. That said, there's room for shooting sims to have a place in a shooter's development, especially in the early stages or as a complementary tool for specific areas of improvement.

For beginners or youngsters starting out in the sport, simulators

can offer a useful introduction. One of the key advantages is how they allow newcomers to begin developing their sight picture and understanding lead, something that's often difficult to grasp initially. Shooting simulators offer immediate feedback on-screen, showing you where the shot pattern is in relation to the target. That kind of visual reinforcement helps accelerate understanding, especially when there isn't a coach or experienced shooter standing behind you. At the range, many newcomers struggle to understand where they missed and, without consistent feedback, it's all too easy to develop bad habits.

Another plus is accessibility and convenience as you don't need to travel to a range or schedule time around availability, you can practice anytime from the comfort of your home. As ammunition prices continue to climb and clay targets become more expensive, shooting sims can also offer a more affordable option to put in extra reps, particularly for those working on foundational skills. It's not a replacement in terms of realism, though is a cost-effective solution for reinforcing visual tracking skills.

Additionally, clay target shooting simulators can be a good aid for those who want to work on their mount, especially those transitioning to a gun-down position. Tracking a virtual target while practicing your mount offers more realism than simply mounting in front of a mirror. That small element of target movement keeps the mind engaged in the exercise and brings a more dynamic feel to practice. It's not perfect but is a step above static drills.

Yet there are some clear limitations to consider, one of the biggest drawbacks being total lack of recoil. Managing this isn't just about absorbing the physical kickback of the gun, it's about learning how to stay balanced and move quickly for the

next shot. That kind of instinctive control is developed only through repetition with a real firearm, something no simulator can truly replicate.

Then there's the absence of environmental variability, which is a huge part of what makes clay target shooting such a dynamic and fun sport. In the real world, no two shooting sessions are ever quite the same. Wind can alter the flight path of a clay, sunlight or lack of it can affect target visibility and these unpredictable environmental factors force shooters to adapt and think on their feet.

Simulators, on the other hand, operate in a controlled and consistent environment. While this can be helpful for learning fundamentals, it doesn't prepare you for the complexities of a real-life setting. And let's not forget, you're still just pointing a laser at a screen. There's no smell of gunpowder, no satisfying 'crack' of the shot and no real sense of impact when you hit a target. The tactile feedback, weight of the gun, even small rituals like loading shells and calling for the target are all missing. These physical and sensory elements aren't just 'nice to have', they're central to the experience and progression of becoming a better shot.

So while a shooting simulator can certainly serve a purpose, particularly for beginners or as a supplementary tool, it's important to recognise what it's not. It's not a replacement for real practice and won't fully prepare you for the pressures and nuances of a live shooting environment. I hope this helps.

---

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# TOP SHOTS

**FIND ANSWERS FROM THE BEST THERE IS. FROM WHAT TO USE TO WHAT IS THIS, OUR TOP SHOTS ARE HERE TO HELP.**

**Q** A friend of mine recently bought a nice old Sako in .222 Remington. The gun shop he bought it from had .222 ammo on special and gave him 100 rounds as part of the deal. Although the ammo was loose in an ice cream container, it appeared new and the lid was labelled 222R. Yet my friend wasn't able to chamber any of the rounds and after some research found the ammo, while labelled .222R, the 'R' meant rimmed and not Remington as he thought.

Back to the gun shop and the dealer admitted to also being tricked, believing the R meant Remington when he bought the ammo cheap at a gun show. I guess my question is: How can the confusion between these two rounds be fixed as there must be other calibres which have similar markings?

Shane C., NSW

**A** Good question which hopefully should serve as a warning to fellow ammo shoppers. The use of the letter R is a standard convention, mainly used on metric ammunition descriptions such as 6.5x57Rmm being a rimmed version of the 6.5x57mm Mauser cartridge. The .222 rimmed ammo your friend has would be described as 5.56x43Rmm in Europe, while some books also refer to it as .222 Australian as well as .222R.

It's unusual to find the R used after an imperial measurement. In the US, where imperial measurements are the norm, the .308 Winchester (a rimless cartridge) has a rimmed equivalent but is called .307 Winchester to clearly distinguish between the two. That said, some cartridges have both a metric and imperial description depending on which part of the world they come from, such as the .380 ACP also being known as the 9mm Browning Short or even 9x17mm.

The .222R was specifically designed by Bruce Bertram for the Martini Cadet single-shot rifle, which was popularly re-barrelled back in the early 1960s for many different (mainly rimmed) cartridges. Using rimmed cases made it easier to modify the extractor in the Cadet.

Rod Pascoe

**Q** I'm a big fan of lever-action rifles but not their cartridges, most of which seem outdated by modern standards. Consequently, I've been looking at the range of Browning Lever Rifles which I believe offer a better range of cartridges for hunting. Trouble is, none of my hunting friends seem to know much about the BLRs so I was wondering if any of your Top Shots contributors had any experience to pass on.

Robert G, Qld.

**A** The BLR as we know it has been around since the 1970s and has developed a good following among those who like lever-action rifles for hunting. I've owned three in different calibres over the years and always found them to be practical and reliable to use.

The rack and pinion cycling of the bolt is strong and positive and combines with the rotating bolt head to provide a solid lock-up. This is a boon to accuracy in my view and while none of the rifles I owned were benchrest propositions, all would group to around the 2 MOA mark with good qual-

ity factory ammunition, provided the barrel wasn't allowed to heat up too much (this is a characteristic of all skinny barrelled rifles, regardless of make).

The detachable box magazine is much easier to load than a tube and a spare magazine ready to go is easily carried in a pocket or bumbag. Some dislike the gaudy glossy finish of these rifles though I never worried about it, preferring to concentrate on performance rather than cosmetics, such as they are.

That said, the trigger on BLRs is pretty ordinary, a bit heavy and creepy for those who like a trigger which breaks cleanly without overdue effort. For all of that, when it came down to hunting I don't recall a time when I ever considered weight of pull a problem. If I ever had the need for a lever-action rifle in a modern calibre, the BLR would be my first choice every time.

John Dunn



**Q** I recently came across this Belgian-made hammer shotgun and was wondering if one of your Top Shots could assist with the following information. The manufacturer, age of the shotgun and when and who imported these into Australia. Were they popular,

what was the gauge of the shotgun and what are the barrel chokes? Any help appreciated.

Peter, via email

**A** Thanks for the question about your shotgun which was manufactured in Belgium's gun-making centre of Liege. The logo stamped on top of each chamber features a centaur and the words 'Le Centaure'. An online search for Le Centaure shotguns suggests the brand was owned by the large and famous Pieper company from Herstal in Liege, though I couldn't verify this. The English inscription 'made in Belgium' rather than 'fabrique en Belgique' implies guns with this brand were made specifically for export to overseas merchants.

Your gun is 16-gauge with a 70mm chamber length according to the markings and is proofed for smokeless propellant. The '16-70' in the sideways horseshoe-shaped loop only came into effect in 1924 and also indicates smokeless proof, as does the 'PV' stamping as well as the 'pour poudres vives' (French meaning 'for bright powder') stamped on the side of the barrel near the chamber.

The date code 'd' indicates it was made in 1925, the weight of the barrels is shown as 1.278kg and the right-hand barrel is choked, although the extent of choking is difficult to read from your photos. Guns made in 16-gauge were fairly popular in the mid-20th century, though this is no longer the case as the 12-gauge rendered these slightly smaller cartridges almost obsolete.

Geoff Smith

SEND QUESTIONS TO:  
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When seeking information on old or antique firearms, please include a photo of the proof marks on those guns which have them. Old shotguns typically have markings beneath the breech. Also outline the firearm's known history or provenance where possible.

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# IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS AND ADVENTURE

WORDS:  
CHARLOTTE FOX

While we remind ourselves that social media provides a curated view of anyone's life, it's hard not to look at **Sarah McDuffy's** Instagram account (@sarah.mcduffy) and not be drawn in by the images and adventure. Among many other things Sarah is founder of Collective Pursuit, a platform to unite and inspire women while teaching new skills in a positive and nurturing environment. Providing guided hunts, beginner bowhunting courses and woman's group hunts in the NSW Hunter Valley, Collective Pursuit looks after everyone from seasoned bowhunters to those looking to try it for the first time. Sarah spoke to **Charlotte Fox**.



TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF.

I grew up in Buckley, Washington State, US which is at the base of Mount Rainier. I was very much involved in the rodeo scene and my mum had an organic produce farm where I'd help out. To be honest I never saw myself leaving that community, until life happened and I ended up with a chance to travel the world. I knew I wanted to learn new skills and push myself, so I sold everything I owned and started more of a nomadic lifestyle. I'm still back and forth quite a bit but, when I'm here in Australia, I live in the Port Stephens area of New South Wales with my second home back in Washington.

WHAT DO YOU DO FOR WORK?

I work in guided hunts, which is what led me here two and a half years ago. I help people who want to learn how to use a bow, through to guided hunts for deer, pigs and goats.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO HUNTING?

In 2018 I bought my first bow and started learning. Initially I'd shoot my bow every day, anything from 20 to 100 shots. I'd be out there practicing and it was just a form of therapy for me. I didn't grow up in a hunting family, even though my brother and dad were super outdoorsy, so I had to find friends who could teach me to shoot.

I was learning how to provide for myself and saw hunting as a way to do that and be more self-sufficient. I learned as much as I could from other people then ended up being invited to Tennessee and film a little TV show on hunting. I became good friends with the producer who also taught me a lot and from there I was invited to hunt in New Zealand, which is what eventually brought me to Australia. One of the main reasons I got into hunting is it can take you anywhere. Being in the elements not only pushes you and helps your character growing with the challenges, it's such an adventure wherever you go.



TELL ME ABOUT YOUR STUNNING IMAGES FROM AFRICA?

My heart is definitely in Africa, it's one of my favourite places. While that trip came at the time I started to get into hunting, I wasn't there specifically for that reason. At that point in my life I really wanted to serve, step out and find my own voice and the best way to do that is not to turn inward but to turn outward.

I was there helping at a school and found the African people just so full of love for life. They have little to nothing yet they have everything. For anyone thinking of travelling to Africa I highly recommend it. It does so much for everyone and even if you can only spend a few days in a community, it really opens your eyes.

WHICH COUNTRIES DID YOU TRAVEL TO?

I stayed in Uganda but the school I'm currently helping with is in Burkina Faso. I've also





worked in a couple of orphanages and it's hard to compare their life to what we're used to as it's so different. They just don't have the everyday comforts we take for granted. Just to draw water from a well for the day is a 30-mile trek and the bathroom's a hole in the ground.

In relation to food, you may or may not have it and, if you do, it might be mushy rice and beans and that's what you live on. Despite that, I found people always had a smile on their face and were so full of joy. I also found the country so beautiful, not the flat safari plains you might think of as Uganda's so diverse with rolling hills, lakes and rivers. It's stunning wherever you go.

#### WHAT TRIPS WERE MORE RELATED TO HUNTING?

New Zealand. I've been there a few times though only the South Island which has some of the most challenging terrain I've ever hunted. It's steep and you're using your hiking poles just to stop yourself from sliding - it's a whole new level. I've done some challenging hunts in Montana, where you're carrying 50lb packs in 9000-10,000ft elevation, so you're taking a couple of steps and are out of breath.

#### HOW DOES HUNTING IN NEW ZEALAND DIFFER FROM THE US?

Every type of game you hunt is different in relation to the stalking tactics you need and where they're going to be at certain times of the year. You really have to know what you're going after. Back in the US hunting whitetail deer in places like Tennessee and Texas, people hunt from a tree stand. Whitetail are very switched-on, easily spooked and hard to hunt with a bow. That's completely different than putting in the miles, which I prefer.

If you're in Montana hunting elk and mule deer, they're very high up which means it can be tricky just to find them. With elk you're usually hunting them during the rut, so are able to bugle them in, which is a skill in itself. To be honest I prefer the mountains as there's something about standing on a summit.

#### HOW DO YOU CONTINUE LEARNING SKILLS LIKE BUGLING?

In this day and age if you want to learn something, there's always a way to do it. There's so much information available and everyone has their own opinion, so you just have to find what works for you. You also have to be willing to put in the work and test things out. Many times I've researched something, tried it out and it hasn't worked out how I'd hoped but you learn what works for you. Luckily I also have my go-to people and mentors I can call up.

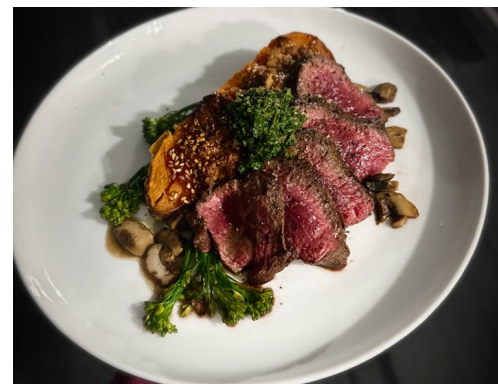
#### SOUNDS LIKE HUNTING IS VERY MUCH ABOUT THE HOLISTIC EXPERIENCE?

It is. There's something about detaching from your phone and being grounded in nature, getting your hands dirty and going through more of your primal senses that just awakens your spirit in another way. It's not just about the skill of capturing the animal, it's also about those moments that'll help you in every area of your life.

It's hard to articulate and explain to people until I bring them along with me, which was a driving force to start running retreats through Collective Pursuit. I also started using hunting for charity. About a year and a half ago, an idea came to me and I started what's called 'a goat for a goat'. Any hunter who shoots a goat with me, I donate a goat in Burkina Faso. For some women it might be the first time they've shot an animal and it's understandable they might feel guilty or it may be challenging. In that moment I say to them: "Hey, you actually just helped a whole village out by this."

#### YOU ALSO HAVE A LOVE FOR COOKING. DO YOU TIE THAT IN WITH HUNTING?

Since I was a kid I've loved experimenting in the kitchen. I've also struggled with health challenges such as Lyme disease, so I had to learn how to cook food which tasted good but was also healthy. With that in mind I'm quite picky about where my meat comes from, where my produce comes from and what ingredients I use. Being able to experiment in the kitchen and create flavourful foods with my own harvest is pretty amazing.





## TELL ME ABOUT THE GUIDED HUNTS.

I'm restructuring a few things so don't have any retreats currently listed on my website but it's something I definitely want to get back to. I was hanging out with a friend who has a bow shop. We were talking about how cool would it be to start something where beginners who've never pulled back a bow or had the chance to hunt can learn to do that, harvest their own meat and stalk an animal properly. We came up with a concept and started putting together guided hunts, then I started my own business in Collective Pursuit, tailored only for women.

## SOUNDS VERY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT PEOPLE MIGHT IMAGINE.

When you go to a retreat it's relaxing but a guided hunt is physically taxing. It's amazing watching women go through those three days and develop so much confidence. Some start thinking they can't even pull back a bow, but they get through the first day being able to put arrows on the target



then dialling-in their shots to the point where they shock themselves. Then you move to the mountains and with that physical challenge you see women who think they can't make it but they do and they light up again. It's amazing growth in such a short time. I'm still very close friends with pretty much all the women I've been able to guide.

## WHAT'S YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN WITH HUNTING STORIES ONLINE?

I like to enjoy my moments so I don't post everything and for the most part everyone's very supportive. I'm excited when somebody reaches out to me, even if it starts off negatively because it allows me to help. Hopefully I can be a sense of reason while also hearing their side. The best part of social media is the connections I've been able to make with people from all over the world having different interactions. That's also how opportunities have unfolded, people reaching out with an offer to go hunting somewhere.

## DO YOU HAVE A SPECIFIC MESSAGE YOU'RE TRYING TO CONVEY?

Helping women find faith in themselves, regaining their confidence and knowing it's okay if we don't fit into a 'cookie cutter' world. I want to be able to connect with people like me, teach them the importance of ethical hunting and respecting the animals we hunt, and to show them you can learn new skills, even if you didn't grow up around it or you're lacking confidence.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON GUIDED HUNTS PLEASE VISIT [COLLECTIVEPURSUIT.COM.AU](http://COLLECTIVEPURSUIT.COM.AU)

Readers who are fans of the show *Alone* will likely have noticed a familiar face in Sarah's photos. Karla Pound co-hosts female hunting retreats with Sarah, amongst many other things that keep her busy! Keep an eye out for Karla Pounds interview with *Australian Shooter* post her season on *Alone* later in the year.



The **Garmin C1 Pro** Chronograph used at the range for *Find out what your rifle likes* on pg54, gives accurate data to hone your craft. Reviewed by *Australian Shooter* in issue June 2024, every AS team member concludes it's worth every pretty penny. RRP \$1099.



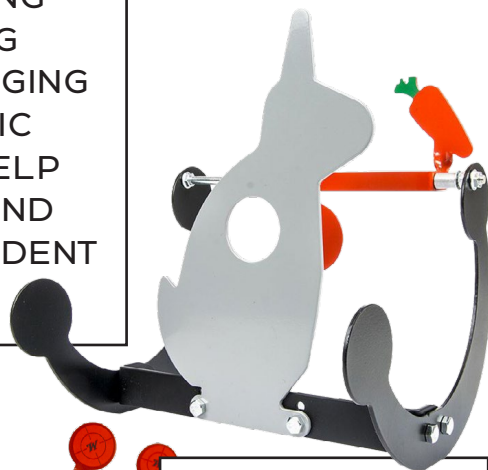
For those looking to dive further into their hobby, a BIY (build it yourself) reloading kit made up of quality, long lasting components is essential. Like the **Hornady** AutoCharge Pro known for it's reliable accuracy RRP \$675. Or for manual measuring - the **RCBS** 1500 Digital Pocket Scale RRP \$110, reviewed in the May 2025 issue of *Australian Shooter*. A **Hornady** Lock-n-load Classic Single Stage press is easy to use for beginners, but won't require replacing as you advance.



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Attention all silhouette shooters: **The Bunnies of Balyang** are changing the game with their reversible silhouette targets with gongs! We like this lifesize sitting fox target made from 12mm Bisalloy 500 with a swinging 100mm gong mounted in its vitals area. Use in the day-time with regular optics or flip it to the reflective side for thermal and night vision scopes. RRP \$249.



**Winchester** had us at auto reset target. The Rolling Rabbit Air Target is designed for .22LR and air rifle shooting. When hit in the vitals, the paddle spins providing instant contact confirmation. For RRP \$50, this is great for both plinking and serious practice. If you like more of a challenge, give their Ferris Wheel 5mm 22LR Target a whirl. If anyone tries this one out, please send pics to [edit@ssaa.org.au](mailto:edit@ssaa.org.au)

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# Get a grip!

## CHRIS REDLICH ENJOYED A TRIPOD OF REAL SUBSTANCE

Once a critic of shooting sticks, I now see the benefit of such an accessory in certain situations. For a hunter like myself who mainly shoots in timbered scrub I prefer to pack light, shoot offhand or take advantage of nature's own rests, until a change of heart was literally handed to me by a guide in New Zealand a couple of years ago.

A fallow buck was spotted 250m below us from a ridge, not clear enough of the manuka bush to shoot but just metres from presenting broadside. Ordinarily I would've prepared for a ridiculously uncomfortable shot while lying on the rocks but, as the photos show, my guide's BOG Pod was a blessing I gladly accepted. From the moment we prepped the legs and took a sight picture of the buck I sat comfortably seated, ready for the shot.

BOG rests have a solid reputation in the industry and an invitation to review their latest DeathGrip Precision Clamping Tripod was welcomed. As the name suggests, this rest has a vice-like grip which could rival that of a Pitbull terrier. Unlike the lighter BOG Pod however, the DeathGrip is designed for securing rifles of all sizes, especially the heavy barrelled, long-range ones which seem to be all the rage these days.

I have to say that despite being light, BOG rests are by no means light duty and while hunting the Alpine slopes they actually doubled-up as walking sticks. The DeathGrip on the other hand, weighing a total of 3.8kg, can be regarded as a heavy-duty alternative that's much bulkier by comparison and not targeted at the lightweight hunter.

STRETCHY LEG STRAP ENSURES  
COMPACT AND SECURE STOWAGE.

Identifying its strength at first glance, dual stainless steel guide pins and a central threaded rod of around 10mm diameter provide a true tightening platform. And at a maximum width of 70mm the vice cradle is large enough to accommodate the widest of rifle stocks. Rippled silicone rubber pads in the cradle not only protect the stock from abrasion but add an element of shock absorption, which is conducive to accuracy.

The large finger-friendly tilt adjustment knob unlocks and allows the clamping head to tilt back and forth to a flexible 270 degrees, while a centre clamp knob permits a full 360 degrees of horizontal panning. I must admit the shaft swivel was so tight at first I had my doubts it would move at all. Then a quick check revealed that by slackening a little grub screw with an Allen key on the base of the shaft pivot, it was moving freely in no time.

Supporting the tripod's clamping cradle are three large (35mm diameter) telescopic aluminium legs. Measuring 600mm closed, the three sections of aluminium pole extend easily to a handy overall 1500mm (straight). Two cam locks on each leg feel solid on closing, instilling confidence on accuracy, particularly for standing shots.

The matt black legs are angle adjustable with each interval clearly marked on the red release pins from 20 degrees (recommended for standing), 45 (sitting) and 85 (lying prone). Despite the designated angle and relative positions however, the angles can be adjusted and locked to suit any desired shooting position from as low as 175mm to 1500mm.

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CAMMING TOGGLE LOCKS THE LEG POSITION; THE RUBBER PADS AND HEAVY DUTY CLAMP ARE WHAT MAKES THE DEATHGRIP (NOTE LARGE DIAMETER GUIDE PINS AND THREADED TIGHTENING SHAFT).

Furthermore, the feet have cleverly placed stainless steel projection pins for locating in soft ground, which are in turn flanked by rubber pads to add grip on hard slippery surfaces. The pins can be wound in or out for further penetration, though the user manual warns against damage or marks on certain surfaces, so I wouldn't plonk the legs on your favourite polished floorboards. For stowage, a stretchy yet strong silicone rubber strap ensures the legs are bound tight and the complete package remains as compact as possible.

With all the DeathGrip's key features combining, they allow plenty of adjustment at the shooter's disposal to suit any terrain, whether standing or sitting, so it was time to test it for real. As expected, the DeathGrip adapted nicely to uneven ground while hunting on a friend's property, as I used it with several rifles including the very heavy Benelli Lupo HPR. The Lupo and Eliminator scope are worth around \$10,000 combined, yet I had enough faith in the tripod to 'suspend' them against the force of gravity at a steep angle.

Lighter rifles are harder to tame at the best of times, yet the DeathGrip made easy work of long shots with a little Ruger American Scout in a variety of scenarios, including safe standing shots above tall grass. All in all it's a superb rest and super strong, though unless I'd had my spinach I wouldn't be keen on carting it around the mountains anytime soon.

Importantly however, a big rifle needs a big rest, so if its pest control on ferals or an easy walk to your favourite varminting domain, I can't think of a sturdier option than this one. Distributed by Nioa, the DeathGrip Precision Tripod is also available in 'Mossy Oak' camo. More at [nioa.com.au](http://nioa.com.au)

STANDING SHOTS FOR VARMINTING MADE EASY WITH THE DEATHGRIP; THE RUBBER FEET COMBINED WITH ADJUSTABLE STEEL PINS HAVE ALL BASES SECURED.



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## The 6.5mm cartridge: Revolution or re-emergence?

**ROD PASCOE  
TACKLES A  
PRICKLY DEBATE**

**T**here's a long history of cartridges using the 6.5mm projectile for target, hunting and military purposes. The bullet was particularly popular for military cartridges in Europe, with Italy adopting the 6.5x52mm Carcano and Greece the 6.5x54mm Mannlicher-Schoenauer. The 6.5x53.5mm Daude-teau was used by the French Navy, the 6.5x55mm Swedish by Norway and Sweden and the 6.5x53mmR by the Dutch and Romanians, to name but a few. Non-European countries which favoured the round included Japan with its 6.5x50mm Arisaka and while it remained a popular calibre in Europe, it was never embraced by hunters in the US or Australia. Until recently, that is.

The 6.5 Creedmoor is the cartridge which sticks in the minds of many shooters as it has probably had the best press and best take-up by shooters joining the 6.5mm bandwagon, helped by some positive feedback from the US military. Yet not all who read the publicity are convinced the new contender is anything special. The fact the military has tested or use something doesn't necessarily mean it'll suit the requirements of sporting shooters.

Another point is new rifles and ammunition are evolving all the time and some products become fads while others simply fade away. Take the .223

THE 6.5X55 SWEDISH (LEFT) CAN ACCEPT BULLETS UP TO 156 GRAINS AND STILL BE USED IN SHORT TO MEDIUM-ACTION RIFLES, YET THE .26 NOSLER CAN ONLY USE LIGHTER, SHORTER BULLETS TO KEEP ITS OVERALL LENGTH WITHIN LIMITS.



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Remington for example, a cartridge also with military roots which hit the streets to fanfare and excellent reviews. So much so the poor old .222 Remington and its rimed brother the .222R are now dinosaurs and have vanished from almost every rifle catalogue.

I say almost as Europeans tend to hold on to firearms and their cartridges when they've proved themselves over time and appear less influenced by fads. Even today in Australia, there are many shooters who claim there was nothing wrong with the triple-two.

Returning to its attributes, the 6.5mm projectile has gained popularity in recent years, especially in precision shooting and military applications. Publicity for newer cartridges such as the 6.5mm Creedmoor, 6.5mm PRC and 6.5-284 Norma has also promoted the projectile as a practical fit between 6mm (.243) and 7.62mm (.308).

Whether or not a 6.5mm projectile is 'superior' to other calibers depends on several factors including its intended use, range and terminal performance. Yet there's an increasing number of people who consider it has certain attributes which stand out from the rest.

One of the main advantages of (some) 6.5mm projectiles is their superior ballistic coefficient (BC). Bullets with higher BC retain velocity better over long distances and are less affected by wind than many other calibers. This makes them an ideal choice for competitive long-range events or military sniping out to 1000 yards or so. That flatter trajectory also reduces the need for extensive elevation adjustments over long distances.

While not as large or heavy as .30 or .338 calibre bullets, the 6.5mm still offers excellent penetration, particularly when paired with modern cartridges. For example the 6.5mm Creedmoor is highly effective in hunting applications, as it can penetrate targets at long range while still delivering sufficient energy to cause damage. The Creedmoor's combination of velocity, energy and accuracy makes it effective in a variety of roles, from hunting medium-sized game to military sniping.

And while it may not be best for heavy animals at extreme ranges, it strikes a good balance for most needs. Though the 6.5mm is superior in many respects, it does have limitations compared to other calibres. Larger ones such as the .308 Winchester and .30-06 Springfield tend to have superior 'stopping power' at close range or for larger game, due to their greater bullet mass and energy.

6.5mm cartridges have become favourites in competitive shooting partly due to their combination of low recoil, excellent long-range accuracy and relatively easy-to-manage ballistics, making them ideal for both precision rifles and self-loaders. The 6.5mm calibres, especially in cartridges like the Grendel and 6.5x47 Lapua, tend to be more powder-efficient than larger ones like .308 Winchester or .300 Win Mag. This means they can achieve comparable or even superior long-range performance while using less propellant, which leads to less recoil and potentially longer barrel life.

Now I'm not going to defend or denigrate any particular cartridge or suggest there's such a thing as the 'perfect' bullet, as everyone has a different requirement for their firearm/ammunition combination and so opinions and choices will differ. So if you're sold on the 6.5mm projectile, the next step is to determine how fast you want it to go.

When you look at a line-up of modern 6.5s what you see is a common bullet in terms of calibre, usually around 120gr or 140gr weight, being pushed out by varying amounts of propellant. In very simple terms, a brass silo of powder in combination with the bullet on top forms the cartridge. This reminds me of the 155mm Howitzer and other non-cartridge firing artillery systems, which use 'charge bags' behind a specific projectile selected for the task. The number of charge bags used is determined by how far the projectile must travel to do its job.

We've come a long way since development of the 6.5x55mm Swedish in 1894. Typical factory loads for the Swede with a 120-grain projectile



SILOS OF POWDER. THE 6.5 GRENDL (LEFT) ALONGSIDE A 6.5-300 WEATHERBY MAGNUM.



LEFT: SOME OF THE CURRENT OFFERINGS (FROM LEFT) 6.5 GRENDL, 6.5X47 LAPUA, 6.5 CREEDMOOR, .260 REMINGTON, 6.5X55 SWEDISH, 6.5-284 NORMA, .26 NOSLER AND 6.5-300 WEATHERBY MAGNUM.



RIGHT: A FEW OLD FAVOURITES (FROM LEFT) 6.5MM JAPANESE ARISAKA, 6.5MM CARCANO, 6.5X54MM MANNLICHER-SCHOENAUER, 6.5MM REMINGTON MAGNUM, 6.5X57MM MAUSER, 6.5X57R AND .264 WINCHESTER MAGNUM.



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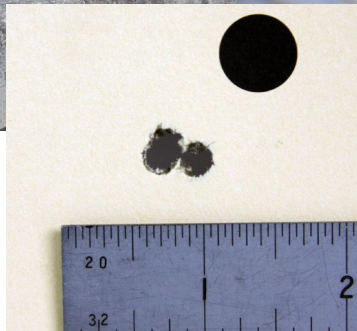
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ROD WITH HIS SAVAGE MODEL 12 IN 6.5-284 NORMA AND (INSET) A RESPECTABLE GROUP AT 100M (PHOTO TAKEN REMOTELY).



produce muzzle velocity in the order of 2850fps and muzzle energy of 2150ft-lbs (with a 140-grain projectile, 2600fps and 2220ft-lbs). Handloads are numerous and every bullet and powder manufacturer offers loads for the Swede with bullet weights ranging from 120-156 grains.

History also shows many cartridges developed in the 20th century didn't make it to the 21st, most notable being the 6.5mm Remington Magnum, introduced in 1966 and now considered obsolete. Developed by Remington for its Model 600 carbines then later for Model 700 rifles, it soon fell out of favour, as the rifle magazines required bullets be deep-seated thereby reducing powder capacity and performance.

Remington offered factory ammunition with light bullets, where you'd think heavier would be preferred with such a large case and powder capacity. Bullets of 100 and 120 grains were capable of 3200 and 3000fps respectively. The only other rifle manufacturer to take up the cartridge was Ruger with its Model 77, though today none offer a rifle for the 6.5 Remington Magnum cartridge.

A survey of ammunition used at the European Rifle Metallic Silhouette Championships in 2022, an event shot over 500m standing off-hand, showed the following. Of 25 competitors in the custom or open rifle division, there was one who used 7.62x39, one 7mm-08, three .308 Winchester, four .260 Remington and 15 used 6.5x55 Swedish ammunition. The top three finishers all used the last one.

In the same year at a major event in the US the breakdown was very different. Apart from having

far more competitors, of the 89 shooters in the open division, 15 used .260 Remington; 7mm-08 Remington (14 shooters); 6mm BR and 6.5 Creedmoor (both 13); .308 Winchester and 6.5x47 Lapua (five each); 7mm BR (four), 6.5 TCU and 6.5 BR (three each); 6x47 and 6.5x55 Swedish (two each) and one each using 6mm Creedmoor, .243 Winchester and another 7mm cartridge.

It's interesting to see such a vast difference in these figures, one being how the Europeans didn't use any wildcat cartridges while the Americans chose several. Nevertheless, the 6.5mm projectile dominated in both regions yet was used in entirely different cartridges, the 6.5x55 Swedish in Europe and .260 Remington and 6.5mm Creedmoor in the US.

The re-emergence of the 6.5mm projectile at the beginning of this century has been embraced by shooters, firearms manufacturers and bullet makers. And within the past few years, experimenters have been busy in their sheds producing wildcat cartridges in the belief they can improve on the commercial offerings. The 6.5/300 RCM (otherwise known as the 6.5 Extreme) and 6.5-300 SAUM are fancy creations based on the Hornady .300 RCM and Remington's .300 Short Action Ultra Magnum cases respectively. Whether these wildcats have a chance in the highly competitive 6.5mm market against the many current factory offerings remains to be seen.

## CONCLUSION

The 6.5mm projectile is considered superior to other calibres for certain applications, especially in terms of long-range accuracy, lower recoil and ballistic performance. Its high BC, flat trajectory and ability to perform well at extended distances make it a preferred choice for competitive shooting. Yet it's not necessarily superior for all uses, particularly in situations where stopping power or penetration against heavily armoured targets is required.

The wide variety of case shapes and sizes capable of housing the 6.5mm projectile gives handloaders and shooters of factory-loaded ammo excellent choices. The decision of which 6.5mm bullets to load into a cartridge case (any case) is a matter for the individual, their hunting or target shooting requirement and expectations for the completed cartridge. This article hasn't covered all 6.5mm cartridges developed over the years but will hopefully show why some will make it and others won't. The future of the 6.5s described here should be determined only by their ability to perform.



THE 6.5X55 SWEDISH (LEFT) AND 6.5-284 NORMA. CASE LENGTHS ARE ROUGHLY THE SAME BUT THE NORMA HOLDS A FAR BIGGER POWDER CHARGE.

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# Preserve those trophy tusks

## JOSEPH NUGENT'S TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

**A**s long as humans have been hunting, the practice of preserving bone, tooth and hide as a lasting memory of past success has been common practice. Obviously there are several ways to do so, generally tailored to the part of an animal being preserved and style of mount desired. In my experience one of the simplest yet easiest-to-damage trophies would have to be feral pig tusks.

Talking with some of my hunting companions, they mentioned that a number of their pig tusks had been damaged over time, some through accidents resulting in mounts falling off the wall and others cracking over the years. When I asked what they'd filled the tusks with I was met with a look of confusion, so it occurred to me not everyone knows how to properly care for and mount pig tusks. There are two important steps in preserving them for best results, these being preparation and mounting.

### PREPARATION

#### STEP 1: REMOVAL

Once you've been lucky enough to secure a quality boar, the first step is to remove the jaw using a knife, axe or bone saw. Once this is done, take care to remove the tongue and any extra tissue which may be attached. It's also a good idea to carefully saw off the end of the jaw at an appropriate point to allow access to the rear of the tusks.

#### STEP 2: CLEANING

Natural decay is the first step in cleaning pig tusks. Unlike full skull mounts, I generally only allow them to sit in the garden for two to three weeks before they're adequately cleaned out by maggots and insects. The idea behind this is to reduce and loosen any tissue attached to the bone prior to being boiled. During the boiling process, I mix dishwashing liquid and water in a large metal pot and simmer over a gas cooker or open fire.



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It's important to not over-boil the tusks, as prolonged exposure to high temperatures can cause teeth to fall out or crack the bone. While the jaw is simmering, I check it every 15 minutes and attempt to remove any loose tissue which may peel from the bone. It's important to get right into the back of the jaw with a hose or pressure washer and remove any tissue which may be inside.

#### STEP 3: WHITENING

After the jaw and tusks are completely clean and free of tissue, they need to be whitened. This is done by mixing a bottle of commercially available hydrogen peroxide and four to five litres of water. Set the tusks in the solution for three or four days and scrub with a scourer sponge where needed to remove any stains from the tusks and jaw. Once adequately whitened, leave in the sun for several days and allow to completely dry then, when this is done, the tusks are ready to mount.

#### MOUNTING

**Full jaw:** This is the most common feral pig mount and involves taking the finished jaw, cutting it to the desired length and attaching to a board. Things to remember include ensuring the jaw bone is cut square and sits flat against the board and, most importantly, fill the tusks and back of the jaw with glue or clear silicon. The idea behind

this is to prevent the teeth and tusks cracking or moving over time. From there, mark the rear of the board and secure the jaw with screws.

**Tusks only:** This is the simplest type of feral pig mount and involves removing the tusks from the jaw completely and securing them to a board. If a tusk mount is desired, they may be removed during the boiling process while the jaw is warm and slightly malleable. It's important to remember they're fragile and prone to being cracked or shattered if not removed with care. If unable to be removed from the front of the jaw, cutting the rear of the jaw and sliding them out rearward is also a viable option. Similar to the full jaw, tusks should be filled with clear silicone or glue to make them more robust and prevent cracking over time. Once filled and allowed to dry, they can be glued directly to a board as desired.

There are various ways of preserving feral pig tusks, however the practice of gently removing tissue, whitening and correctly mounting them has proven successful for me over the years. Filling with clear silicone or glue is a great way to make tusks more durable and reduce the likelihood of cracking. Pig tusks are one of the simplest and most common taxidermy items in Australia. Serving as a tangible memory of past hunts, tusk mounts quite rightly adorn the walls of pubs, sheds and mancaves across the country.

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# When Performance matters



## PAUL MILLER SALUTES ANOTHER ITALIAN MASTERPIECE

**A**llowing for the fact Beretta has been producing firearms since the early 1500s, I don't believe they ever made a side-by-side or over-and-under shotgun with anything other than a traditional walnut stock. This means that for more than 500 years there's been a continuous history of evolving firearms design with, more recently, different synthetic materials being used in some of the stocks on their self-loading shotguns. These are designed to withstand vigorous use in the field and often to make these firearms lighter to carry.

When I opened the smart blue plastic protective carry case we see included with most Beretta firearms, I was pleasantly surprised at how the new grey and black laminated stock looked. Especially so for what a cranky old conservative walnut guy I've always been (that's cranky and conservative and lover of walnut, not always old!)

I've written before that Beretta shotguns (both side-by-side and over-and-under) have always been extremely popular in Australia. They've continuously improved over time with models designed specifically for Trap and Skeet shooting and, more recently, Sporting Clays. Underpinning all this design and innovation are the field models like the basic yet excellent 686 Silver Pigeon 1, which we've reviewed here at least twice over the years.

It would be fair to say this is the base model which historically leads to the 687 series, then to the 682 and most recently to the 694 which we're familiar with in recent years. I think the 688 Performance on review here sits logically between the 682 and 694 series, certainly in terms of its model number, though its technology and inclusions make it a very real competitor to the 694.



#### ACTION

The 688 Performance action is black and redesigned to be wider and heavier. This fits the more recent trend in top-shelf competition guns to put extra weight between the hands, to improve handling and slightly dampen recoil even further. It's decorated simply with a diagonal line and two horizontal ones milled into the sides of the action to create a modern effect. This is complemented by a bright red '688' on the sides, along with the famous Beretta logo in the same colour on the bottom of the action. The black action and red engraving go together perfectly and lend a modern 'racy' feel to the gun.

The single inertia-operated trigger is adjustable for finger length and comfort and pulls were crisp at around 3lbs. The ejectors worked perfectly and the top lever was easy to use, even for a lefty like me. Top of the action is stippled to break up any

reflection you might otherwise generate when mounting the gun in sunny conditions, a nice practical touch.

#### STOCK AND FORE-END

The grey laminated wood stock and fore-end make this gun look very modern and, in a way, purposeful. First impressions were highly favourable and this only improved when I put the gun together and had a feel for how well it mounted and swung.

The stock's designed to be more weather resistant and is heavier than a comparable walnut option. It's also a little thicker through the comb and features the B-Fast adjustable system which is easy to tweak with the tool provided. Drop at comb and heel dimensions are in the order of 1.5" and 2.20", which allows a nice upright head position and flat-shooting pattern placement with the adjustable stock in its lowest position.



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ACTION TO PREVENT GLARE.



The adjustable comb allows for fine-tuning and that's what makes this gun so comfortable and effective for shooters of different shapes and sizes. The stock has a very comfortable and effective 18mm MicroCore recoil pad which can be swapped with thicker or thinner aftermarket Beretta MicroCore pads to lengthen or shorten length of pull depending on your specific needs.

The fore-end is of the modern slim design we're seeing recently on several upmarket English and Italian shotguns and is highly comfortable in the hand. It promotes a nice relationship between the hand and the barrels and gives a feel of precision and pointability I particularly liked. Both stock and fore-end are laser checkered and the pattern perfectly executed, providing a comfortable and secure grip. This stock is clearly designed for a serious competition shooter with a



BERETTA'S FIRST LAMINATED SHOTGUN STOCK IS BOTH MODERN LOOKING AND ALSO APPEARS TO REDUCE RECOIL.

steep pistol grip which gives a good relationship between trigger finger and trigger. It feels super comfortable with its gentle palm swell and offers excellent gun control.

#### BARRELS

These are the excellent 30" Steelium Optima-bore HP which are used on Beretta's higher-end competition guns. It's also available in 32" for taller than average shooters, or those who like the precision and increased steadiness longer barrels can provide. These are ventilated between the barrels, which are in turn immaculately blued and topped with a slightly tapered ventilated rib (10mm to 8mm) at the muzzle. This leads the eye perfectly out to the target and while we don't 'aim' a shotgun, it certainly adds to the feeling of precision when 'pointing'. Five extended Optima chokes provide excellent patterns and destroyed targets.

#### SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

This 688 performed superbly and is obviously the product of a great deal of thought, time and money spent in research and development on both stock and action. The thinking behind the laminated stock seems to be about weather-proofing and consistency of weight distribution. Combine this with the slightly wider and heavier action and you end up with a gun that's perfectly weighted over the hinge pin.

This makes for sweet handling and also seems to dampen recoil more than a conventional wooden stock. Of course weight plays a part in this effect, though there's a theory that laminated rifle stocks reduce recoil and this philosophy seems to have been carried over into this first-time laminated stock on a Beretta shotgun.

This gun performed as well as any Beretta I've tested and is testament to the quality of manufacture and dedication they put into all their firearms. I have to say the modern look grew on me very quickly, so I'm grateful they didn't send me the 32" left-handed model as I may have called my bank manager and extend the mortgage yet again. Highly recommended. ●

## SPECIFICATIONS

### Manufacturer:

Beretta

### Model:

688 Performance

### Gauge:

12-gauge

### Action:

Boxlock ejector

### Trigger:

Adjustable, breaks at 4lb

### Barrel length:

30" or 32"

### Chokes:

Five extended Optima HP

### Stock and fore-end:

Grey and black laminated hardwood

### Stock dimensions:

Length of pull 14.75", 1.5" at comb and 2.25" at heel

### Weight:

8.5lbs

### Warranty:

12 months (24 if registered with Beretta Australia)

### Accessories:

Choke and tools included in plastic box with gun oil

### RRP:

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# Life on the edge

## SENIOR CORRESPONDENT JOHN DUNN ON THE SECRET OF HIS SUCCESS

**W**hen I first started hunting sambar deer in the late 1970s it was all about the mountains and back country with steep gullies, tall timber and thick scrub where deer could - and often did - disappear in the blink of an eye like grey will o' the wisps. For some years I was a guest with a hound team who took great pride in hunting the 'mongrel country' other teams shied away from.

Hunting with them reinforced the notion the sambar really was a back country animal. It was always physically challenging with meagre rewards considering the effort involved, yet despite that their teamwork and camaraderie made it seem like a grand adventure and, looking back, I have to acknowledge they taught me a lot. Most important was a basic grounding in deer sign and where to find it, experience I couldn't have acquired anywhere else at the time. They also taught me how deer use the country they live in and, in doing so, convinced me there had to be a better way to hunt them.

For me that better way came courtesy of a farming family I met through my (then) employment. As luck would have it, they owned land along the edge of some wonderful mountain country which was home to a strong population of sambar. When I was eventually invited to hunt on the property it opened a whole new world to me and, some 40 years later, I'm still hunting there.

Still stuck with a back country mindset I initially only scouted the farm land for sign, then hunted on what I found. It worked well enough and didn't take long before I knew where most of the wallows and bedding areas were within two or three kilometres of the farm fringe. It took a few more years for me to eventually realise most of the deer I was seeing or taking were much closer

to the edge of the bush. There was no need to go right out to hunt as working the edge country was a far easier option.

That said, it still requires a good working knowledge of the animals being hunted: Where they come from and go to after they've been, where they're most likely to be feeding at any given time of year, how they use open country to their advantage and how their patterns of movement can be short-circuited successfully.

In the early days I stalked the bush edge, trying to catch animals out as they fed back into cover of a morning or carefully edged out to feed in the evening. The most important thing I learned was timing is crucial. I had to be in the right place at the right time which wasn't always easy, as a simple complication like a change in weather was sometimes all it took to make the deer go elsewhere.

Learning to predict where that might be set in train yet another batch of learning experiences and eventually I had it pretty well nailed. Concurrent with that came the realisation that moving about farm fringe country at the optimum times of dawn and dusk more often than not gave the game away. I began to sit back and watch likely areas, using binoculars instead of boots to find what I was looking for.

Initially I planted in patches of natural cover where I could, hoping to go unnoticed. Sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't and the natural progression from there was to establish blinds which overlooked feeding and travel areas. Before long I'd a network of places I could choose from and use, depending on prevailing weather conditions. From there I moved on to tree stands, though I no longer use them after I almost fell 15 years ago. Even so, for the past 25 years the bulk of my sambar hunting has been sit and wait.





ABOVE: NOT A LEAF OUT OF PLACE. THIS FALLEN TREE WAS USED AS A GROUND BLIND TO TAKE A SAMBAR STAG FEEDING IN A CROP PADDOCK; RIGHT: CLASSIC EDGE COUNTRY SCENARIO. SAMBAR FIND A RYEGRASS PADDOCK ON THE EDGE OF TIMBER IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST. RIFLE IS A NO.1 RUGER IN .375 H&H.



ABOVE: HUNTING FROM A TREE STAND IS A GREAT WAY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF EDGE COUNTRY OPPORTUNITIES, THOUGH MUCH PATIENCE IS REQUIRED.

Sit and wait hunting isn't for everyone. A lot of younger hunters find it boring, preferring to be up and about, while older folk like me enjoy the idea of just sitting back and letting the afternoon tick away. There's always something happening and the longer you sit the more you see. Fitting unobtrusively into the rhythm of what's happening of an afternoon is a bonus. If everything in a paddock is as normal, deer are more likely to put in an appearance before it's too dark to see them.

Kangaroos, wallabies, rabbits and stock feeding along the edge of the bush as they normally do give deer confidence to shed their natural wariness and come out to play. In undisturbed country, I've seen up to half a dozen sambar feeding in the open in the last of the afternoon. Admittedly they're never too far from the bush, yet the sit and wait hunter does have the chance to look them over at leisure, especially from a tree stand.

That doesn't mean the deer aren't alert. One overcast winter afternoon many years ago, I was in a ground blind watching a sambar hind and her yearling calf feeding in a strip-grazed paddock. The landholder came up the track on a quad bike to push a herd of cows back to the dairy for their afternoon milking. As soon as the deer heard the machine approaching, they melted back into the bush and stood out of sight.

When the cows and quad had gone and the sound of the engine faded away, they fed back out into the open, apparently feeling safe again in the quiet of the evening. They were still there when I walked away after dark. The obvious lesson there is deer are always alert to what's going on around them, so a hunter needs to fit seamlessly into their habitat to have any chance of success, something that can be all but impossible when still hunting in the bush.

There are other advantages to tree stands. If one has been thoughtfully located, a hunter doesn't have to worry about deer catching his scent on the breeze as it's usually well above them. Another plus is deer and most other animals seldom look up, so a patient hunter sitting still and quietly is unlikely to be spotted.

As an older hunter who can no longer physically tackle the steep stuff, the big advantage of edge-country hunting is recovery of any animal taken is generally easy. A truck or tractor can usually be driven to within easy reach of where it needs to be, and while sometimes a deer may have to be rolled down a hill or even dragged a bit, that's always preferable to having to carry it out.

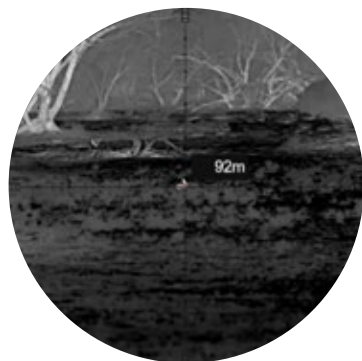
Some of the Philistines I know in the hunting fraternity see my preferred methods of hunting the edge country as 'old-mannish', which they probably are. That said, it provides me with a way to maintain an interest in something which, for a long time, was a driving force in my life. It keeps me in the game and is very much the alternative to not being able to hunt at all.



WELL-USED SAMBAR WALLOW WITH A VIEW OVER THE GRAZING LANDS THEY LOVE TO FEED IN.

# The heat is on

## MATTHEW GODSON HAILS A SUPERB THERMAL SCOPE



**T**he Pulsar Thermion 2 LRF XL60 is a thermal riflescope combining high-definition thermal imaging with an integrated laser rangefinder in a robust, user-friendly package. Built for mid to long-range shooting, this scope exemplifies Pulsar's top-tier engineering and innovation, making it one of the most powerful optics currently available for thermal imaging in the field.

At its heart is a 1024 x 768 resolution thermal sensor paired with an F60/1.1 objective lens. This combination produces some of the clearest thermal imagery available on a commercial scope, allowing the user to detect heat signatures at distances of up to 2.8kms. Whether scanning open terrain for pest animals or identifying distant targets in complete darkness, fog or bush, the XL60 will excel in virtually any condition.

Accompanying the high-resolution sensor is a 2560 x 2560 Micro-OLED display. This provides vivid visuals and detailed target rendering, significantly enhancing user experience compared to earlier models. Combined with Pulsar's image boost technology, the scope delivers excellent contrast and clarity which enables users to distinguish subtle heat differences with ease.

One of the standout features of the XL60 is its integrated laser rangefinder (LRF), which can accurately measure distances up to 800m. This function is seamlessly built into the scope's design, providing instant distance readings without the need for an external device. For long-range shooting the LRF is a gamechanger as it allows for precise shot placement, substantially reducing the risk of missed shots. The ability to quickly gauge the exact distance to a target is invaluable, especially when engaging at longer ranges or in low-visibility.

Pulsar has designed the XL60 with rugged durability in mind. The scope features an IPX7 waterproof rating, making it submersible in up to one meter of water for 30 minutes. Additionally, it's engineered to withstand the recoil of powerful firearms including .375 H&H. This resilience ensures the scope remains zeroed and operational even after repeated firing on heavy-recoiling

rifles. The unit's also built with a metal-alloy housing which combines strength with relatively lightweight handling at 1.2kg. It retains the classic aesthetics of a traditional riflescope, fitting seamlessly on standard 30mm rings to simplify mounting and integration with existing set-ups.

Battery life is another strong point of the XL60, the scope featuring a dual system with both an internal and a removable external battery. Combined, these can provide up to 10 hours of continuous operation. This extended life means fewer interruptions during prolonged field sessions, ensuring the scope's ready when needed most. And there's no reason why you couldn't buy additional batteries to extend that even further.

Customizable user profiles and modes further enhance the XL60's field performance. Users can switch between different brightness and contrast pre-sets to suit varying environmental conditions so, whether operating in dense bush or open plains, users can fine-tune their visuals for optimal performance.

Despite its complexity and feature-rich design, the XL60 maintains a remarkably intuitive interface. The user-friendly menu system is accessible through a side-mounted turret and control buttons which are easy to operate even wearing gloves. Key features like zeroing profiles, picture-in-picture mode, video recording and wi-fi streaming to mobile devices via the Stream Vision 2 app, make the XL60 not just a scope but a fully integrated hunting and shooting platform.

The picture-in-picture feature allows users to zoom in on a specific area of the image without losing peripheral visibility, invaluable for target identification and tracking in dynamic environments. In addition, the video recording function lets you capture hunts or training sessions for review or sharing. To further enhance integration, the XL60 comes with a wireless remote control. This duplicates many functions such as turning the device and display off, performing calibration, digital zooming, activating rangefinder and navigating the menu. All that's required is to connect the remote control to the device's Bluetooth via the menu.



WARNE QUICK-DETACH MOUNTS OFFER ADAPTABILITY; SHOOTING OFF A TRIPOD ENABLES PRECISE ACCURACY.



When comparing the XL60 to its predecessor the XL50, the most significant upgrades include a higher resolution sensor (1024 x 768 vs. 640 x 480), sharper Micro-OLED display, integrated LRF and improved eye relief (65mm) which makes it more comfortable and safer for use with high-recoiling firearms. Increased base magnification (2.5x compared to 2.0x in the XL50) allows for better long-range visibility and identification. The laser rangefinder's seamless integration into the scope design is a major enhancement, eliminating the need for a separate range-finding device, so the XL60 represents a substantial leap forward in both technology and practical utility.

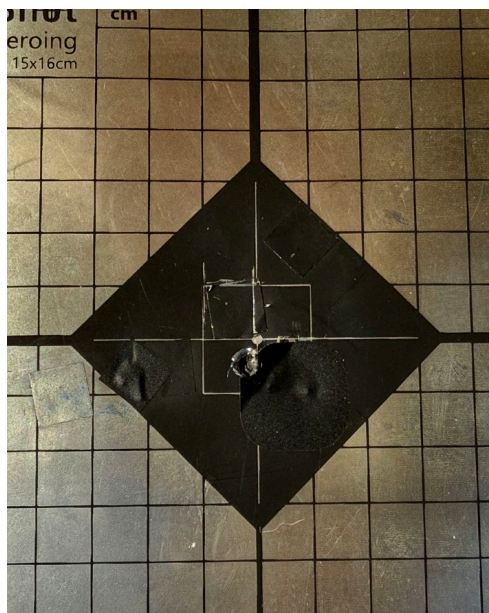
#### IN THE FIELD

To get the most out of the XL60's LRF function I installed their Stream Vision Ballistics App on my phone, paired it with the scope and created a 'ballistic profile' for the ammunition I was going to use. Luckily that ammo was already in the pre-loaded database, though if it hadn't been it would simply be a case of entering the relevant ammunition data and you're good to go. You also have an option of entering environmental data either manually or live via phone sensors to strengthen the ballistic calculations. Once the profile set-up on the app was complete, I simply connected then synced to the scope. This allowed the scope to instantly calculate holdover and wind corrections based on the ballistic data entered when the LRF button is pressed.

Sighting-in was a breeze. After going through the process of aligning the reticle with point of impact, use the Zoom Zeroing function to improve accuracy of your final zero. By increasing the magnification level, the smaller the step of shifting on the reticle will be. For example the click value at 100m for 2.5x is 16mm, 5x is 8mm, 10x is 4mm and 20x is 2mm. When you're close enough to 'dead-on' using the one-shot zero process outlined in the manual, simply measure the distance between point of aim and point of impact. With a few click adjustments your zero will be as precise as it can be.

Where I'd set up my sighting bench, I observed some rabbit sign in areas beyond where I'd placed the target frame. I decided if I stayed around until dusk, the odd rabbit might pop its head up before I moved to another part of the property. I sighted-in the XL60 at 50m thinking any longer shots would test the accuracy of the ballistic calculator. The first rabbit wandered out at around 100m just on dark and the second a bit further out, both accounted for with direct head shots.

A third was taken at just under 200m, all of them ranged using the LRF and subsequently shot with the point of aim indicated by the ballis-



WITH JUST A COUPLE OF CLICKS YOUR ZERO WILL BE PRECISE.

tic calculator. Successfully hitting small targets like rabbits consistently at reasonable distances, provided me with enough evidence to suggest the ballistic calculator works a treat. If time had been on my side I'd have tried some longer-range testing on gongs to really stretch its credentials.

#### AND FINALLY . . .

The XL60 can boast a range of strengths which make it a top-tier choice in thermal optics. It delivered exceptional resolution and image clarity, enabling accurate target identification even at extended distances. With long detection and recognition ranges, an integrated laser rangefinder with up to 800m of range and a rugged, waterproof design built to withstand high recoil, this scope is designed for demanding use.

Its long battery life, thanks to the dual battery system, and user-friendly interface packed with advanced features make it both practical and powerful in the field. These capabilities make it particularly well-suited to long-range hunting in open or challenging environments, predator and pest control requiring precise shot placement as well as activities demanding fast, accurate range estimation.

While the XL60 excels in performance its high price point may be prohibitive for some users, especially those new to thermal optics but, as they say, 'buy once, cry once'. Furthermore, the advanced features may present a bit of a learning curve for beginners but, for professional shooters and hunters requiring reliable and high-performing optics for all environments, this one stands out as a valuable and capable tool. The Thermion 2 LRF XL60 is distributed by Tasco Sales Australia and has an RRP of around \$9,999.



THE 60MM LENS PROVIDES A 2.5X BASE MAGNIFICATION.

THE XL60 IS A TOP-TIER CHOICE IN THERMAL OPTICS; EVEN ON NORMAL SETTING, RABBITS ARE CLEARLY IDENTIFIED BEYOND 200M.

# A slice of German history

## DEREK NUGENT UNEARTHES A LONG-LOST GEM



THE WIDDER AS GIFTED, CLEARLY WORSE FOR WEAR.

**T**he phrase ‘Diamond in the Rough’ first appeared in common usage around 1785 and remains a well understood phrase to this day. Obviously it doesn’t literally refer to an uncut diamond, rather to something with hidden worth, value or beauty. Something which initially appears plain or unrefined, yet has quality at its core and usually requires some form of intervention to reveal its full potential.

I recently had one such gem quite literally fall into my hands in the form of a rather nondescript old knife in a well-used and weatherbeaten sheath. It was gifted to me by a neighbor who was aware of my interest in knives. She’d inherited it from her brother many years ago and it had languished in her garage until it found its way into my possession.

### NEVER JUDGE A BOOK . . .

At first glance the knife had absolutely nothing to recommend it. The sheath was battered and bruised, the leather brittle and perhaps the victim of rodent predation. The knife itself was dirty, metalwork tarnished and lightly pitted with rust in places, the blade showing obvious signs of a rigorous life which hadn’t carried an edge for years. It reminded me of my old Scout knife, a cheap blade carried more for looks than practicalities, back in the days when adolescents were still trusted to routinely carry such things in public.

It was only when I started to handle the knife I had an inkling there might be more to it than met the eye. I noticed immediately the quality of the design - a classic trailing point skinner. The balance and proportions were perfect and fitted my hand like a glove, naturally drawing my thumb to the well-placed and generous ramp machined into the spine.

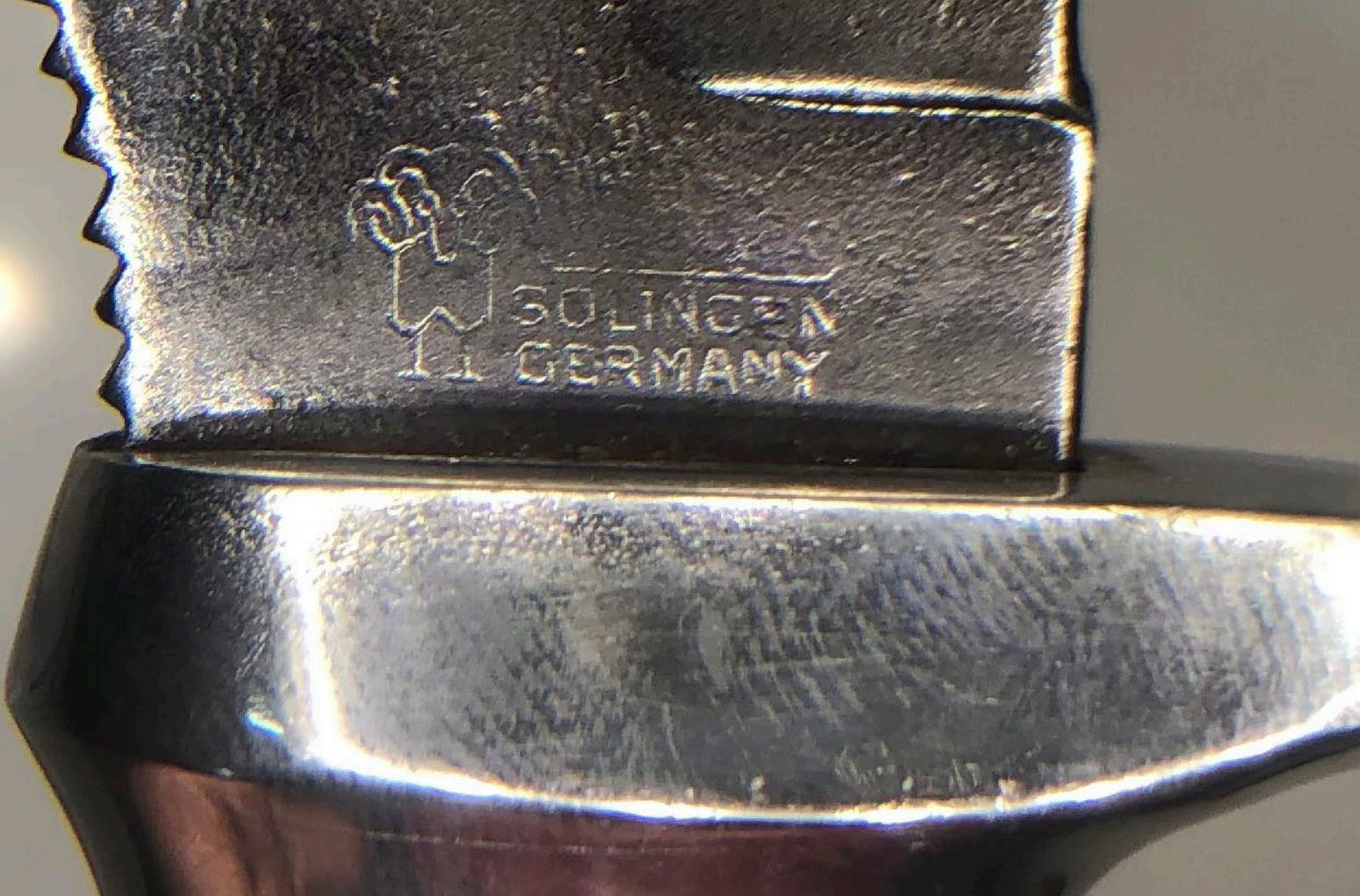
The handle was made up of 17 slim, tightly packed leather rondels which, unlike the sheath, had stood the test of time. Additionally, the knife was as ‘tight’ as the day it was made and nothing had worked loose or separated with use over the years. It gave every impression of being a good quality, well-manufactured blade though it did concern me I couldn’t find a maker’s stamp anywhere.

Having had my curiosity piqued I turned my attention to the sheath, hoping to find some indicators of the knife’s pedigree. After giving it a thorough clean I used a torch and magnifying glass to unlock further secrets, being amazed to be able to read on the belt loop the words ‘Solingen Western Germany’ and discern the imprint of a maker’s name: Widder.

This was enough to have me on the phone to a mate with the necessary gear to refurbish and polish the metalwork and, several hours, later I was enjoying a Cinderella moment. The gem had emerged from the rough. The metalwork had been buffed to a shine and returned the blade to its former glory but, more importantly, the process had revealed a maker’s mark which confirmed the information I’d gleaned from the sheath. Etched into the metal in barely legible script beside a stylized ram icon was the name ‘Widder’ and below it ‘Solingen Germany’.

Solingen is known as ‘The City of Blades’ and has always been regarded as the centre of the German knifemaking industry, being home to numerous quality manufacturers like Puma and Boker among others. The name was first documented in 1067 and the modern variant has been in common use since the late 1300s.

In fact archaeological records show Solingen has been a centre of blacksmithing for more than 2000 years and, during the Middle Ages, was



renowned for the quality of its swords with manufacturing processes a closely-guarded secret. The city was destroyed by Allied bombing in 1944 but subsequently rebuilt and re-established as Germany's premier knifemaking centre. A Solingen knife is a good knife.

#### THE GAME'S AFOOT

The next task was to investigate the maker's reputation and try to date the knife. Widder is German for ram, hence the stylized ram icon which is the trade mark of Karl Piel OHG of Solingen. The company seems to have enjoyed a reputation for well-made, good quality knifeware which was heavily imported into foreign markets including the US in the 1950s and '60s.

Widder knives are common enough lots on specialist auction sites, with prices starting from around \$200 for factory-made blades to more than \$700 for the rarer handmade range, depending on condition of course. Their marketed as 'vintage collector's items' with most being dated from the 1960s to 1980s. The earliest confirmed Widder knife I could locate was dated circa 1930 and my understanding is production ceased in the late '80s.

Widder produced knives in an assortment of sizes and patterns including Bowies, skinners, daggers, utility and hunting. Interestingly, all

examples I located featured antler handles and I couldn't find a single example of a leather grip like mine. They say imitation is the greatest form of flattery and, from my research, it became clear Widder designs were widely replicated by the Gutmann Cutlery Co., another Solingen manufacturer. Whether there was some form of business arrangement between the two companies or the patterns were simply copied I've no idea.

However, these Gutmann 'Edge' brand knives are exact twins of Widder products of the time, even down to the unique screw in the pommel for affixing and tightening the tang. Edge-brand knives were an example of the 'house brand' industry which flourished in Solingen throughout the 1960s and into the 1980s. The process saw the same factory make identical yet differently branded blades for a variety of foreign importers, a practice which continues around the world to this day.

Another example was Eurocut knives, also produced from 1960 well into the '80s. This enterprise saw several quality manufacturers turn out Eurocut-branded knives in factories alongside their own brands, the consortium including the likes of Widder, Boker and Puma. It was perhaps in response to the success of the house brand industry that from the late 1960s onwards, Widder stamped their hugely popular trailing



TRADITIONAL WIDDER TRADEMARK STAMP REVEALED AFTER BLADE RESTORATION; WIDDER TRADEMARK STAMP AS USED ON HANDMADE 'PRESENTATION' QUALITY KNIVES.



BEFORE AND AFTER RESTORATION,  
NOW READY TO RESUME WORK.



point skinning knives 'Original Buffalo Skinner', where prior to that point these buffalo skinner blades were adorned only with the manufacturer's stamp.

#### A BIRD IN THE HAND

So what is this knife which sits so comfortably in my hand? Without doubt I have an authentic factory-made 5" Widder buffalo skinner and while not a handmade version, I believe it's an early and perhaps even rarer example, probably from the first half of the 1960s. The absence of the 'Original Buffalo Skinner' tag on the blade and the fact the handle is leather as opposed to antler is, to my mind, indicative of this. My belief is antler-handle models were more attractive to the foreign import market and, as such, were favoured as the house brand industry flourished.

Another clue to its date comes from the 'Made in Western Germany' stamp on the sheath, as



FAINT CLUES TO A DISTINGUISHED PEDIGREE.

any such manufacturing stamp which specifically identifies East and West Germany dates items to between 1949 and 1990. In terms of the evolution of the stamp, Western Germany indicates a pre-1973 manufacturing date while West Germany or W. Germany is post-1973.

I've based this article on information I was able to glean from a variety of sources. Of course as an amateur sleuth trying to uncover the truth of what I believe to be a long-extinct knife manufacturer, I freely admit I may have made some incorrect assumptions and, in the interests of accuracy, would welcome the input and corrections of any knife aficionados among the readership.

I've always admired the way the English language produces words and phrases to succinctly summarize and classify the world. In this instance I could call myself an aichmomaniac, from the Greek aichme meaning point and mania meaning obsession. Yet claiming I'm obsessed by sharp pointy things like knives is perhaps overstating the situation and does, after all, sound a little too psychotic. I much prefer the more genteel aichmophile, one with an intense interest in or admiration for knives, for that's the truth.

I do have an interest in the historical background to knives and knifemaking and admire the myriad of forms a blade can take for both practical and aesthetic purposes. I also have great respect for those talented artisans who can craft a bespoke blade and, in doing so, produce something that's both beautiful and functional.

While my newly-acquired Widder blade doesn't aspire to those lofty heights, it'll take its place in my collection as I respect the history behind it. I admire its simple, timeless, functional design and the fact it shows its age and usage it's had. Now back in the land of the living it'll certainly enjoy the occasional outing in the field, as that just seems like the right thing to do. ●

• If any reader has information which could enhance this article, email us at [edit@ssaa.org.au](mailto:edit@ssaa.org.au)

# RED HOT!



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**ISSUE 23**

**OUT  
NOW**



# New player in Aussie munitions sector

## JOHN MAXWELL FINDS THINGS ARE HAPPENING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**A**ustralian shooters would be familiar with our major producer of munitions, Defence company Thales which manufactures high quality ammunition and propellant powders for sporting shooters but mostly for the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Now a newcomer has arrived on the scene in the shape of ARES Armaments of Adelaide, which produces munitions for military and police customers though not yet the Australian civilian shooting market. But that could change.

“Possibly in the future. I think the priority now is making sure there’s enough ammo for law enforcement agencies to train regularly,” ARES chief executive officer Jason Murray told *Australian Shooter*. ARES sees itself at the forefront of a renaissance of Australian munitions manufacturing. “One hundred per cent. That’s what we’ve been pushing for since we started,” he said. “What we’re hoping for is to start growing from grassroots an Australian munitions manufacturing capability.”

The rise of a second manufacturer was likely inconceivable just three or four years ago. What’s changed is the rest of the world with the emergence of a more insular US, a rising China and conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine. No longer can Australia be comfortable with once assured munitions supply chain.

“Doing it now is possible because of the geopolitical situation we find ourselves in,” Mr Murray said. ARES is just over a year old, with current capacity to produce up to five million rounds of rifle ammunition a year working a single dayshift on week days only. “We’ve a small team of 13 comprising veterans and ex-cops but have set up from the start with the mindset of being a prime contractor.”

ARES came about, he explained, after he realised no non-standard ammunition was being manufactured in Australia. “From a law enforcement perspective or for any sort of special application, absolutely 100 per of the ammunition is imported,” he said. “We wanted to address that with the ability to ballistically match ammunition natures and provide a research and development on the ground capability in Australia.”

Mr Murray, a former Army Reservist, longtime Defence company executive and competitive shooter, said Thales produces amazing quality small arms ammunition for the ADF in quantity, but with less capacity to produce smaller quantities of non-standard munitions. “We’re very agile. If a client needs a small order that’s outside their capacity then we’re very happy to help. We can reconfigure production lines quickly to whatever calibres are required,” he said.

ARES can now produce a range of ammunition natures including 9mm, 40 S&W, 5.56/223, 7.62/308, 6.5 Creedmoor, 277 Fury, 300 Blackout, 300WM, 300NM, 338NM, 338LAP, 50BMG, 12G lethal and less lethal. And it’s not just for Australia. “We’re responding to a couple of European government requests and the numbers are considerable,” Mr Murray said. “The only people who can supply that are established US and European manufacturers.”

ON A VISIT TO THE ARES ADELAIDE FACILITY ARE (FROM LEFT) LOUI BURKE, ARES CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER; JURIJ POLISCHKO, HEAD OF DEFENCE AND SPACE AT DEFENCE SA; JOE SZAKAC, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MINISTER FOR INVESTMENT AND VETERANS AFFAIRS; MICHAEL DATTA, ARES CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER; AND JASON MURRAY, ARES CO-FOUNDER AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER.



ARES ARMAMENTS  
AUSTRALIA



RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AT ARES AMMUNITION.



ARES' ROOSTER COUNTER-DRONE ROUND, DESIGNED TO DISINTEGRATE AFTER A CERTAIN DISTANCE TO MAXIMISE HIT PROBABILITY AND MINIMISE RISK TO CIVILIANS. THIS ISN'T SOMETHING SPORTING SHOOTERS WILL EVER GET TO TRY BUT IS INDICATIVE OF THE INNOVATION IN AUSTRALIA'S MUNITIONS SECTOR.

To make this ammo ARES sources components where it can, from international suppliers and from Thales which produces cartridge cases, projectiles and propellant powders but, significantly, not primers which are imported from the US. Australia produced small arms primers through two world wars until around the turn of the century when local production ceased. As Australian reloaders well know, during the component shortage of recent years primers were hard to come by, expensive and with some imports of questionable quality.

The ability to produce small arms ammunition for the ADF is a fundamental strategic capability, yet the absence of domestic manufacture of primers would appear to be a significant shortcoming. "One thing we do need in Australia is someone to start making primers. That would be fantastic," Mr Murray said. And that's not all. ARES sources projectiles from all the big name suppliers and makes its own lathe-turned projectiles for specialist natures of long-range ammunition.

"We try to do as much as we possibly can locally, which is almost non-existent. There just hasn't been a market," he said. It would be a real bonus, he said, if there were more Australian companies producing projectiles and cases. "I'd love to see more Australian projectile manufacturers. We'd be really happy to talk to any manufacturer about custom-designed law enforcement and military projectiles again because no-one's doing it," he said. "We're happy to help out. If a small company needed a solid order to secure investment to buy a machine, we'd absolutely support them."

For military use, projectiles must comply with the 1899 Hague Convention which bans the use of bullets designed to expand on impact, creating a more devastating wound. In practice that means military ammo is full metal jacket (FMJ),

though there are no such restrictions on police or hunters. The former typically use hollow-point ammunition, designed to expand on impact to rapidly incapacitate the target and avoid over-penetration which could endanger bystanders.

Mr Murray said almost every law enforcement client had a different view of what ammunition they wanted for their various firearms. Australia has a long and haphazard history of domestic munitions manufacture, mostly to support the Defence forces but also sporting shooters. In 1888, the Colonial Ammunition Company (CAC) of

New Zealand founded an ammunition factory in Footscray, Melbourne, initially producing components which were assembled into completed ammunition in England then shipped back to Australia.

During World War One, CAC turned out roughly two million rounds of .303 rifle ammunition a year. It was acquired by the government in 1927 then, with federation, the Commonwealth took overall responsibility for national Defence and the Armed Forces. At the 1907 Colonial Conference in London, then PM Alfred Deakin argued Australia couldn't rely on supply of weapons and munitions from England and needed its own manufacturing capabilities. Thus were founded the government explosives factory in Maribyrnong, Victoria and small arms factory at Lithgow, NSW.

Australia's munitions manufacturing capabilities expanded exponentially during World War One, shrunk during the inter-war period then expanded again in World War Two. During that war, Australian production was vast and diverse with everything from warships to tanks, artillery, small arms and munitions. We designed and built our own aircraft and infantry weapons. After WWII the armaments industry again decreased, in some cases switching to production of civilian wares such as sporting rifles and refrigerators. This was an industry created to meet wartime requirements yet facing reduced and uncertain demand.

In 1984 this all became the Office of Defence Production and in 1989 that was corporatised to become Australian Defence Industries (ADI). Munitions production was centralised at Mulwala and the new plant at Benalla, facilities which remain government-owned but contractor-operated. And there've been others catering to the civil munitions market. Winchester Australia was established at Geelong in 1967, producing cartridges for sporting shooters, though that ceased in 2019 with production relocating to Winchester sites in the US.

The Bertram Bullet Company of Seymour, Victoria produces cartridge cases and some projectiles for current and obsolete firearms, with significant export sales into the US and Europe. Similarly, Woodleigh Bullets turns out high-end hunting projectiles, also with substantial exports.

One reason more haven't started manufacturing munitions is the regulatory burden which seems to apply to anything firearms-related. "It's hard enough as it is and has been incredibly difficult, one of the most complex businesses I've ever had to set up due to legislation and compliance," Mr Murray said. "As soon as you produce in a commercial context, you have to have every single thing certified, insured, compliant and approved through multiple layers of regulations. On average I reckon 90 per cent of the effort on a daily basis is nothing to do with making ammunition. Commercially it's an incredibly complex landscape you have to navigate."

But ARES isn't just munitions. In early June they partnered with Zu Bladeworks, the Australian firm chosen to supply the ADF with a new fighting knife. It also has another interesting project in the works and has produced what it says is a world first counter-drone 7.62 NATO round called Rooster, in conjunction with their testing partner, Canberra firm Electro Optic Systems

which produces the Slinger counter-UAS remote weapon station.

Slinger is equipped with a 30mm M230LF Bushmaster cannon firing the Northrop Grumman M1211 high explosive proximity fused round. These are expensive, reportedly costing well over \$1000 a time, yet highly effective and capable of one or two-shot kills on drones beyond two kilometres. Slinger usually also carries a secondary armament, typically a MAG 58 or M134 Mini-gun in 7.62 NATO calibre, able to engage drones at closer range. However, 7.62 NATO projectiles remain lethal at several kilometres, making their use risky in populated areas.

ARES' objective was to develop a projectile which fragmented beyond a certain distance, reducing the risk of collateral harm. "Our intent was to design a round which increases support in depth but has the ability to magically fragment in flight at a specified range," Mr Murray said.

Right now ARES doesn't have its own unique headstamp with cartridges marked according to their particular manufacturer. "The plan is once we get up to major quantities with some of the contracts we're looking at right now, then we can have our own headstamp. We're still coming out of the gates and getting our systems set up," Mr Murray said. "We'll get there but at the moment we're just a little Aussie battler having a crack." ●



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# Find out what your rifle likes

## MATTHEW GODSON HAS SOME SOUND ADVICE FOR .22 NEWCOMERS

**W**hen you're new to shooting and hunting, there's a good chance your first rifle will be the affordable and versatile .22LR. Naturally, the next question becomes: 'What ammunition should I use and which brands are worth buying?' So we hit on the idea of running the rule over several popular .22LR options to help get you started.

I raided our ammo locker stocked with samples from a variety of distributors and visited a local gun shop to buy several packs of commonly used rounds, specifically asking for their best sellers and most frequently asked-for brands. For this review we categorized each type of ammunition as either target or hunting rounds, the latter defined as those with hollow-point projectiles.

Once I'd amassed a healthy stack of boxes on my desk the sorting began. In total we tested 23 different varieties made up of 11 hunting and

12 target loads. Brands selected for target use included Federal, Sellier & Bellot, CCI, Norma, Eley, Fiocchi and RWS, while the hunting options featured Eley, RWS, CCI, Aguila, Winchester, Remington, Browning, and Norma.

To determine the best way of evaluating the performance of these different ammo types I hit the internet. After some research I learned the key is to test precision, specifically by measuring dispersion (how far apart bullet holes are on the target). The most common metric is 'extreme spread' which measures the centre-to-centre distance between the two furthest shots in a group.

While easy to calculate, extreme spread isn't actually a very reliable measure as it uses only a small portion of the available data. In a five-shot group only two shots (40 per cent) are used, while in a 10-shot group that drops to just 20 per cent, making extreme spread more of a rough indicator than a truly informative metric.

# "Do you have high value firearms or a collection?"

Megan Spiniello | General Manager SSAA Insurance Brokers



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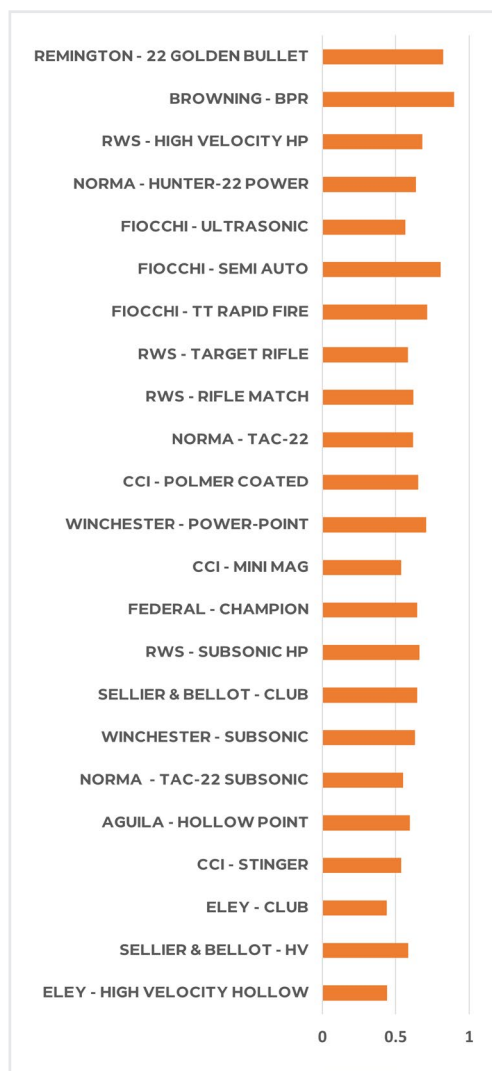


A better method is mean radius, also known as ‘average-to-centre’, a straightforward system with the mean radius being the average distance from each shot to the group’s centre. Unlike extreme spread it uses every shot in the group, making it a more comprehensive and statistically sound indicator of precision. It’s also easy to calculate using free (on trial) software like OnTarget. Just take a photo of the target, upload it and the program does the rest. According to online research, mean radius is just as effective as more complex statistical methods when comparing the relative precision of different ammunition types. In short, it strikes a great balance between simplicity and accuracy.

With a clear plan in place it was time to visit the range. Knowing performance can vary from one firearm to another, I recruited a couple of friends with different rifles. It wasn’t hard to find volunteers as after all, who wouldn’t want to spend a day at the range sending down at least 460 rounds?

Three of us set up at the SSAA (SA) Para range and set out to shoot 20-round groups for each of the 23 ammo types. Our method was simple: Clean the barrel using two treated patches, follow with five dry patches, then fire two fouling shots with a specifically chosen brand. After that we fired one shot with the review ammo to check point of impact, followed by a full 20-shot group. We repeated this cleaning process between every group, labelling all targets with an ammo ID number, the shooter and rifle used.

After collecting 46 shot targets (in addition to my own 23), it was time to begin the analysis. I photographed each target and uploaded the images to my computer, using the OnTarget software to calculate the mean radius for each group. So now to the part you’ve been waiting for - the results of our big day at the range.



AVERAGE MEAN RADIUS

# TOP 5 TARGET AMMO

ACROSS ALL RIFLES  
BY MEAN RADIUS

- 1 ELEY CLUB
- 2 CCI MINI-MAG
- 3 FIOCCHI ULTRASONIC
- 4 RWS TARGET RIFLE
- 5 SELLIER & BELLOT HV

## BEST PERFORMING AMMO BY RIFLE

### Ruger American:

CCI Mini Mag; Norma Tac 22; Eley Club; Sellier & Bellot HV; RWS Target Rifle.

### Savage FVSR:

Eley Club; Federal Champion; CCI Mini Mag; Fiocchi Semi-Auto; Sellier & Bellot Club.

### Ruger Precision:

Eley Club; RWS Rifle Match; Fiocchi Ultrasonic; RWS Target Rifle; CCI Polymer Coated.

# TOP 5 HUNTING AMMO

ACROSS ALL RIFLES  
BY MEAN RADIUS

- 1 ELEY HIGH VELOCITY HOLLOW
- 2 CCI STINGER
- 3 NORMA TAC 22 SUBSONIC
- 4 AGUILA HOLLOW POINT
- 5 WINCHESTER SUBSONIC

## BEST PERFORMING AMMO BY RIFLE

### Ruger American:

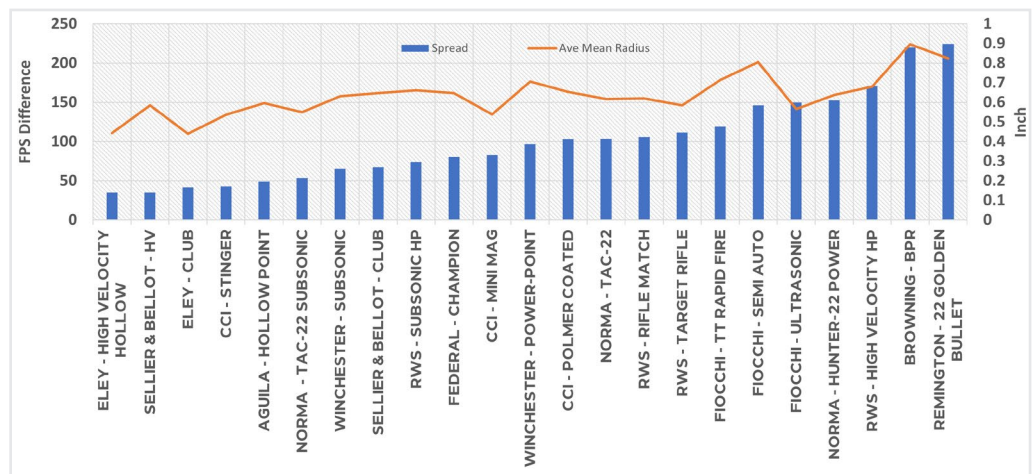
Eley High Velocity Hollow; Norma Tac-22 Subsonic; Winchester Subsonic; CCI Stinger; Aguila Hollow Point.

### Savage FVSR:

Eley High Velocity Hollow; Norma Tac-22 Subsonic; RWS Subsonic HP; Norma Hunter-22 Power; Aguila Hollow Point.

### Ruger Precision:

CCI Stinger; Eley High Velocity Hollow; Winchester Subsonic; Aguila Hollow Point; RWS High Velocity HP.



USING THE ONTARGET SOFTWARE ALLOWED FOR EASY ANALYSIS OF MEAN RADIUS; COMPARING VELOCITY SPREAD WITH AVERAGE MEAN RADIUS

### STATISTICAL TEST RESULTS

When comparing all Target ammo across all rifles there was no statistically significant difference in performance ( $P = 0.13$ ), the same being true for Hunting ammo ( $P = 0.09$ ). For context, a P-value of 0.05 or less is generally considered statistically significant.

### BONUS TEST: VELOCITY CONSISTENCY

We also measured velocity using a chronograph on every shot fired through one rifle, the Savage FVSR. The five ammo types with least velocity spread (difference between fastest and slowest shots) were also among the top performers in mean radius.

#### Target loads (lowest velocity spread)

- 1: Sellier & Bellot HV
- 2: Eley Club
- 3: Sellier & Bellot Club
- 4: Federal Champion
- 5: CCI Mini-Mag

#### Hunting loads (lowest velocity spread)

- 1: Eley High Velocity Hollow
- 2: CCI Stinger
- 3: Aguila Hollow Point
- 4: Norma Tac-22 Subsonic
- 5: Winchester Subsonic

### TAKEAWAYS

One key factor is we used common, budget-friendly rifles likely to be found in the hands of new shooters. It's likely that if we'd tested the same ammo in high-priced competition-grade rifles, we'd see tighter groups and potentially significant performance differences between brands. Another consideration is using the three-rifle mean radius average is a great way to help you choose your first five packets of ammo to try. Remember, no matter what the data says here, time spent at the range beats doing chores at home. Every time!

# Red for go!

## NEW PLAYER IS 'LOADED FOR THE AUSTRALIAN SHOOTER' REPORTS CHRIS REDLICH

**L**ast time I bought factory ammunition was to compare options in a review rifle. I'm an avid handloader so while familiar with cartridge components and my preference for projectiles, I'm a little confused by the colourful factory ammo boxes spread across the shelves. Furthermore, every manufacturer seems to lay claim to their product being the fastest or having the best knockdown power. "Does it really?"

In a perfect test environment with a carefully tuned rifle I'm sure they might produce outstanding results, yet the hunting world's not so perfect and no two rifles or shooting scenarios are ever identical. Some suppliers would prefer I use the ammo they sell, which is fine from a marketing point of view, but when that ammo shoots terribly through their own rifle I need to look elsewhere.

As a hunting reviewer I've had to diversify my choice of ammunition whether it be factory or handloaded and, more recently, gladly accepted an invite to review the newly-released offerings from Red Earth. Currently their ammunition is only available in .223 Rem and luckily we had some compatible rifles (I'd be surprised if most shooters didn't have at least one rifle chambered in what's arguably Australia's most popular calibre). Yet for reasons of testing market response, it makes perfect sense that if you're releasing something new then 'start with what's popular'.

Red Earth Ammo is an Australian-owned brand manufactured in the US, their dual-purpose offering of bullets in .223 Remington made specifically with Aussie hunters in mind. Once again we see a personalised sales pitch of 'Loaded for the Australian shooter', using the common red fox Varminter projectiles and a game animal for the Razorback variety. By using these motifs you assume they'd be the perfect medicine for their chosen quarry. As I've found, the .223 Remington with one bullet type can be adequate for a broad range of game including foxes and some pigs, so what's the difference between this pair?

My handloader's curiosity had me taking the magnifying specs to both and I'll pass on some of what I found. Both projectiles weigh 55-grains with the Varminter using Hornady's V-Max ballistic tip bullet. I've a history with V-Max bullets dating back more than 30 years, including a recent purchase and can vouch for their effectiveness. They're a flat-based, lead core bullet recognisable by their coloured polymer tips.

Those tips sit in front of a tiny cavity which, on impact, initiates rapid expansion to its thin copper jacket and are typically used for smaller game with thin skin such as feral cats, wild dogs, hares and of course, foxes. The explosive nature of V-Max bullets usually results in significant exit wounds. Well regarded as a flat-shooting and accurate option, many a fox has fallen to the V-Max and it's no wonder they head the 'Varminter' category.

Red Earth 'Razorback' game bullets on the other hand use Hornady's boat-tail, custom soft point, with expansion on these not quite as rapid or aggressive as the V-Max. By comparison, its lead tip and marginally thicker copper jacket mushroom more evenly on impact (increasing sectional density), creating a larger wound channel to the vital organs on heavier-skinned game such as wild pigs.

Both bullets are cannelured and share the same ogive and have been loaded with what appears to be a fast-burning, fine granule powder weighing an even 25-grains. I found this similar to my own handloads which generate muzzle velocities of around 3200fps from a 24" barrel. While they won't win a drag race against the likes of a .22/250 Remington, the .223 Rem cartridge has a reliable history of 'runs on the board' in the Australian bush and at the range.

They're seated to an overall length of 57mm (for the slightly longer V-Max) and designed to chamber easily in most commercial rifles, with or without detachable magazines. Bullet seating can play a role in accuracy and that's why I was keen to test them in a couple of rifles to see which fared best with what round.



VARMINTER V-MAX BULLET COMPARED TO THE RAZORBACK BOAT-TAIL, LEAD SOFT-POINT.



RED EARTH AMMO USED  
FOR BOTH CATEGORIES  
IN FAIRDINKUM RED  
EARTH COUNTRY.

RUGER AMERICAN GEN2 SCOUT  
'VARMINTER'



RED EARTH AMMO

'RAZORBACK'

3 SHOTS  
@ 100m



RUGER M77  
223 REM

MIXED ACCURACY RESULTS AT FIRST BUT REMAINED CONSISTENT.

Shooting firstly an 'out of the safe' three-shot group from my wife's Ruger M77, the Razorback ammo measured over an inch at 100m as did the Varminter. Next up, the Ruger Scout rifle shooting Razorback ammo printed also above one inch, though thankfully the ballistic-tipped Varminter produced a highly satisfying half-inch group and remained tight with two more shots (as seen in the picture) after adjusting the scope down to zero.

This proved once again some rifles can be fickle with factory ammo yet, despite the first of three groups being slightly wider than I'd prefer, there were no 'flyers' and follow-up groups remained consistent. Quality manufacture is key to consistency and a reminder that prioritising correct shot placement on your chosen quarry is more important than accuracy on paper.

I was keen to evaluate the ammunition thoroughly to determine if their categories met the expected standards, so we chose the M77 for use with the 'fox' ammo and Ruger Scout with the soft-points on pigs due to its larger 10-shot magazine capacity. Furthermore, I recruited the services of a local professional shooter for his expert opinion. Brock culls roos and pigs as part of his livelihood and prefers to use his Tikka T3X Varminter Hunter in .223 Rem so, after my own experience with the same rifle, I'd high expectations for his outfit.

I'm happy to report that unlike my first range test, Brock shot very satisfying sub-MOA groups straightaway with both bullets at 100m, remarking how effectively the Varminters performed on foxes. In typical V-Max fashion, he reported the bullets worked so well with headshots that targets

were unable to be presented for photos. On another occasion he head-shot (as per commercial standard required) numerous kangaroos for the processor at long range and was more than happy with their performance. Brock also recorded satisfactory results with the Razorback ammo on pigs and remarked on how both loads left his barrel clean with minimal powder fouling.

After bearing some weight of expectation for testing, Red Earth proved on par with most other factory ammo I've tested lately. They are, however, specifically targeted at the Aussie market and after numerous field excursions, performed well on foxes and wild pigs in their respective categories. I don't believe for a minute the average shooter will switch bullets 'on the run' if they happen to spot a feral pig while fox hunting or vice-versa, though it's refreshing having that option available.

As I discovered during testing, both loads performed better in some rifles than others though this is no reflection on the ammunition, merely a case of barrel-to-bullet preference. Furthermore, as a glowing endorsement for the new brand, Brock said he'd definitely be buying Red Earth Ammo in future.

Importantly, lightweight high-velocity rounds such as .223 bullets do have limitations and can be easily swayed by light foliage. For that reason I believe it'll only be a matter of time before we see the introduction of popular larger calibres added to the Red Earth lineup. To help keep pricing down, Red Earth 'Varminter' and 'Razorback' ammunition is sold in bulk cartons of 500, so check your local retailer for price and availability. More at [redistributions.com.au](http://redistributions.com.au)



V-MAX BULLETS PERFORM WELL ON PREDATORS SUCH AS FOXES; RAZORBACK SOFT-POINT LEAD TIPS WORKED WELL ON PIGS FOR BROCK AND HIS TIKKA T3X.

# NEW **RED EARTH AMMO** NEW

## .223 REMINGTON 55GR 500 ROUNDS RIFLE CARTRIDGES

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# Another one for the ages

**DANIEL O'DEA CELEBRATES THE LATEST ANSCHUTZ TRIUMPH**

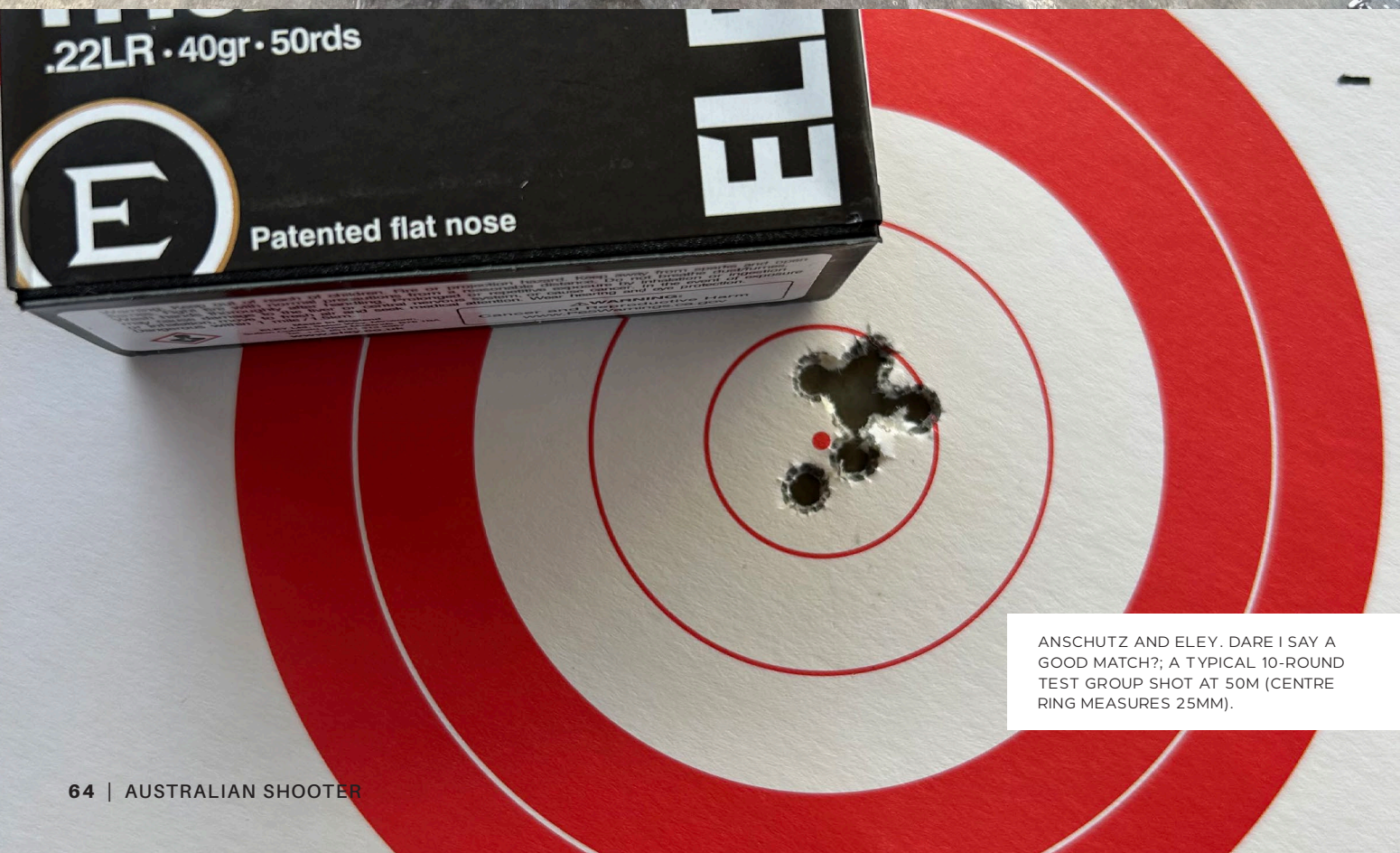


**G**erman firearms firm Anschutz is perhaps not as prominent a brand as it once was in Australia. When I was growing up during the 1970s and '80s and chamberings such as the .222 Remington and .22 Hornet were among the most popular calibres, if you came across one it would just as likely be an Anschutz. Likewise, when it came .22 rimfires they were among one of the most popular choices. You need only check the used ads on any of the gun sales websites and you'll find plenty of Anschutz rifles of this vintage still going strong 50 years on.

When I was about 15 and growing up in Sydney, I recall dragging my dad into Shooters' Home in George St. The single-shot Anschutz I picked up that day for \$110 was the first rifle I'd own chambered in .22LR, (I started with a .22 Magnum but the ammo was too dear) and 40 years on I still have it.

Sporting rifles weren't cheap in those days (comparatively) with the Anschutz brand reasonably priced and well known for both quality and accuracy. My single-shot was pretty basic and not too different in form or function to the myriad of other single-shot .22s of the day. It was a good honest product. Anschutz though has since found their niche, still making quality hunting rifles yet more developing into premium brand specializing in state-of-the-art target rifles. Be it benchrest, biathlon or just about any recognized target match out there, Anschutz will likely have a purpose-built rifle for it.

Australian distributor Nioa provided *Australian Shooter* with an Anschutz Model 1761 APR XRS which, quoting from their website: "Was specially developed for the small calibre PRS (Precision Rifle Series) disciplines." Straight from the supplied hard case this rifle really looks the business. Anschutz start with their 1761 high-precision rimfire action mated to a 544mm heavy



ANSCHUTZ AND ELEY. DARE I SAY A GOOD MATCH?; A TYPICAL 10-ROUND TEST GROUP SHOT AT 50M (CENTRE RING MEASURES 25MM).



FROM TOP: ADJUSTMENT KNOBS FOR THE CHEEKPICE ARE RECESSED INTO THE STOCK. ALSO NOTE QD SLING CUP; THE EXPOSED COCKING INDICATOR GIVES BOTH A VISUAL AND TACTILE REFERENCE TO THE RIFLE'S STATUS; ALL FIRE CONTROLS ARE EASY TO ACCESS AND OPERATE.

duty target barrel, that action with its self-centring three locking-lugged bolt renowned as both smooth and supremely accurate.

A match-grade rifle needs a match-grade trigger which, in this case, is an Anschütz single-stage 5061 D APR, adjustable from 750g to 1200g it's factory set on the former. The trigger system is quite some piece of engineering in its own right, said to include more than 50 individual precision parts, adjustability also including the option to move the trigger tongue forward and aft or swivel from left or right.

As a long-range rifle the action is appropriately topped with a full-length 30MOA Picatinny rail, while the whole barrelled action package sits neatly in an MDT XRS chassis system. For those unfamiliar, such MDT stocks/chassis systems in my opinion provide the perfect balance between all the modern chassis rifle benefits, while maintaining similar but improved ergonomics when compared to a more traditional stock system. MDT themselves promote the system as a 'hybrid stock' and "features of a chassis with traditional feel". The high-grade 6061 alloy chassis core provides rock solid V-Block bedding and a fully free-floating barrel, without the rest of it presenting as some type of modern alloy skeleton.

Even with the traditional bent the stock in no way lacks features. Length of pull is adjustable via five quarter-inch extension plates which sit between the butt and rubber kick pad, while an adjustable cheekpiece can be raised or lowered via two small screw knobs without tools. The ergonomic pistol grip incorporates a thumb-rest and interchangeable grip panel which allow for a choice of angled or vertical grip styles (both included). The 12" fore-end includes M-Lok for ease of accessory or rail fitments while a barrier stop, QD studs and cups are among other neat features.

The rifle's fed via a single 10-round magazine combining a stainless steel body with an extended polymer base incorporating a 'non-slip waffle' pattern. According to Anschütz it's said to be "insensitive to dust, dirt and water" which is probably a good thing, as the last thing you want is an overly-sensitive magazine!

A precision rifle deserves a precision scope and Nioa didn't disappoint, the rifle arriving fitted with an excellent Leupold Mark 4HD 4.5-18x52. With plenty of magnification, 34mm main tube and oversized turrets featuring 36 MIL (125 MOA) of elevation adjustment, you couldn't ask for much more optics-wise on a long-range .22 rim-fire rifle. Fittingly, a supply of Eley Match .22LR ammunition completed the package for testing.

As part of their Quality Assurance program each Anschütz rifle includes a card with a factory test-target facsimile, the one for the test rifle presenting an 18.60mm group measured edge-to-edge with the distance listed as 100m. The card also includes information such as model details, serial number, ammo used and inspector's name. Of course 'inspector' would be the correct terminology, as groups for factory testing are shot with

the barrelled action mounted in a special barrel vice in a climate-controlled indoor range (there's a YouTube video of this). Naturally this is the most consistent way a factory can demonstrate what the rifle's capable of as it removes all human variables. I mention this only to point out you shouldn't be concerned if you can't replicate the test group.

Needless to say Anschütz have a proven track record in producing highly accurate rifles, the volume of competitions won with their products impossible to calculate. In the case of the review gun, even with my meagre abilities I was able to produce some very tight 10-shot groups around the same size as the test target, albeit at 50m yet still representing superb accuracy. Off the bench and using a fair bit of elevation available on the Leupold Mark 4HD optic, I was even able to land rounds on the hanging plates of my 200m metal plate rack, not bad for a .22LR. Basically, in the case of the Anschütz you're almost guaranteed the level of accuracy will rely more on the shooter's ability than anything else.

In operation as a match-grade target rifle the Anschütz is most happily fed a diet of appropriate match-grade ammo (the supplied Eley Match rounds fed smoothly and consistently). Out of interest I did try some other non-match ammo in case some might be considering such a rifle for tactical bunny-busting or similar. Most fed equally as well, though I'd note the rifle didn't particularly like some of the flatter nose hollow-point projectiles. These included Winchester Power points, which seemed to present higher on the feed ramp when cycling and didn't want to go into the chamber. Goes without saying that as with any rifle, best test it with ammo to be used before match day or going afield.

I'm a big fan of MDT products, having one of their stocks on a 6.5 Creedmoor. Both ergonomics and features are excellent and I really like the feel. The full pistol grip fills the hand, providing dynamic control when working barricades or obstacles as may be found in some precision rifle competitions, while the flat fore-end sits stable on bag or rest. The oversized bolt handle on the 1761 APR XRS can be found instinctively for short, sharp reloads, likewise the large knurled button on the two-position safety lever thumbs with ease.

A cocking indicator protruding from the rear of the bolt gives both a visual and tactile reference of the rifle's condition, while a tap with the nail of your trigger finger on the magazine release, found forward in the trigger guard, will have the magazine falling free. The trigger is crisp and precise with the whole package well thought-out and built to purpose.

The Model 1761 APR XRS represents a huge departure from the basic single-shot I proudly walked out on to George St with all those years ago, but the Anschütz reputation of extremely well-built and accurate firearms rings just as loudly. More at [nioa.com.au](http://nioa.com.au) ●

# What do I spend my money on for best results?

## NIGHT VISION AND THERMAL BUYERS' GUIDE

**W**elcome to the final instalment in our four-part series on Thermal and Night Vision, with perhaps the most commonly asked question: What do I buy for my needs? This month we offer advice gathered from thousands of shooters and hunters over the years, including comments on buyers' remorse 'after purchase' and we'll summarise the key pros and cons to consider.

### NIGHT VISION VS THERMAL

This is the \$10,000 question, literally, and there are several factors to consider, most notably 'spotting' and price. Our summary is as follows, with all common properties excluded (for example all units these days are pretty tough and carry IP67 or IP68 ratings along with dual-band wi-fi, Bluetooth, photos, videos etc).

#### THERMAL PROS

- Nothing can hide from thermal as it defeats all natural camouflage, saving hours when spotting.
- Can be used day or night in up to 50 degrees.
- Operates in all conditions including mist and fog.
- Detects animals out to much longer distances.
- Excellent for spotting animals in long grass, dense vegetation and the darkest conditions.
- Multiple colour palettes for different conditions.

#### THERMAL CONS

- On the whole thermal is more expensive than night vision at around double the price on rifle scopes.
- Image quality is more two-dimensional.
- Larger lenses (longer distance) and more sensitive sensors (finer detail) propel the price upwards.
- Images may lack species identification detail at longer distances unless using top-end equipment.
- Hot objects can confuse, for example hot rocks at a distance after a warm day.

#### NIGHT VISION PROS

- Highly-detailed, backlit, full-colour digital video (in crisp 4K for more modern night vision).
- Amazing light-enhanced technology offers mobile phone digital quality for day, dawn and dusk.
- Technology enables clear images at longer distances.

- Images transfer to monochrome 'enhanced' images when it becomes too dark for colour 'day' mode.
- IR torches can make images as clear as day even in the darkest conditions.
- More affordable than thermal technology.

#### NIGHT VISION CONS

- Night vision devices amplify available light so must have some kind of light source.
- Animals which are camouflaged, hiding and/or not moving are much harder to find than with thermal.
- Hampered by fog, smoke and heavy vegetation.
- Typically has a shorter/poorer detection range than thermal, especially in challenging conditions.
- IR torches add weight to a scope if clamped on.
- When using IR, close objects form bright, 'washed-out' reflections which hamper longer vision.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS:

With everything else being equal and as a general recommendation, which of course will vary with specific individual circumstances, we've found the following advice to hold true (in most cases).

**Spotting/detection:** The easiest decision as thermal wins hands-down with even the most basic monocular offering a huge detection advantage. Always use thermal for detecting prey as it'll save you hours.

**Spotting range:** Shorter, sub-500m ranges are fine with virtually all thermal devices. However, the larger the identification distance and detail needed means larger lenses and better sensors, so the price will rise rapidly (\$600-\$6000). Ask: 'What detail do I really need at what range?'

**Day v night shooting:** For scopes, 4K Night Vision offers many advantages for shooters who operate mostly during daylight, dawn or dusk, most notably clearer colour images and lower price range (about \$1800).

**Thermal scopes:** For denser vegetation, smaller animals, prey which hides or darker conditions, thermal scopes are unbeatable, though this comes at a price. They're more expensive as lens size and sensor quality step up.

**Laser rangefinders:** These add around \$500 to the cost of a device. You can have one on a spotting device (monocular/binocular), a scope or both. Consider where you'd prefer the LRF and don't forget your budget.

**Thermal note:** Larger lenses and/or better sensors equate to more detail at distance, though obviously this pushes the price up.

*Editorial provided by Roy Barber, Head of Training at The Night Vision Shop.*



Guide  
outdoor

Sensing Beyond Visible

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As the world's second largest thermal imaging optics manufacturer\*,  
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ultra-competitive pricing.

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

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## GUIDE THERMAL MONOCULARS – SPECIAL SSAA OFFERS



### TE 211

RRP \$649 **\$549**

- ✓ 10mm Lens
- ✓ 500m Detection, 125m Identification Ranges
- ✓ 256 x 192 @ 12µm, NETD <30mK Sensor
- ✓ Photo, Video, Audio, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, 16GB
- ✓ 6 Hours Battery Life; 248 grams
- ✓ Tiny spotter (just 132mm!) for short ranges.



### TE 411

RRP \$1499 **\$1275**

- ✓ 25mm Lens
- ✓ 1300m Detection, 250m Identification Ranges
- ✓ 400 x 300 @ 12µm, NETD <25mK Sensor
- ✓ Photo, Video, Audio, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, 16GB
- ✓ 5 Hours Battery Life; 315 grams
- ✓ Pocket-sized for spotting at short/medium ranges.



### TD 633L

RRP \$3099 **\$2635**

- ✓ 35mm Lens (+ 1000m Laser Rangefinder)
- ✓ 1800m Detection, 450m Identification Ranges
- ✓ 640 x 512 @ 12µm, NETD <20mK Sensor
- ✓ Photo, Video, Audio, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, 32GB memory
- ✓ 12 Hour Battery Life; 376 grams
- ✓ One-handed operation, compact all-rounder.



### TD 653L

RRP \$3499 **\$2975**

- ✓ 50mm Lens (+ 1000m Laser Rangefinder)
- ✓ 2600m Detection, 650m Identification Ranges
- ✓ 640 x 512 @ 12µm, NETD <20mK Sensor
- ✓ Photo, Video, Audio, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, 32GB memory
- ✓ 10 Hour Battery Life; 472 grams
- ✓ High resolution, crisp detail and long range for premium performance.

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FREE POSTAGE, ARE AVAILABLE  
THROUGH SEPTEMBER ONLY!**

# Peddling their wares

## JOHN DUNN 'CATALOGUES' THE HISTORY OF GUN ADVERTISING

**A**dvertising has always been an important part of marketing strategies. From pork chops to politics someone, somewhere is always trying to convince the punters why their product is better than everyone else's. It's an ancient and not always honourable practice which in some cases is only a short breath away from outright lying. The end always justifies the means it would seem, or am I just being cynical? But cynicism aside, a lot of period advertising can be a useful source of information about certain products which are no longer commercially available and nowhere is that truer than in catalogues published by firearms and ammunition makers.

I began collecting old and or reproduction firearms catalogues in the mid-1970s, mostly for their esoteric content which couldn't be found anywhere else. As a single-shot rifle tragic I found them a good source of information which was difficult to find in book form, bearing in mind those were pre-Google days. Admittedly, a lot of what I was looking for could only be extracted in small pieces, yet when all put together it often created a bigger picture that otherwise would've been unavailable.

Over the years, collections of catalogues have been compiled into books, providing a broad sweep of the different firearms available at any given time from various providers. These are fascinating resources, not just for the technical detail they provide about manufacturers and the firearms they're advertising, but also about the variants and options as well as the (then) ridiculously low prices. Most are a smorgasbord of information for those with the eyes to see, with some of the period testimonials bordering on the fantastic to say the least. Yes, outlandish claims about products have been around for a very long time.

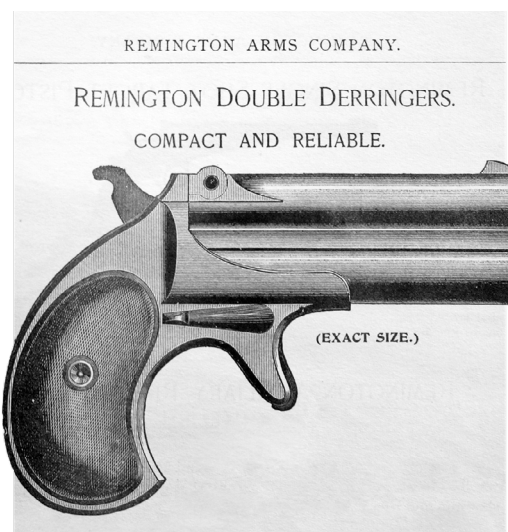
The other thing I find fascinating about old catalogues are the different typefaces used, not to mention the illustrations, most of which were produced from woodcut engravings. The level of detail in some illustrations is amazing, especially from larger companies and I've often wondered how much some of those early catalogues cost to produce. The first two books I bought on firearms advertising came from a gun show in Sydney in the late 1970s. Both were compiled by L.D.

Satterlee and published by the Follet Publishing Company in 1962.

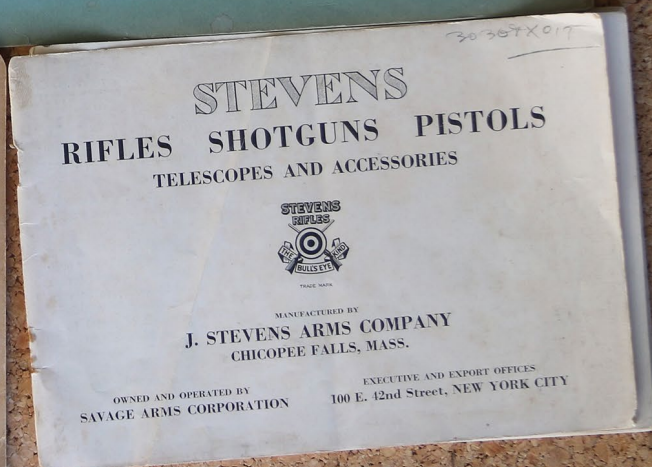
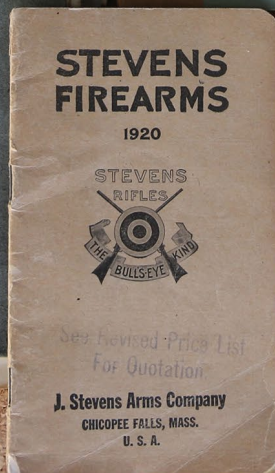
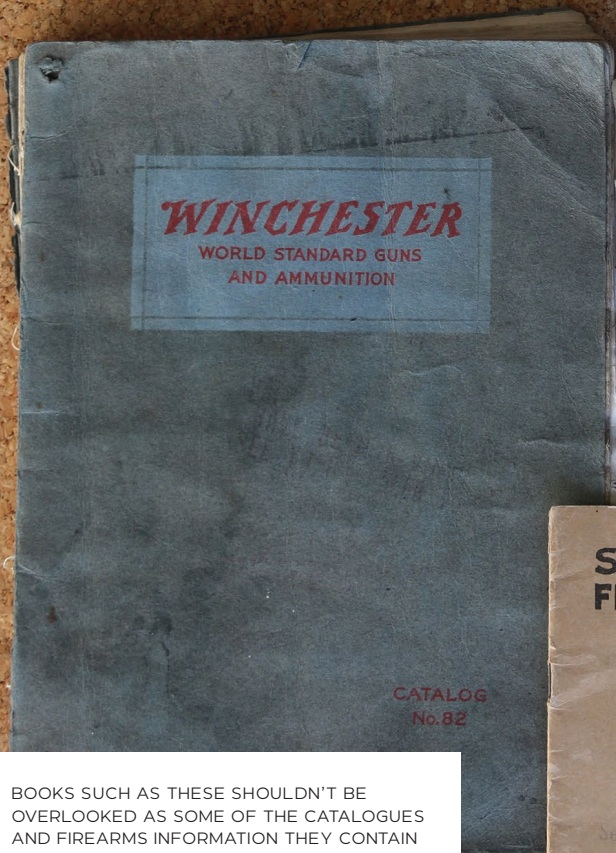
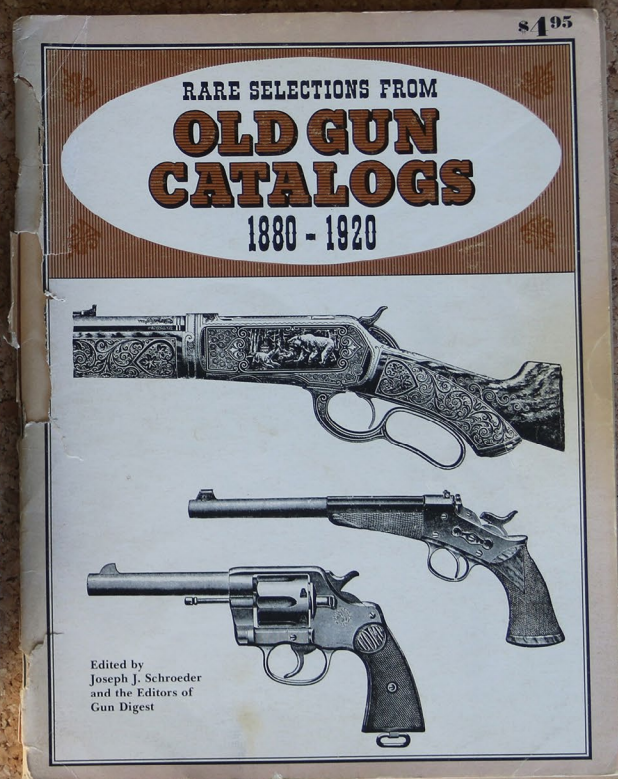
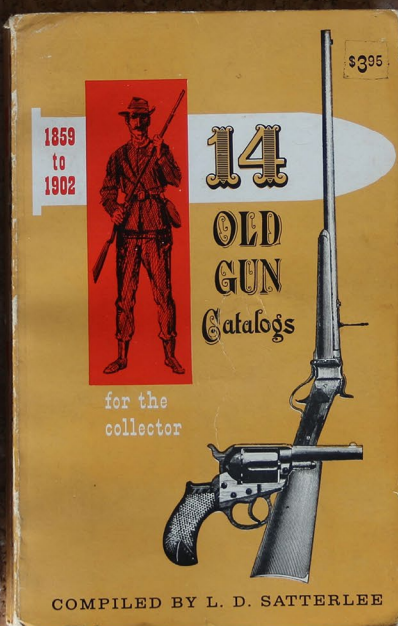
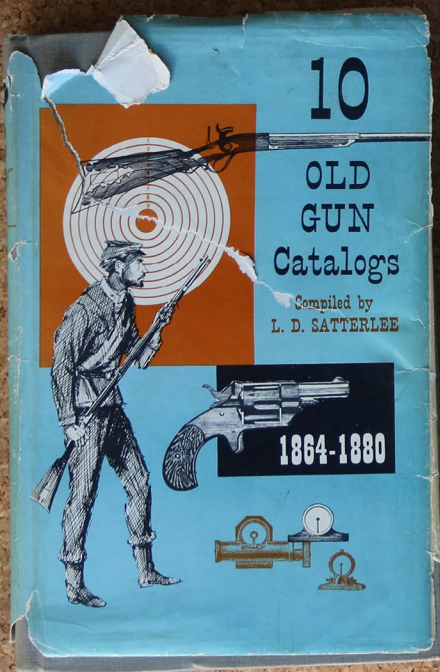
*10 Old Gun Catalogs*, Volume I, Fourth Edition is a hard cover and contains facsimiles of 10 catalogues from 1864-1880. Volume II (Fourth edition) *14 Old Gun Catalogs for the Collector* is a soft cover and contains 14 examples from 1859-1902. Though some of the companies doing the advertising no longer exist, their products are still out there in collections and the catalogues can be invaluable when it comes to identification of particular firearms.

Original catalogues from the late 19th to early 20th century can be quite expensive, if and when you can find them. Most seem to exist within the collecting fraternity and many collectors are loath to part with them. For all of that they do turn up at swap meets, car boot sales and gun shows, so it pays to keep your eyes peeled.

I have a few, including one from Remington dated 1894 containing material on a range of their single-shot rifles, the Remington-Lee bolt-action magazine, single and double-barrelled shotguns, a single-shot rolling block target pistol and, of course, the famous .41 rimfire Remington double Derringer.



FROM THE 1894 REMINGTON CATALOGUE, A WONDERFULLY DETAILED PRINT OF THE REMINGTON DERRINGER PISTOL.



BOOKS SUCH AS THESE SHOULDN'T BE OVERLOOKED AS SOME OF THE CATALOGUES AND FIREARMS INFORMATION THEY CONTAIN SIMPLY ISN'T AVAILABLE ANYWHERE ELSE; FOUR ORIGINAL ADVERTISING CATALOGUES FROM THREE DIFFERENT MAKERS.

There are also illustrations of various gun parts and their prices, reloading tools, special sights and, on the last two pages, Remington bicycles and sewing machines. The cover is tattered and most of the pages are yellowed with age but I love it dearly, mostly because it takes me back to an era when life was a lot less complicated than it is now.

Another original I have is a No.82 Winchester catalogue I've never been able to date accurately. Catalogue 83 was published in 1925 so I expect 82 was published not long after the cessation of World War One. It's dirty and tatty and a little mildewed in places but the content more than makes up for that. It includes firearms and accessories, spare parts, cleaning gear, ammunition and cartridge ballistics. It's the only one I've ever

come across and I wouldn't part with it for quids.

Two of my favourite catalogues are from the J. Stevens Arms Company, one from 1920 and the other from 1925. The latter has pencilled notations alongside quite a few of the firearms, all of which are in shillings and pence, suggesting it may have belonged to a firearms dealer originally.

Reproduction catalogues are a little more common and quite a few have been released over the years by different publishing houses. My collection contains copies or facsimiles by US companies including Stevens, Remington, Winchester, Hopkins & Allen and the Union Metallic Cartridge Company. From the UK I have publications by BSA and W.W. Greener, a 1902-3 edition for Kynoch ammunition and a 1925 hard cover copy of sporting ammunition manufactured by Eley Brothers Limited and Kynoch Limited. I also have sporting gun powders made by Curtis & Harvey Limited and Nobel's Explosive Co Limited.

The quality of reproduction catalogues varies a bit but the information they contain is more important, so don't be put off by something that's been badly copied or reproduced, as it may just hold that little bit of extra detail you've been seeking. For anyone after reproduction firearms catalogues or manuals, Cornell Publications ([cornellpubs.com](http://cornellpubs.com)) has a wide range from 1835-1980.

As important as they are and have been, not all catalogues lived up to advertisers' expectations. One reproduction Stevens catalogue I have (No.18 from 1898) bears the re-printer's warning "this catalogue is an exact copy of the original which contained a printer's error and was missing pages 33-48." Apart from that, it advertises some wonderful kit but you have to wonder about the quality control.


Here in Australia, many of the universal providers such as F. Lasseter & Co. and Anthony Hordern & Sons produced large catalogues for their many country customers. Collectable in themselves, these routinely included all manner of domestic and agricultural necessities as well as firearms and shooters' requisites nobody in those days would have blinked an eye at. They're not as informative as makers' catalogues of the same era, though the range of products is amazing, especially when you compare what was offered then and what we're allowed to have now. How times have changed.

While most firearms catalogues from the 20th century aren't as interesting as those from the 19th, there are some which rate as collectable. Here's an example. Because I've always had a soft spot for Ruger firearms, I have a modest and in-

Page Four
J. Stevens Arms Co.

### A Stevens .22 for Every Need and Every Purse

Every normal boy and man has to some degree the primitive hunting instinct. The desire for possession of a firearm when combined with general utility is best found in the .22 caliber rifle. There are probably more rifles of this caliber in use than all other sizes combined.



For hunting purposes the cartridge is ideal for all small game as well as vermin birds and animals. It is particularly adaptable to target practice on account of its low cost.

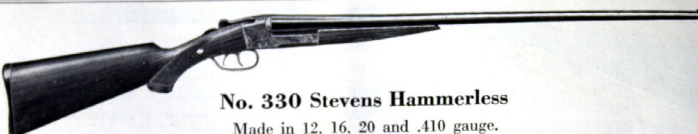
The .22 long rifle cartridge was originated by the J. Stevens Arms Company for use in their rifles and is especially recommended for hunting and target purposes on account of its unusual accuracy and exceptionally powerful ballistic performances.

All the rifles on the following pages are chambered for the .22 long rifle cartridge. This permits the use of .22 short or .22 long cartridges in the same rifle when it is desirable to use less powerful ammunition. Certain models are also chambered for the slightly larger .25 rim-fire and .32 long rim-fire cartridges, and smooth bored for shot cartridges.

Stevens .22 caliber barrels are the world's leaders for accuracy. All barrels are bored and reamed with utmost precision regardless of selling price and are supplied on a wide assortment of rifles, each adapted for a definite use and user.

---


Page Twenty-four
Stevens Double Barrel Shotguns



### No. 330 Stevens Hammerless

Made in 12, 16, 20 and .410 gauge.

Barrels	Blued. High pressure compressed steel, tested with nitro powder, matted rib. 12, 16 and 20 gauge right barrel modified, left barrel full choked. .410 gauge both barrels full choked.	Frame	Take-down. Beautifully polished and case hardened.
Length	12 gauge.....28-30 and 32 inches 16 gauge.....28 and 30 inches 20 gauge.....26 and 28 inches .410 gauge.....26 inches	Stock	Selected Black Walnut, finely checkered, full pistol grip capped, rubber butt plate. Length 14 in. Drop about 3 inches, walnut fore-end checkered.
Action	Hammerless. Top lever and bolt in one piece, coil springs. Large powerful extractors, automatic safety.	Weight	12 gauge.....7½ to 7¾ lb. 16 gauge.....7¼ to 7½ lb. 20 gauge.....6¼ to 6¾ lb. .410 gauge.....5¾ to 6¼ lb.
		Ammunition Any standard factory loaded shell.	



The No. 330 Stevens is our latest model and was designed to supply the popular demand for a serviceable double gun of good appearance to sell at a moderately low price.

The action has many of the exclusive Stevens features that insure a smooth working reliable performance during years of hard usage. Barrels are carefully bored and choked.

Particular attention is given to this gun in securing a handsome finish. Rounded corners of frame, polished barrels and finely checkered stock and forearm are unusual features in comparatively priced arms.

One in a paper carton.  
Ten in a case.

Parcel post weight 12 lbs.  
Weight about 115 lbs.

IT'S ALL ABOUT ADVERTISING: FROM THE INSIDE COVER OF THE 1925 STEVENS ARMS CATALOGUE; FROM THE 1925 STEVENS CATALOGUE - NOTICE THE PENCILLED PRICE IN SHILLINGS AND PENCE.



WINCHESTER CATALOGUES ANYONE? THE THREE LARGER ONES ARE REPRINTS, THE SMALLER ONE AT THE BOTTOM A 1934 ORIGINAL.



GOTTA LOVE 'EM. SINGLE-SHOT ADVERTISING FROM THE 1982 RUGER EXPORT CATALOGUE.

complete collection of Ruger catalogues and owners' manuals from 1982 through to 2014. Some I acquired because of my interest and involvement with the No.1 and No.3 model single-shots, others from my gun dealer days.

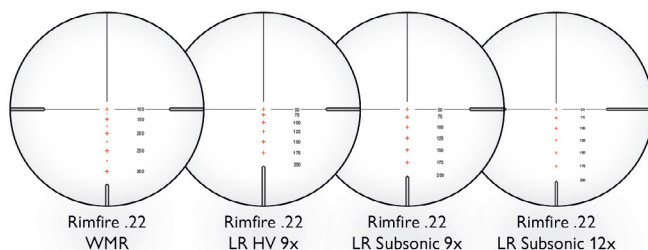
There are firearms in there which are no longer available but that doesn't mean I can't read the advertising text, look at the pictures and appreciate them for what that are. Along with my copy of *Ruger and His Firearms - A History of the Man, the Company and Their Firearms* by R.L. Wilson, I can look up and find most things I need to know. If I can't there's always the internet - and even there it's still all about the advertising. ●



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### VANTAGE .22 SCOPES





# An American

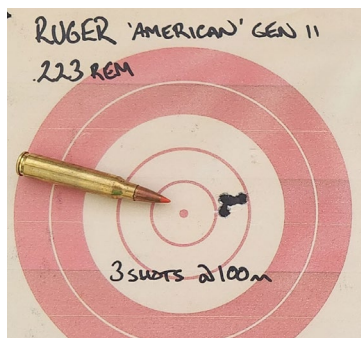
## CHRIS REDLICH HAILES THE SUPERB GEN 2 BUDGET RUGER

**T**he biggest pig showed itself once again and, after closing the gap to less than 50 metres, it became clear I'd be needing more than one round. The following experience made me thankful for the rifle I was carrying and even more so for the fact it has a 10-shot magazine.

But how do you introduce a rifle which, by all appearances, looks like any other bolt-action, because the Ruger American Gen 2 Scout is ordinarily just another bolt-action rifle. So my challenge was to write an eye-catching intro to another rifle review and, if that opening paragraph has your attention, then read on because not many new guns afford me the same excitement as this one.

Differing somewhat from their flagship Model 77s with Mauser-type (controlled round feed) action, the Ruger American sports a three-lug push feed affair. As the Gen 2 designation suggests, it's the second coming of what was already a highly popular American Gen 1, sporting upgrades based on customer feedback. If I was to take note of all the noise my mates had to make about the American, by all reports the Gen 1 is a highly accurate rifle.

I'd never used a Gen 1 so can't draw comparisons, though what's immediately appealing about the Gen 2 is its spiral fluted barrel. The test model Scout, being the shortest of the 'American' rifle family, has a chrome-moly barrel measuring 16" (406mm without muzzle brake) and the cold



THE RIFLE WAS EXTREMELY COMFORTABLE TO SHOOT AND SUPERBLY ACCURATE WITH FEDERAL AMMO.

hammer-forged rifling has a right-hand twist of one-in-eight. To me that would be perfect for heavier bullets in the region of 62-70-grains, particularly with longer barrels. Yet distributor Nioa had supplied me with 55-grain Federals and reckoned I wouldn't be disappointed (as I'd find out later, their in-house testing was spot-on with the short barrel).

I don't see too much advantage to be gained with a muzzle brake for the 223 Rem, unless for the sake of consistency across the American models. The threaded muzzle would be beneficial though, if at some point down the track our authorities relax the laws around suppressors. Interestingly, Ruger have designated this rifle 5.56 NATO and although sharing similar dimensions

as the 223 Rem, the former generates higher chamber pressures than its sibling cartridge. This says to me the machining tolerances and metallurgy of steel used in the US-made American is to a very high standard.

The action beds firmly to the synthetic stock via a milled recess mating with an integral bedding block system. Combined with its two action screws, they positively locate the receiver while providing a full-length, free-floating channel to the barrel. Although the American is meant to be a budget model, you can't help but feel the pride Ruger feels by having their bold motif emblazoned on the left of the action.

I believe if you're going to build a budget rifle then build one which sells and, after one look and



BOLT AND DETACHABLE MAGPUL 10-SHOT MAGAZINE COMBINED FOR FAULTLESS CYCLING.

feel of the bolt, it further reinforced to me a quality product. The three-lug design enables a short 70-degree throw and while having a no-frills finish, the CNC-machined stainless steel bolt moved smoothly through the entire action cycle, while the large claw and plunge ejector removed and threw spent cases clear.

Despite its removeable large bolt knob and rear shroud made from not so glamorous plastic, they account for not much in overall weight reduction. The inclusion of a Picatinny rail on all American models is welcome and proves Ruger have built these rifles for utility and versatility. And protecting this utility rifle from the elements is a deep metallic grey Cerakote finish on all steel components.

The polymer composite stock is all business-like and the new grey splatter finish a welcome improvement on the original plain beige and olive of the Gen 1. The upgraded rippled lines of the new stock are contoured to promote a positive grip during tough conditions, something I came to appreciate later.

Like its Ruger cousins the stock is ambidextrous but, instead of a straight comb as on the M77, it has a raised cheek-piece which connects nicely to the face. Ruger don't supply the extra bits with the rifle, though the modular nature of the butt stock allows for customising with optional spacers. I found cheek height and length of pull on this one fine for comfortable offhand shooting.

Strange at first was the way the rear sling swivel was housed in the butt, though I've since learned Ruger have done this to provide an uninterrupted rear rest while using a bag. I couldn't imagine an M77 timber stock with such an arrangement but it looks right at home on the American's synthetic stock. The dual stack 10-shot Magpul polymer magazine is without doubt a fantastic inclusion. It clicks and retains securely while providing reliable feeding of additional rounds and the release button on the right is managed easily.

The Ruger Marksman trigger is reminiscent of Savage's AccuTrigger and does take some getting used to. It's a two-stage affair that's user adjustable from three to five pounds. I'd rather the manufacturers would lower their pressures to at least a two-pound minimum but, for whatever reason, they don't. Despite my grumbles it came set at 3.5lbs and I managed it well. The three-stage slide safety is at the rear of the tang and controlled easily by the tip of the thumb. All stages of safety clicked positively and are identified by clearly visible white lines (for one and two) and a single red line for 'fire'.

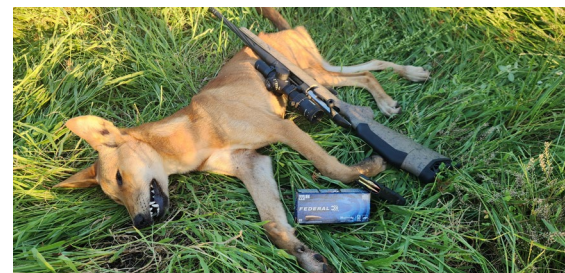
With the rifle measuring 945mm and weighing just 2.9kg (unscoped) allows it to slot neatly into the 'compact' category. The Scout came paired with a Leupold Mk. 4HD 1-4.5x24. Leupold Mk. 4 scopes don't need too much introduction and the quality of the glass speaks for itself. Although a fairly weighty affair, it's straight objective and low magnification made it an ideal fit for the petite Ruger.

Lots of rain had seen an explosion of grass since I last visited my range and sadly the cattle hadn't been doing their fair share of mowing. It was so high I couldn't set up my bench, so I used my ute mirrors instead. I didn't have high hopes for a tight group but boy was I in for a shock. My first three shots from a less than desirable 'benchrest' produced an eye-watering sub-half group at 100m, so apart from a tweak to the left I was ready to go hunting (and it proved Nioa were all over this one).

#### LET'S GO TO WORK

Fast-forward a few weeks to where this story began and I was helping my farmer friend Lyn with some machinery repairs, the American along for the ride in case a few ferals showed up. As the saying goes, one thing led to another and my ears pricked to a howl among the cattle bellows by the creek, so I concealed myself in the bank's long grass with the Scout at the ready.

The wild dog and I exchanged howls and I knew it was inching ever closer. The wind swirled around me and after a standoff lasting almost an hour the dog fell silent. I locked away the rifle and walked to the gate then, lo and behold, a little further on it was heading towards the house. It had obviously caught my scent and fled down the creek for a safer exit.



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THE RUNNING BOAR TESTED THE  
SPEED OF THE RIFLE AND IT'S  
SUITABILITY FOR FAST FOLLOW-  
UP SHOTS.





THE LARGE SOW FELL EFFORTLESSLY TO THE SCOUT-FEDERAL COMBO. NOTE EFFECTIVE GREY SPLATTER FINISH OF THE STOCK.

**Unbelievably, the boar who was next in my sights ran towards me and not with the fleeing mob, a first for me in all my years of hunting. I stood my ground and hit him between the eyes at around 10m...**

The bright orange glow of its coat was a dead giveaway as the sun caught each step through the grass, so I gave chase using bushes for cover. She must've sensed I was on to her as she paused momentarily in the grass. I couldn't go any further for fear of spooking the dog, so I stood still at around 100m with the American shouldered and locked on her ears in the scope.

I gave a "hoi" at which she raised her head and, with the reticle now on her chest, I fired and she was down for keeps. Not a move, not a sound and my first field test was complete. Or so I thought. Daylight was disappearing fast and on heading for home I spotted a mob of wild pigs. My wife had told me to be back early for her cousin's surprise birthday but I resigned myself to not making it on time.

Like the dog stalk earlier, I closed in on the mob using a favourable breeze and some bushes for cover. Not wasting any time, I shot the biggest sow first. Unbelievably, the boar who was next in my sights ran towards me and not with the fleeing mob, a first for me in all my years of hunting. I stood my ground and hit him between the eyes at around 10m before his 'cutlery' made mincemeat of my lower legs. I jumped to one side as he flew past and piled up in heap from the first bullet.

My memory is hazy as I literally had seconds to react but, at some point, I'd rechambered another round which was just as well, as he sprang to his feet and bolted towards me from behind. Since knee surgery last year I was surprised I could still muster a sprint but this was a desperate situation as, sensing a safe gap, I swivelled and put him down for good. And with my eye well and truly 'in', another three smaller pigs quickly fell to the .223 Rem shooting offhand.

#### AND FINALLY

There's something quite liberating about ejecting spent cartridges without having to pick up brass and that's exactly how I felt with the Federal ammo. Saving cases for the press was the furthest thing from my mind when shooting those ferals. Shot after shot, each round from the magazine cycled faultlessly with every bullet finding its target. The bolt stop marked the end of my magazine capacity and it was at that point I wished I'd reloaded to full capacity before the stalk.

I had a dream run with this rifle and my only regret is there was no-one around to film the charging boar. I couldn't fault what Ruger have marketed as a cheaper alternative. Prices may vary but for those looking for a budget rifle retailing for around \$1200-\$1300 (at time of writing), the Gen 2 Scout is by no means budget-build quality and worthy of serious consideration. For a full list of chamberings and more, visit [nioa.com.au](http://nioa.com.au) ●

# When only the best will do



## JIM DICKSON HAILES THE ULTIMATE GAME GUNS

**T**he shotgun reached perfection in the side-by-side 12-bore game gun of the UK, as there's no more long-lasting, reliable or efficient bird gun. A best quality side-by-side game gun that's been made to fit the owner with stock measurements precisely done to one-sixteenth of an inch in every possible direction, can be so lively and responsive in the hands that both gun and shooter become one at the pull of the trigger.

This is the result of not just balance but proper form and weight distribution. Balance points need to vary with the shooter so the gun is supported equally by both hands (it can vary from gun to gun). Barrels are thinned so more of their effective weight comes from leverage than actual weight. The forearm should be a splinter form so the hand grasps the barrels instead of a beavertail fore-end, which permits a more closed hand for better pointing and can make you a four-times better shot right there.

The rear grip is ideally straight or at most a semi-pistol grip or 'Prince of Wales' grip as it's sometimes called. This also aids precise pointing as does the fact the grip is kept as slim as possible. The tighter your grip closes on the stock the

THE FINISHING ON A PURDEY SHOTGUN IS EXQUISITE.

less effort is required for gripping as that's just the way your hand works. A full pistol grip stock makes it almost impossible to hit a bird directly overhead or slightly behind you. Side-by-side barrels have far less wind resistance when swinging on a bird than an over-and-under gun, while the deep fore-end grip required for the latter isn't as conducive for accurate pointing as the position of the lead hand on the former.

When a side-by-side game gun is properly stocked to fit the owner, it's fired the moment it's cheeked with the shooter never seeing the barrels. The thumb on the lead hand is laid alongside the barrels, effectively insuring master-eye dominance. On an over-and-under, the master eye sees a single barrel while the non-dominant eye sees the great mass of both barrels and may sometimes fight for dominance as a result. In the odd times it wins, you miss off to the side.



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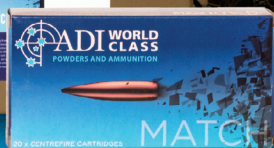
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The over-and-under was one of the first double configurations tried, yet was soon discarded as inferior to the side-by-side configuration, only returning when the gun trade wanted something different in a bid to sell people another gun. The term 'single sighting plane' resonated with US shooters who wanted to 'sight' a shotgun like a rifle, instead of pointing it like a shotgun should be. America's a nation of rifle shooters while Britain's one of shotgunners and merging the two styles of shooting produced an inferior shotgun, better suited to a 'aiming' than 'pointing'. A proper side-by-side shotgun is used by keeping your eye on the bird and ignoring the gun, just as a cricketer keeps his eye on the ball and ignores the bat. If he looks at the bat he misses the ball. The gun is brought up as level as possible, avoiding a rocking motion, with the left hand (for right-handed shooters) pointing it at the bird at all stages. There've been many shooters who could fire and hit at any stage of mounting, because of accurate pointing with the lead hand as the gun comes up.

The swing toward a crossing bird is done with the whole body instead of just the shoulders, with the right foot pushing off as you swing to the left and left foot pushing off as you swing to the right. The eye is locked firmly on the bird and the gun fired the moment it's cheeked. If the form is correct and the gun fits the shooter it's a hit and, at this point, the intrinsic liveliness of the gun comes into play as both shooter and gun merge into one at the moment of firing. This almost mystical experience is confined to properly-fitted best quality shotguns and is arguably the greatest experience in shooting. You can hit a bird with other shotguns but it just doesn't feel the same. There's a big difference between shooting a bird and shooting a bird with a shotgun you have to 'experience' to understand.

These guns were perfected over centuries from the flintlock era to the 20th century, due to a unique combination of a wealthy class used to the best of everything and some of the most highly-skilled workmen the world has known. The wealthy of the UK wanted only the best quality money could buy, which started a race to perfect the side-by-side double as the greatest bird-shooting sporting arm of all time. These didn't just look and handle good, they were solid into the millions of rounds fired. There's a saying in the gun trade that you buy a best quality gun for your grandchildren, as they'll be using it after you're long gone.

Some years ago the guns at the Holland & Holland shooting school were tested for wear and, despite most of them having fired five to six million rounds apiece, there was no measurable

JOHN DICKSON GUNMAKERS AT WORK;  
WESTLEY RICHARDS SHOTGUN; SMOKING  
THE BARRELS AT WESTLEY RICHARDS.



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JOHN DICKSON & SON ROUND ACTION; THE SUPERB GILES WHIT TOME PARAGON SHOTGUN.

depreciation. This reliability and longevity was the reason early explorers used these guns as, after all, there were no gun shops or gunsmiths in the unexplored wilds of darkest Africa. Whatever you carried had to keep working no matter what.

One of the reasons for this longevity is careful design and the other is precision fitting. These guns are fitted internally to tolerances far beyond any machine-made firearm, resulting in the wear surface being spread evenly over the maximum length. This is instead of having high and low places to wear first which throws the mechanism

into more uneven wear patterns, resulting in a drastically shorter life for those parts. Everything is done by hand, even filing the barrels round and they aren't just round, they're swamped in the middle for better weight distribution.

Mating surfaces of guns are assembled after blackening with smoke, so the high spots will show up and are then filed. Ejectors are timed so both shells are ejected to the same spot. No matter how many times the parts are assembled and disassembled, they'll keep checking and trying the fit until all interlocking parts work perfectly together and fit exactly with no microscopic high and low spots. A best quality gun is exactly that, the absolute best humans can make and money can buy regardless of cost. There's also the understated elegance which best quality exudes. These guns are a work of true functional art made

by some of the greatest craftsmen who ever lived. They don't just hang on a wall like a nice painting, they're useful and look beautiful doing it.

There are three main action types in sidelock, boxlock and the Dickson round action, each with its advantages, though in practice all work so well it doesn't really matter. The sidelock is the elegant traditional gun of London gunmakers, while the boxlock is more favoured in Birmingham where Westley Richards invented it. The Dickson round action has the best weight distribution for liveliness and most unbreakable mainsprings with the mechanism on the trigger plate. Often called the blitz action in Germany, John Dickson held the patent on it.

Styles and fashions change, sometimes for the worse and around 1600 in England, the fashion in the King's court became the rapier. The old broadsword and buckler masters like George Silver proved capable of making a fool of these new swords and their foreign instructors, to the point that masters of the rapier wanted nothing to do with sparring with the broadsword and buckler masters.

Nevertheless, fashion prevailed and the rapier became the most popular sword. In modern times the over-and-under shotgun has been championed by Americans who want to sight it like a rifle, and they've led the way to making it the most popular, even though you'll harvest more birds with a side-by-side. So there you have it: Do you want to make a fashion statement or do you want to put birds in your bag? Personally, I'll continue to use my 1906 best quality Thomas Horsley sidelock side-by-side 12-bore that has the stock altered to fit me like a glove. ●



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# TSA OUTDOORS

# Queenslanders earn their stripes in testing weekend

**S**pringsure Benchrest Club hosted Queensland's Group Centrefire 4-Gun Championships at the Captains Mountain Complex last month, with a memorable four days serving up bright sunshine, hail and everything in between.

Things kicked off on Friday under clear skies with the Unlimited class, where Paul Sullivan made an early statement with a screamer group of .196 at 100 yards, before going on to record the smallest group at 200 yards and take the overall award.

The following morning brought the Light Centrefire category where the weather flipped on its head with hailstorms sweeping through the complex, Annie Elliot delivering a superb .060 group at 100 yards which had heads turning all along the firing line. At 200 yards, Jon Babic sent down a .386 group though it was the up-and-coming Jason Edwards who claimed the win at that distance with Sullivan going on to take the aggregate title.

Sunday dawned with wild winds which tested everyone's skill and patience in the Heavy Centrefire showdown, though Keith Sewell tamed the conditions with a .129 at 100 yards. At twice that distance, Annie Elliot underlined her consistency over the weekend with a .297 group for overall victory, while Babic wrapped up the Light and Heavy 2-Gun honours, a superb achievement in truly challenging conditions.

The mercury finally started to climb for the Sporter category on the final day, Les Fraser impressing at 100 yards with a .145, while at double distance it was Sullivan who added another group success with a .305. William Greer was rewarded for solid and consistent shooting across the board when he took the overall title.

• 3-Gun champion: Jon Babic; 4-Gun Queensland state champion: Paul Sullivan. Congratulations to everyone who took part and sincere thanks go to the dedicated team of volunteers.



ANNIE ELLIOT'S LIGHT CENTREFIRE GROUP TURNED HEADS ON THE FIRING LINE.



SOME OF THE WINNERS FROM A SUCCESSFUL WEEKEND; SHOOTERS EARNED THEIR MEDALS IN OFTEN CHALLENGING CONDITION.

## DEAR SHOOTER

### MORE ON KNIFE QUERY

The clasp knife question submitted by Barry Sadler (Top Shots, *Shooter*, June 2025) is a Naval seaman's knife issued during the Second World War and, later, by the Royal Australian Navy, Royal Navy and other British Commonwealth navies. Mine was made by Harrison Brothers & Howson of Sheffield, England. In service they were colloquially called 'Pusser's Dirk'. The officer on Royal Navy ships responsible for provisions and clothing was the Purser (colloquially the Pusser), hence anything issued from Naval stores was referred to as Pusser.

Commissioned officers carried a sword as their personal weapon and symbol of status, midshipmen a dirk and all other rates (the lower deck) had only their tool of trade, their clasp knife or Pusser's Dirk to indicate their lower status.

Barry's blade has been reshaped to a point as they were manufactured as a sheepfoot blade. In the Merchant Service in the days of sail, new crew on joining had to show their knives for inspection, with any pointed blade having its tip cut off by the blacksmith so they couldn't be used as a weapon.

Neil Coates, via email

• The knife in the attached photograph was issued to me when I joined the Royal Marines back in the '60s. You can just make out my service number and yes, it was classed as a multitool and still is today (even has a screwdriver tip). I think you may find the one pictured in Top Shots has had the blade filed down. It was known as Jack's knife as in Jack for sailor and was manufactured in the UK (mine by Rodgers of Sheffield) well before WWII, each with a number (this one 21306).

Peter Crawshaw-Williams, via email

• The knife shown by Barry Sadler is a British and Commonwealth Navy 'Pusser's Dirk' or Seaman's Knife, usually made by Rodgers of Sheffield from the 1930s onwards. I have the same knife issued to my stepfather in 1938 and another exactly the same issued to me in 1973 at the RNZN Training Establishment

(HMNZS Tamaki), while my friend has one from the RAN Training Establishment HMAS Cerberus also in the '70s. The point on Mr Sadler's has been altered, as most were, due to the original being somewhat problematic when cutting cordage and 'old hands' giving us youngsters some advice. Earlier versions had different grip scales than the lead alloy on ours. Keith Gallagher, via email

• Barry Sadler's knife is an Army issue we call a Clasp Knife (a broad term) or Jack Knife. Yes, the Navy had them too, though you didn't have to be on a boat to have one. While these things have evolved over time, including adding a can opener, they've essentially stayed the same. Barry states his dad had it on returning from WWII and suggests he could've got it from an American, though this assumption is not correct. The one in the picture is a British Army/Naval issue, possibly from a Sheffield company (I could confirm with a close-up of the base of the blade which will have the maker's mark).

At the beginning of WWII we used British war stores to furnish/issue our own troops, until we manufactured them ourselves here in Australia later in the war where they have Bakelite handles. I was issued one similar in design in 1994 when I joined the Army and have a modest collection of vintage ones. Scott Heiman, *Shooter* columnist

• A knife very similar to the one pictured was issued to me on April 12, 1972 when I joined the Royal Australian Navy. The spike is meant to splice wire cable and the knife didn't have a point as sailors weren't allowed ones with pointy blades (never understood it, as we had a marlin spike attached to the knife which was more deadly). Splicing manila rope was done with wooden spikes.

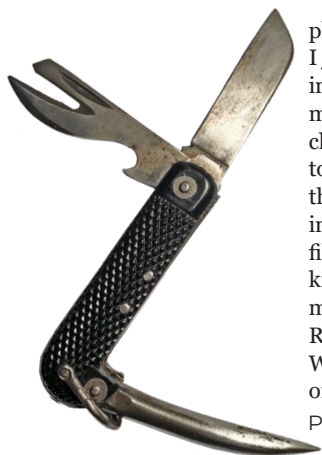
The reason we were issued a sailor's knife was when you signed up, everyone was a 'sailor' first, doing lower deck duties as Ords (ordinary seaman rank) except for officers. Once the initial 12 months of being a 'sailor' finished, we were transferred to our category trades training. From what I believe, all Commonwealth navies had the same

initial training programme, so the RN, RCN, RAN, RNZN and others were issued the same kit, including that knife for the same reason.

I believe in the 1980s for those in the RAN it all changed and sailors were issued off-the-shelf Bunnings pocket knives, again no point on the larger blade but no marlin spike as we'd stopped using lots of wire cables. Having said that, practically no-one used these knives, they just ended up in kitbags which is why when someone runs across one it's usually in great shape for its age. Patrick Beresford, via email

• I can add some more provenance as to the style of knife issued to certain ranks in WWI. Handmade under contract by a number of Sheffield knifemakers, the one pictured is by J. Rodgers from my collection of British knives and swords and, while typically understated in appearance, it has an additional can/bottle opener blade. Every aspect of the knife is sturdily built to be functional and I find the cutting blade holds its edge better than any SS knife I have (I have a number of these including in my toolbox). I doubt the US military had anything to do with it, as it wouldn't meet the Hollywood appearance standard!

Jogesh Dhanda, via email



THE KNIFE ISSUED TO PETER CRAWSHAW-WILLIAMS IN THE 1960S.



A VERSION BY J. RODGERS, OWNED BY JOGESH DHANDA

• Many thanks to everyone who submitted words and pictures in support of this matter. Correspondence on the subject is now closed – Ed.

SEND LETTERS TO:  
edit@ssaa.org.au

## 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.

### 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@nswesd.com.au or 0499 987 899; Ben Doherty bjdoherty@bigpond.com or 0409 831 258 (all after hours).

### Precision Target Pistol National Championships

September 20-21, 2025

Majura Pistol Club, ACT  
Program: September 19: Practice. 20: Any Rimfire Pistol 900 Match; Any Revolver Match; Distinguished Revolver. 21: Rimfire Mayleigh Match; Any Centrefire Pistol 900 Match; CMP Service Pistol. Prizes: National medals to third place in all grades and juniors. Facilities: Canteen available Saturday and Sunday, drinks and coffee with barbecue lunch. Contact: Brad Lake mpc@ssaaact.org.au

### Air Rifle Field Target National Championships

September 26-28, 2025

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

### SSAA IHMS National Championships

September 26 – October 3, 2025

Eagle Park Shooting Complex, Vic  
Program: Sep 26: Smallbore and Field Pistol practice. 27-29: Small Bore and Field Pistol competition for Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited, Unlim-

ited Any Sight, Unlimited Standing. 30: Big Bore practice. October 1-3: Big Bore competition for Production, Revolver, Standing, Unlimited, Unlimited Half Scale, Unlimited Any Sight, Unlimited Any Sight Half Scale, Unlimited Standing. Facilities: Camping with showers and toilets. Daily use of clubhouse. Canteen available Friday - Monday. Contact: Peter Mannu: metallicsilhouette@gmail.com

### Single Action National Championships and Chisholm Trail

September 28-October 5, 2025

Millmerran, Qld  
Program: September 28: Long Range pre-shoot; 29: Long Range; 30: Long Range, 1911 Match, Plainsman Match; October 1: Pat Garrett Match, Warmup Stages; 2-4: Main Match; 5: Closing ceremony. See National website for full event itinerary. Facilities: Hot breakfast to buy from Monday, sandwiches and evening meals for sale, on-site cabins for hire. Contact: chisholmtrail@ssaaqld.org.au

### BPCR Silhouette National Championships

October 3-6, 2025

Monarto Silhouette Range, SA  
Program: Oct 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.

### Lever Action National Championships

October 4-6, 2025

SSAA Northern Rivers, Casino, NSW  
Program: See National website for full event itinerary. Facilities: Saturday night dinner included in fee for competitors, self-help tea and coffee, barbecue lunch at cost. Camping on range with toilets and showers, caravan park 500m from range and motel 1km away. Contact: Don Chesworth drchesworth@iinet.net.au or Jim Ellis leveraction@disciplines.ssaa.org.au

## International

### Pacific Zone Muzzleloading Postal Shoot

July 1-September 30, 2025

Program: The MLAIC 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@ssaaapara.org.au

### Law Enforcement Activities 10th Anniversary International Tournament

October 11-12, 2025

SSAA Majura, Canberra, ACT  
Program: PPC 48, PPC 72, APS 90, APS 150. Facilities: The ranges in use for this event have toilets, barbecue and tea/coffee facilities, accommodation nearby. Contact: See National website for full details.

## NSW

### NSW Muzzleloading State Championships

November 7-9, 2025

Windamere Regional Shooting Complex, NSW  
Program: 9am start each day, see National website for full event rundown. Prizes: Medals for first three in each category. Facilities: Basic camping with toilets and hot showers, barbecue lunch available Friday, Saturday and Sunday, dinner available Saturday night after AGM. Contact: Shayne Barnsley 0418 302 062 darth\_royce@hotmail.com; or Alison Hughes 0407 853 393 alisonleehughes123@gmail.com

## SA

### 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 paulee06@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: Breech-loading 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: Sat: T&P1 30-shot GRCF or Classic; 1500 150-shot GRCF or Classic; 50m Precision 30-shot GRCF or Classic; Multi-target 24-shot GRCF or Classic. Sun: T&P1 30-shot GRCF or Classic; 1500 150-shot GRCF or Classic; 50m Precision 30-shot GRCF or Classic; Multi-target 24-shot GRCF or Classic. Facilities: Camping available, canteen, barbecue on Saturday night. Contact: Dave McCarthy atm3855@yahoo.com.au

## WA

### SSAA WA 5 Stand State Championships

September 21, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: Shotgun. 100 targets = 4 rounds of 25. Facilities: Hot food, cool drinks and snacks available for purchase. Tea and coffee free. Contact Neil Cobb 0404 040 357 /neilcobb@bigpond.com

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

October 19, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: Gates open 8am, first detail 9.30. All eight core matches for Big Game Rifle will be shot, nominations taken on the day, \$20 for all eight or \$5 per event. Medals for first three, shield for top shooter Open. Note there are no facilities at PBGRC, temporary shade only. Contact Steve Pearson steve@variflow.com.au or 0417 178 262.

### SSAA WA Rifle Metallic Silhouette State Championships

October 25-26, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: October 25: Centrefire Silhouette (40 shot), Centrefire Hunter (40 shot). October 26: Rimfire Silhouette (40 shot), Rimfire Hunter (40 shot). Facilities: Some camping and hot showers available. Contact: Paul Dunn 0407 428 175 /pauled1939@gmail.com

### SSAA WA Sporting Clays State Championships

November 9, 2025

Wanneroo Shooting Complex, WA  
Program: Shotgun. 100 targets = 4 rounds of 25. Facilities: Hot food, cool drinks and snacks available for purchase. Tea and coffee free. Contact Neil Cobb 0404 040 357 /neilcobb@bigpond.com

## Vic

### 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 msrcc.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.

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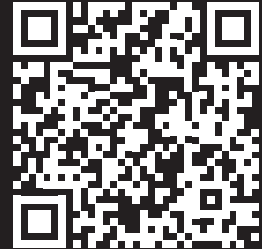
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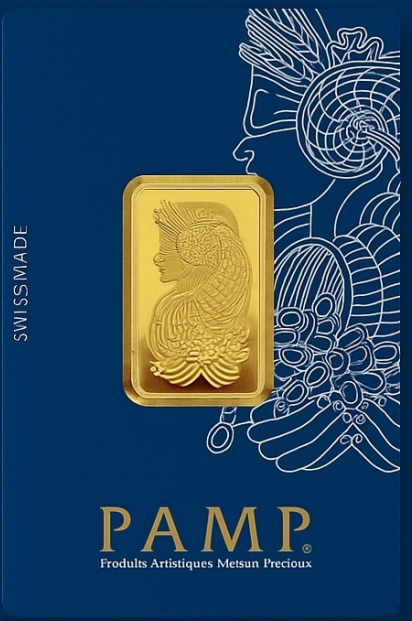


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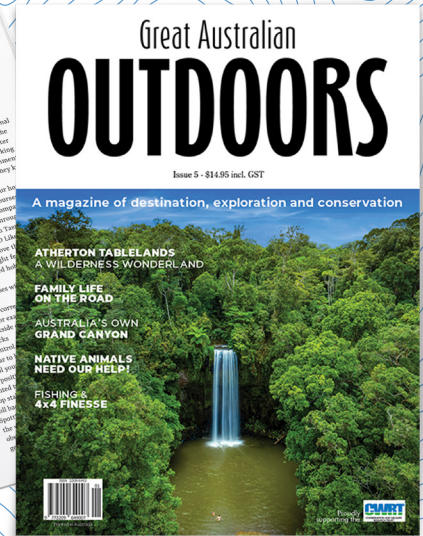
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# THE ARGUMENT IS WEARING THIN

WORDS:  
MARK VAN DEN  
BOOGAART



If you've been following the pig bounty issue, you've probably heard of the arguments for and against for putting a price on porkies' snouts. These aren't new as fox and wild dog bounties have been and currently are in place across the country, providing a valuable incentive to help manage feral species populations.

Bounties have their detractors and it's true no system delivers a perfect outcome, a fact often used as a lever to attack the idea of establishing a publicly accessible bounty. The pig bounty proposed for New South Wales is a case in point, with more pig muck thrown at the idea than produced by the total feral pig population in that state.

As a committed proponent of a bounty I've certainly given the case 'against' some thought and, to be honest, several points of attack keep whirring around my head. The first is the confusing position of the influence of hunters. Globally, the antis say we're the cause of mass extinction with ducks gone, fish gone and the rest crushed by the unrelenting roll of our off-road tyres. As a hunter, fisher and four-wheel drive owner, I suppose that's the trifecta of planetary terminator for me.

OK so I'm The Grim Reaper but then there's the counter claim, oddly also made by the antis. It seems when it comes to why bounties don't work, as a recreational hunter I am - wait for it - the cause of the increase in feral numbers! Now this claim is an oldie but a goodie. The story goes there are hunters out there snatching tusky boars and flirtatious sows, coaxing them into the back of a

truck and driving them to secluded honeymoon locations where they can happily start their own 'three little pigs' families.

So just to keep score, if you're a hunter, in between recklessly scything through fur, feathers and fins, you're helping deliver bundles of piglet joy or, maybe in these more modern times, administering the bacon matchmaking App, Grunter. Personally, the role of Stork is the more flattering. In my garden I can barely keep alive a patch of lawn, yet can raise healthy pigs thousands of kilometres from home through my animal husbandry skills.

Another point is cost, particularly the administration of recreational hunting borne by the government and appropriate departments. When it comes to pigs we can make some assumptions as, for the government, they're a financial disaster. A budget, generated through tax revenue, is created to fund control and there's no return on this investment, something in the railways we used to call a sunk loss. The best you can ever hope for is not running out of money.

For the landowner that loss it's even more dramatic. The cost of controlling pigs comes straight from the pocket but is really a double whammy. Pigs eat profit at the same time increasing operational costs, what we call taking with both hands. Then there's the hunter. If you hunt, either public or private, you pay and you pay all the way

through. Licence, permits, access, all your equipment, fuel and food. Truth be told, administrative costs are a tiny portion of the overall spend and, considering recreational hunters are often required to buy a licence unlike any other contractor, the recreational hunter pays to play.

Which brings us to the effectiveness argument, being that because recreational hunting isn't part of a wider strategic initiative, frankly it has no real value. Now you could Steelman the argument by saying OK, unaligned action is less effective than a concentrated effort. However, and this is a big however, within the wider community citizen input is highly valued, often promoted and at times even formally acknowledged.

Would anyone be silly enough to say a Men's Shed is ineffective because it isn't part of a strategic initiative, or the local 4WD club's annual beach clean-up weekend isn't worth the effort as again, it's not coordinated at governmental level? The answer is a categorical no, so why not recreational hunting?

Of course the myriad other benefits associated with recreational hunting are also generally ignored, downplayed or outright challenged, though I suppose that's the modus operandi of the anti-hunting and shooting brigade. Whatever the true weight of measures might be, it stands to reason that allowing some of the costs to flow back to the recreational hunter through bounties can only help, not hinder the cause.



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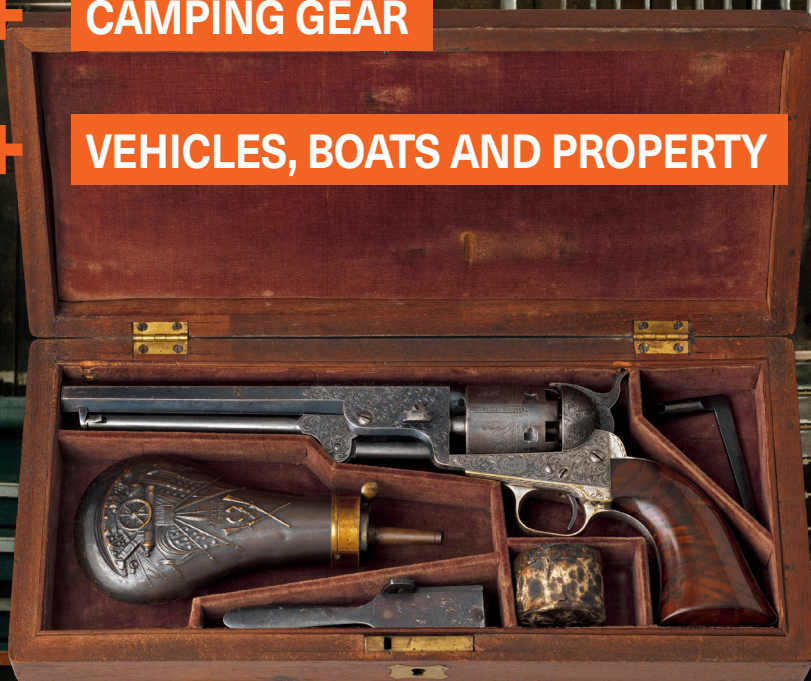
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**Not Covered.**

Theft where the equipment was not stored in an approved gun safe as required by State or Territory authority, other than when the equipment is in use or away from the member's premises. Where the member or any person or entity to whom the equipment has been entrusted fails to comply with any law relating to storage, use or handling of the equipment.

Any commentary provided in the advertisement is general information which does not take into account your individual situation and you should consider SSAA Mutual's Financial Services Guide and Statement of Protection, PDS and TMD ([www.ssaab.com.au](http://www.ssaab.com.au)) before deciding to become a member and to purchase and hold discretionary protection issued by SSAA Mutual Limited. ACN 655 675 862