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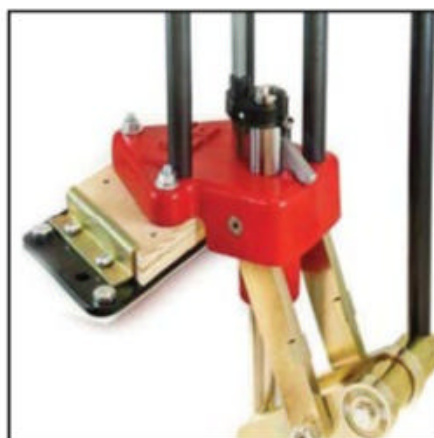
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From the Editor

Welcome to our final edition for what has been another massive year! This issue sees Don Caswell kick off our 'Red deer hunting guide' to focus on stags outside the roar, Chris Redlich take a good share of tasty goat meat, Gary Hall land a heap of pigs and fish in the Top End, Ant Atkinson fulfil a lifelong dream to hunt chital deer in North Queensland, Mike Arnold in hot pursuit for a Damara springbok in Africa and Mark van den Boogaart return for 'More small block adventures' chasing deer along with porkers this time – be sure to catch the series on SSAA TV.

We look at trapping which isn't as easy as you may think, explain why load development differs for each and every rifle, keep you hydrated as you hunt this summer, condemn misguided firearm laws that target licensed hunters and shooters, provide a way to salvage velvet deer antlers, brush up on timber stock care, connect with nature for added success and put together the ultimate hunting den decked out with reloading, trophy, butchery and cool rooms plus more.

Edgeware covers the handy Lansky Blademedic Sharpener for in the field and top-notch Nirey KE-280 Electric Knife Sharpener for home, along with the nifty Fällkniven Kolt Knife for around camp and just about everywhere else. Product reviews feature the well-priced Vortex Impact 1000 laser rangefinder, reliable Warne Maxima Permanent-Attachable Scope Rings, pig-busting Winchester Super-X .308 150-grain bullets, notable ZeroTech Thrive 3-12x44 riflescope and the trusty .22-250 Remington Model 788 rifle.

We explore rabbits being a staple here in Australia for decades and serve up a traditional shearers' meal flavoured with port, foray into the subcontinent for simple yet delicious Kashmir goat curry and also start a 'smoky' culinary series to indulge in succulent honey bourbon venison ribs.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas with your loved ones and a happy and prosperous New Year filled with bountiful hunting!

Thomas Cook
Editor



The stags grow antlers in their home range and then head for the roar.



Red deer hunting guide

stags outside the roar

Part 1: **Don Caswell** covers the period when they are more widespread and their keen senses are on point

A hunter's chance of success is greatly increased by good knowledge of the prey animal's behaviour. Traditionally, a hunter's understanding increases a little with every trip afield, in a never-ending process of gradual wisdom building.

This acquiring of perception can be accelerated by taking advantage of the expertise of more experienced hunters. Some species are well catered to in that regard. Red deer have been a premium species for millennia, as celebrated widely in the art of many cultures from antiquity.

The behaviour of red deer has been closely observed over the years and many excellent books written on the topic, in many languages. In more recent times, since the introduction of deer to New Zealand, a strong hunting culture and appreciation of deer has developed there as well. Over the past 100 years, many fine volumes have been written about New Zealand hunting and red deer in particular. Being a close Southern Hemisphere neighbour means that specific seasonal behaviour of deer in New Zealand can be related directly to Australia.

One particularly helpful book is *Red Deer in New Zealand – A Complete Hunting Manual* by Roger Lentle and Frank Saxton. While the deer information presented

there is also scattered through many other sources, Lentle and Saxton pull it all together in comprehensive fashion and draw valuable insights into how hunters can exploit that knowledge. Anyone with an interest in hunting red deer should track down a copy of this book.

Another useful source of hard data, specific to Australian conditions, comes from the SSAA sponsored study on red deer at Cressbrook Dam in South East Queensland, as reported in the *Australian Shooter* of April 2013, 'Red Deer Research Project Update' by Dr Matt Amos.

Stags beyond the roar

Hunting red deer stags during the roar is a major fascination to many hunters. For a month or so around Easter, the stags and hinds concentrate in one location to mate. The stags are fully antlered and driven. It is during this time that the stags roar at each other in competition for the ladies. To be camped out in deer country and listening to the bellows of the stags is a memorable experience.

However, a lot of hunters, like me, are not that interested in trophies of the roar. We are more concerned about bagging some prime venison and you will not manage that from a hormone-loaded stag laced with adrenalin.

Red deer hunting guide – stags outside the roar

Outside of the roar is a period of around 10 months when the stags and hinds separate and return to their own territories. There is a distinct seasonal variation, influenced by weather and climate, that has a major impact on the behaviour of the deer and where you can expect to find them. This is not just the domain of the venison hunters either. The stags will carry their antlers for another five months, through until September, when they shed.

During this time the stags will be many kilometres (10 to 30 is not uncommon) from where they were during the roar. And, their wary senses, no longer dulled by the imperatives of the roar, are back to a keen level. This is a challenging time to be a trophy hunter, quite different from hunting stags during the roar. An added benefit is that the stags' venison is more palatable than during the roar period.

Stag development

The hinds give birth in early summer, from late November to early December. Male fawns spend less than 12 months in the protection of the hind group. The pregnant hinds chase out the yearling spikers in the latter part of spring as they begin preparing for the arrival of the new fawns.

The spiker stags wander off and seek to find a company of stags to join. This is a dangerous time for the yearling spikers. Lacking the full sense of wariness and experience embodied in the hind groups, the spikers are relatively easy targets for hunters. And carrying a load of prime venison does them no favours.

By joining a stag company there is some safety in the numbers and experience of the older stags. But it is still hazardous for spikers as the older stags will often let

them go ahead into potentially risky situations while hanging back themselves. And, in the event of an alarm, there is no coordinated group escape marshalled by the experienced old hinds, but an every-stag-for-himself scenario that often leaves confused young spikers dithering in harm's way.

Over the first few years, the surviving spikers build on their knowledge and wariness. They also go from hanging about on the edge of the rut to a tentative participation as their size and antlers grow. After five years, as an eight-pointer, the now maturing stags engage fully in the roar. The sixth year sees 10-pointers which, as time goes on, can develop into even bigger heads. In free-ranging Australia, 12- and 14-point stags are not rare, but by that age they have a full kit bag of tricks and precautions, requiring a careful, dedicated and experienced stalker.

A bit of well-earned luck does not go amiss either. In some places, good wild deer genetics, boosted by superior farmed escapees, may produce the odd even larger free-range stag. It may lead to accelerated development in some wild stags which, in a farm scenario of excellent food and great genetics, can produce huge antlers of many points in only a few years.

For free-range deer habitat anywhere, the key to developing a herd of big-antlered stags is as simple as having the discipline to not shoot anything (other than



A big 15-pointer from Brisbane Valley.

culling obvious poor genetics) smaller than 10 or 12 points.

Where and when to seek stags

The red deer study reported by Dr Matt Amos did a lot of GPS collaring of both stags and hinds. This quantified many of the anecdotal observations and matched hard data from overseas in locations equivalent to red deer habitat here in Australia.

The stags are more wide-ranging than the hinds and have larger home areas. When you factor in the corridor the stags travel to reach the rutting grounds, that significantly adds to average scope of the stags. Typically, from Dr Amos' South East Queensland data, the stags' span is over 3000 hectares while the hinds' area average is 700 hectares.

At the end of the autumn roar the stags trek back to their base area. As winter approaches the stags tend to 'yard-up' into a smaller area of their domain. During



This is what a 30-plus point rack looks like.



Spikers lack the experience and wariness of mature stags.

winter, when it is cold and food is harder to find, deer slow their metabolism down and stay in small, sheltered zones away from human activity, often far from their normal feeding grounds. Their travel and feeding are greatly reduced during this winter period. The yarding grounds of red deer can be productive for hunting.

As winter passes, and the warmth of spring returns, the deer are hungry and they begin to actively seek out food. At this time the stag companies become looser and more scattered. Red deer are predominantly browsing animals and do most of their activity in the late evening and early morning. However, in spring (September–October) they prefer the initially more abundant grass grazing. During this time, they are often to be found on the more open, sunny areas.

As summer approaches they move back to forest browsing. Typically, the stags linger longer on the grasslands than do the hinds before heading back into the bush. Deer will feed extensively on clear full-moon nights and will be camped up by first light. They

feed on dark nights too, but less efficiently and will be found feeding still at daylight. So, hunting at dawn on the dark of the moon is a rewarding strategy.

In country with lush vegetation and heavy dew, the deer satisfy most of their water requirements from their browsing and will infrequently seek water to drink. In drier country, the deer will need to find surface water. They generally do this in the late afternoon, after their siesta, before heading out to feed into the evening. Hunting water sources in the late afternoon can be productive.

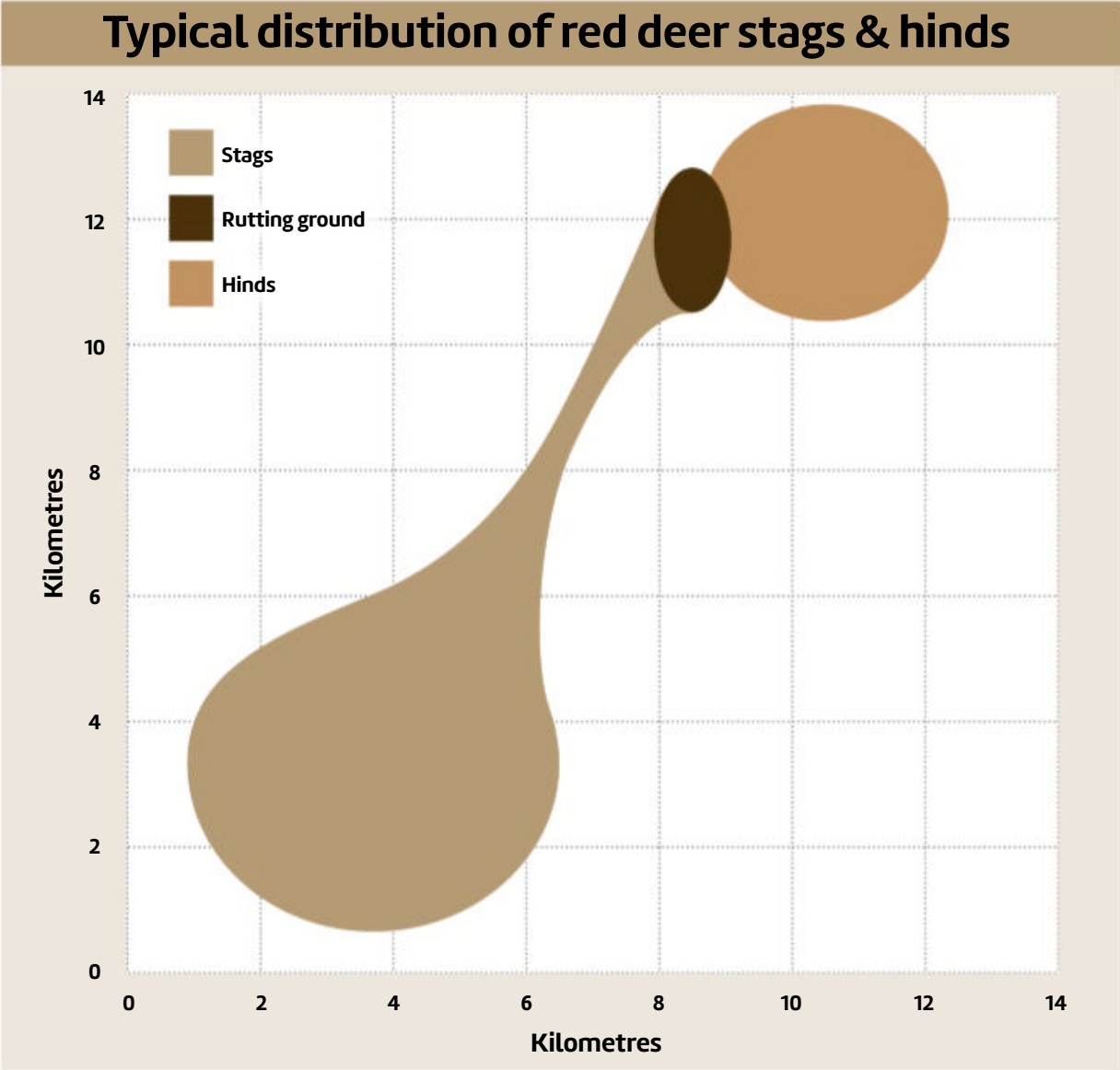
The stags shed their antlers in September and then begin the summertime process of growing a new set for the next year’s roar. During the time their antlers are growing rapidly, encased in the delicate velvet, the stags favour the more brush-free areas of their range. They also shy away from fences that, at other times, they would pass through or over. This behaviour is all about protecting the delicate new growth of antler that is sensitive and easily damaged.

Putting it all together

Obviously, the starting point for an aspiring red deer hunter is locating where the animals are at any time of the year. That requires a lot of trips to assess country and look for clues to the deers’ presence.

The finding of cast antlers is a good clue to the whereabouts of the stags’ territory outside of the roar. The existence of wallows nearby to where there are hinds is a great indication of where the stags will be during the roar.

Once you know where to look, you need to be right up to speed on understanding the acuteness of the deers’ senses and their varying behaviour. The seasons and prevailing weather impact that, and your chances of hunting success. To be continued... ■



Red deer stags and hinds live most of the year well separated – except for during the roar.



The truth about trapping



This old dog fox may not make much of a fur for the floor, but he'll certainly test your trapping skills.

It's legal and humane, but not easy, clarifies **Adrian Kenney**

Today in Australia, traditional trapping with leg hold traps is about as obscure to society as the best laid trap is to a rabbit's eye. Even among hunters, trapping has vanished from view with the vast majority focusing

their hunting attention down the barrels of shotguns and through riflescopes. Some people even think trapping is illegal; yet in most states it is not.

It is true that trapping regulations are more complex and restrictive than they

used to be in the days of the old traditional rabbit traps with their non-forgiving steel jaws. These days, we have jaws lined with rubber and chains with swivels and springs to facilitate easier movement and less distress to the animal that's captured.

There are particular sized traps for rabbits, foxes and wild dogs plus many more legislative requirements that need to be followed by those who want to be a trapper. Once you've done all the research on the laws and requirements in your particular state, it's not hard to follow.

But is trapping cruel? If you're a city slicker with no real exposure to the natural world or farming of animals, I can see how you would think it is cruel to hold an animal in a trap. Based on your experiences that would be an unpleasant moment for the captured animal – granted.

Realistically, hunters have to admit that being caught in a trap isn't exactly party time for any rabbit, fox, wild dog or feral cat. So, is it necessary and is the discomfort



This dog fox is sniffing the base of a sapling before cocking his leg and leaving his scent. Fox urine is a great way to lure these creatures.

minimised as much as possible? In both cases, absolutely. The fact that vermin need to be controlled is admitted and acknowledged by anybody.

It is also a fact that today's trapping is regulated to a point whereby it is as humane as possible. So why trap an animal instead of shooting it? Trapping assists in the control of vermin that are otherwise difficult to curb via other methods for various reasons. Therefore, it is both required and as humane as possible. Any person, who spends most of their lives in and around the natural world, knows that control measures such as poisoning and myxomatosis can have unpleasant outcomes.

But despite the lack of publicity around the topic, trapping is still being carried out in most states of Australia by amateurs and professionals alike. On many bush tracks through the forest, you can find signs informing the public of 'wild dog capture devices in use.' The professional trappers often use drags (a heavy object on a chain attached to the trap) to enable the captured wild dog to move off from the edge of bush tracks into the forest away from public view. The heavy object and chain quickly entangle on vegetation, with the trapper only needing to follow the drag marks a short distance to despatch the animal.

Amateur trappers generally focus their attention on the more numerous and available rabbits and foxes. While the wild dog is seen as the most challenging and difficult animal to trap, if you're lazy and cut corners with your trapping even rabbits and foxes become troublesome to catch.

Like anything in life it's a matter of dedication and persistence if you wish to capture more success than failure and more satisfaction than frustration. Trapping is a form of hunting that I struggle with, not due to ethical concerns but because I lack the dedication to do it well.

Multiple mistakes can be made, ranging from frustration to failure. It's the kind of frustration sambar hunters feel at some point when miles from camp, having been hunting all day without seeing a deer and the rain starts pouring down to accompany your sore knee that was twisted in the previous gully. You gradually hobble back



There is a host of equipment that can be used when trapping – some are necessities and others are optional.



There are many key stages when setting a trap properly. If you cut corners all you'll find along your trap line are missed opportunities and much frustration.

The truth about trapping



Checking the trap line in the early morning can be rewarding if you have put in the work and set those traps properly.



By setting the trap close to the mouth of the burrow a rabbit has less room to avoid it and somewhere to go if a fox happens along.

through the thick, soaking vegetation in the pouring rain while pondering why the heck you bother. That feeling right there that can be trapping if you don't do it well.

However, on the other hand, in the right locations and with properly laid traps you can barely wait for daybreak to go around the trap line and see what you caught during the night. Often, you'll hear a rattle of chain in the stillness of early morning as you approach that fox set on a ferny ridge. Pushing through the ferns there he is with his magnificent red coat and those mischievous eyes staring back at you. With a swift shot from a .22 to the head for a quick kill you have that wonderful fur to be tanned and preserved. Then, it's on to the next trap.

In areas with plentiful bunnies and when the traps are laid properly you can have a rabbit in trap after trap. When trapping rabbits, the best locations are well used burrows that are worn from traffic; rabbit runs (travel routes between burrows and the feeding grounds) and rabbit mounds. The

rabbit runs and mounds are areas where multiple rabbits are drawn to, so increasing your odds of success. Rabbit furs can be tanned and stitched together to make all manner of things and the meat is undamaged from shotgun pellets or bullet holes and prime for the pot or pan.

Trapping is definitely a skill and an art. It is not easy in terms of technique, or the effort required doing it well. When I've put the effort in, I've had reasonable success on foxes and rabbits.

Quite simply, don't be lazy. Make any necessary alterations or changes to new traps to properly prepare them, such as pan tension, dying, waxing and generally making sure they function properly.

Take the time to set the traps perfectly in a good location. You can't cut corners with trapping if you want good results. There are indeed a host of factors that can come into play and the energy you put in to overcome them is what will decide if you succeed or fail.

The best thing a newcomer can do is watch some professional trapping footage that shows how to go about the format from A to Z. Then it comes down to experience and that's the best teacher of all. ■

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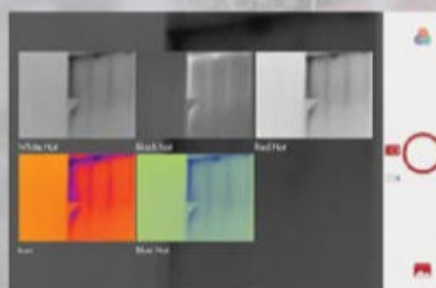
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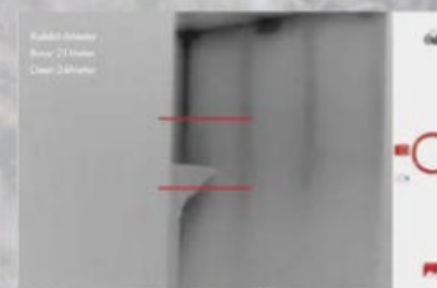
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And we're off and smoking...

Paul Barker smokes succulent honey bourbon venison ribs in his new Kamado Joe Classic Series 3

Anyone with an interest in cooking is more than likely looking for fresh appliances or other related items to create new and tasty dishes or improve on family favourites. We like experimenting with various cooking styles and methods. Smoking fish, mainly trout and other game meats, when available, are popular dishes.

Our normal smoking items have seen better days so it was time to look at updating and grabbing something more modern and versatile, not specifically just for smoking. This set in train an almost casual approach to find the ideal piece of equipment for our perceived requirements. Looking at various websites and a couple of outdoor barbecue stores it soon became obvious that more than a casual approach would be a required add to the outdoor kitchen, as there was a huge and varied choice.

The field was narrowed and after a couple more visits to suppliers for some hands-on checks on actual items it came down to which item had the most features and best price.

In the end we went to a Barbeques Galore store and settled for a ceramic style multi-function Kamado grill. Of those on offer we opted for the Kamado Joe Classic Series 3 model.

This was the stand-out to suit our requirements and with its bright, fire engine red colour and noteworthy size



The Kamado Joe Series 3 set-up complete and ready to cook.

it will certainly brighten up the outdoor kitchen area. Being able to use the KJ as an oven, we don't have to go out for pizzas anymore. The ability to use it as a grill, smoker and a stove made it the obvious choice.

The KJ journey began not long after the carrier delivered this impressive looking crate sitting on a rather solid pallet. It was a bit of a shock to note that the all-up weight was just short of 150kg. Further into the unboxing and separating the contents, it soon became obvious it would be a two-person job to complete the assembly.

The first part was to bolt together the components. This was a straightforward job using the supplied hardware and tools. Its design is certainly solid given the weight it has to support. Installing the supplied four heavy-duty castors, two of which have wheel locks, completed the trolley assembly.

The main body of the KJ was then placed into the trolley. Being constructed of ceramic and having a wall thickness of about 25mm explained where the bulk of the weight was situated. Next step in the set-up was to install the fire box in the base of the body. Comprising of an ash pan,



Ready for installation are the fire box components, charcoal basket, half-moon ceramic heat deflectors, SloRoller assembly, divide and conquer three-level insert and cooking grill racks, ash tray and tools.



Unboxed and ready for assembly – the sturdy trolley cart, two aluminium side benches and control tower vent.

the fire box base and the five petal shaped sections that form the sides of the fire box, these are held in position with a stainless steel retaining ring.

The remaining accessories that come standard with the KJ3 include the SloRoller hyperbolic deflector system which gives a significant improvement to the heat circulation in the dome, a divide and conquer three-level rack, an X-accessory rack, two half-moon ceramic heat deflectors and two stainless steel half-moon cooking racks.

To complete our KJ set-up we purchased the optional ceramic pizza stone and the classic grill expander. These two items extend the possibilities. Apart from cooking pizza they can be used for extra grilling and the pizza stone for additional heat distribution when required.

Before using the KJ to cook/grill food it is suggested that an initial burn-in be performed, because the ceramic can absorb unwanted aromas such as those from petro-based fire lighters and heat beads. It is highly recommended that premium quality lump natural charcoal be used as the primary heat source.

Smoking wood is another consideration when starting out in a KJ cooking adventure. In Australia we are fortunate that there are a number of timber types that are ideal for smoking. Gathering smoking wood can add another worthwhile dimension to hunting trips and save considerable dollars along the way. Go for red gum, iron bark,

stringybark, yellow box, black wattle, jarrah and macadamia.

Popular imported smoking wood varieties include maple, mesquite, hickory and oak – in all quite an extensive range to suit most smoking applications.

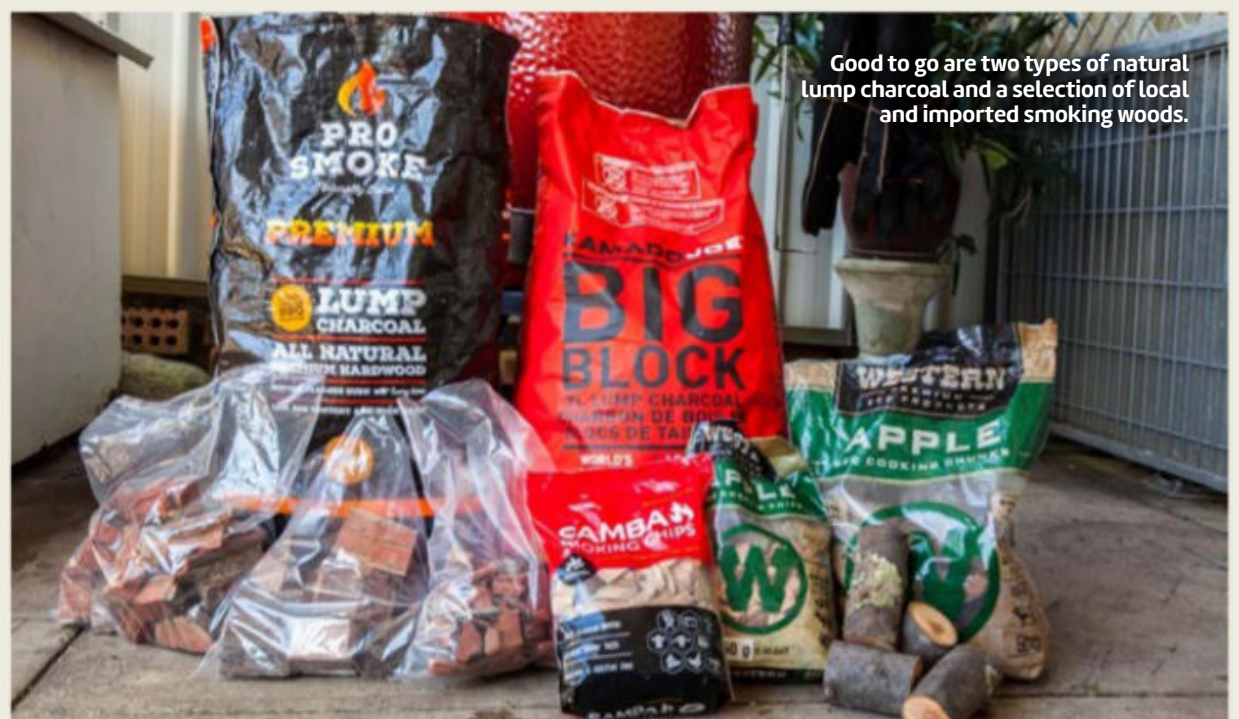
The flexibility in cooking styles when configuring the KJ with the various heat deflectors and grill racks is impressive, from drying/smoking jerky at 70 degrees Centigrade for three hours or so through to 450 degrees Centigrade for eight to 10 minutes for great homemade pizza. The efficiency gained from the heavy ceramic walled KJ means maintaining stable temperatures over long periods is a breeze.

That said, there is a minor learning curve to becoming proficient at adjusting the bottom vent and the control tower

vent to maintaining the desired temperature. The dome thermometer is a great aid to keeping an eye on temperature fluctuations. The graduated control tower top vent is weather-proof and in conjunction with the bottom vent the through-put of air can be controlled precisely to maintain the desired temperature.

Overall, the Kamado Joe represents a welcome addition to our outdoor kitchen and one that will well and truly outlast the others that it has superseded. While not the least expensive in the KJ bracket, the inclusions for the Classic Series 3 justify the investment.

Priced at \$3299 at the time of writing, visit barbecuesgalore.com.au for more information.



Good to go are two types of natural lump charcoal and a selection of local and imported smoking woods.

And we're off and smoking...

Smoky venison ribs

With the addition of the Kamado Joe Classic Series 3 to our outdoor kitchen setting we have been able to explore a whole array of new cooking ideas and methods of preparing different game meat dishes.

The ability to prepare the Kamado Joe for low and slow cooking is ideal for smoking venison ribs and various other cuts of game meat.

As with any new cooking appliance, particularly those that are fuelled with charcoal and similar fuels, there is a bit of a learning curve to understand and discover their sweet spots with the different configurations. After initial use and some experimentation, it does not take long to become confident tackling the various formats for the KJ when preparing different game meat types and cuts.

If you don't own a Kamado smoker, no worries, the ribs will be delicious using your personal smoking system.

Recipe

Enough venison ribs for the number of people dining

Rub ingredients

- 2 tablespoons smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon plain paprika
- 2 tablespoons garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons onion powder
- 1 tablespoon chilli powder
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon fresh ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh ground white pepper
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon cumin

Honey bourbon glaze ingredients

- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup bourbon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons wholegrain mustard
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon crushed red peppers
- Juice of $\frac{1}{4}$ fresh lime
- Peppers and ginger optional

Everyone's tastes are different so some experimentation may be required to vary the rub ingredients from the basic recipe.

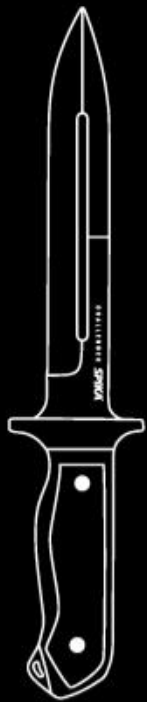
Method.

First up, the dry rub has to be prepared along with a liquid glaze. Combine all of the dry rub ingredients in a bowl and mix well. The glaze can also be prepared at this stage or left until later while the ribs are cooking. As with the dry rub, combine all of the ingredients in a bowl and mix well.

Next, the ribs need to be trimmed of any excess meat and bone fragments. On the bone side the silver, white tissue needs to be removed. This is best done by lifting one edge of the tissue with a blunt instrument – a teaspoon handle or bread and butter knife are ideal for this process.

Venison ribs and the dry rub ingredients.





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STICKER

L: 356mm
W: 70mm
HRC: 57-59
🔨 440



**DROP
POINT**

L: 203mm
W: 37mm
HRC: 58-60
🔨 AUS-8



**GUT
HOOK**

L: 203mm
W: 37mm
HRC: 58-60
🔨 AUS-8



**LARGE
FOLDER**

L: 192mm
W: 34mm
HRC: 58-60
🔨 AUS-8



**SMALL
FOLDER**

L: 132mm
W: 23mm
HRC: 58-60
🔨 AUS-8



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And we're off and smoking...

Start on the top of a rib at one edge and after separating enough tissue to obtain a grip, strip the entire tissue from the ribs. A couple of attempts may be required to complete this process. Removing this tissue will allow better penetration of the rub on the bone side of the ribs.

Place the ribs bone side up on a baking flat or similar tray and apply a liberal amount of the dry rub. Turn the ribs over and with the meat side up apply the dry rub. Loading the dry rub in a shaker bottle/container makes applying an even coating much simpler.

While the rub is working its magic on the ribs, it's time to turn the attention to setting up the KJ for low and slow cooking using the double indirect method. With the charcoal basket clean, a fist size chunk of seasoned apple wood is positioned in the middle back part of the basket. Then add about half the basket capacity with lump charcoal, making sure to cover the apple wood.

With natural firelighters or a blowtorch, fire up the charcoal and place the SloRoller

base into position followed by the divide and conquer rack. On the middle position add the X-accessory rack followed by the two half-moon heat deflectors pushed apart to form a V-shaped opening in the centre to allow the heat up into the dome. With the dome closed and the top and bottom vents open, it's time keep an eye on the temperature.

For best results, a dome target temperature of 130 degrees Centigrade is what to aim for. Once the dome has warmed up to a temperature just above 130°C, open the dome and with heat resistant gloves on, quickly remove the two heat deflectors and the X-accessory rack and place the top components of the SloRoller into position on the base. Then replace the X-accessory rack and the two deflector plates pushed together.

To complete the low and slow arrangement a circular drip tray can be placed on top of the heat deflector plates and the two half-moon grill racks are installed on the top position of the divide and conquer rack and the dome closed.

Once the temperature approaches the 130°C mark, it's time to close the bottom vent to around 14mm and the control tower top vent to about the same gap. When the temperature has reached the target level and stabilised, place the ribs onto the grill racks bone side down.

Adjusting the two vents to control the heat can be a bit tricky at first, but with a little practice it all falls into place.

Cooking time will be between two and three hours, depending on the thickness of the ribs. During this period it's a good idea to keep a watchful eye on the temperature to ensure that it remains on or close to the target mark. The thick ceramic walls of the KJ will hold a constant temperature given there is sufficient charcoal in the basket for the duration of the cook.

After two hours have elapsed, start checking for doneness – a sharp pointed skewer inserted between the ribs will give a good indication on how things are progressing. If the skewer takes a reasonable amount of effort to penetrate the meat, more time is required. Once you're happy that the ribs are almost done, brush on a thin layer of the glaze and continue cooking to allow the glaze to form a sticky crust.

With all aspects coming together, a really tender, juicy and flavoursome slab of ribs will arrive at the table for all present to enjoy.

Cooking on the Kamado Joe has certainly been an eye-opener in many respects. But having gained a growing amount of experience with it, this has almost become second nature. Setting it up for the various cooking configurations possible has been very rewarding. ■



The venison ribs with an even coating of the tasty dry rub.



The seasoned ribs prepared for smoking and cooking on the top grill racks.



Well worth the effort – the tasty ribs with a serve of homemade chips.

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The simple answer is

Matthew Cameron warns there is no blanket call when it comes to load development

NO

It seems to be a fashion over the past few years that when a question is asked, the answer predictably is, it's on the internet. However, one word is missing and that word is control. Personally, as a reloader I treat everything on the internet with suspicion. If you are going to use a suggested powder load off the internet, the first item is to check the load against a reputable reloading manual. You might just find that the load is above the maximum recommended.

There is a lot of information on the internet that is potentially dangerous for the reloader, so just how do you protect yourself? One answer comes from another area – it's the ABC method:

Assume nothing.

Believe nothing.

Check everything.

I do not know how many times I have come across the following question on the internet in just about every shooting site – it recurs with some regularity:

'I have just bought a XYZ rifle in .22-250 calibre, could you please recommend an accurate load.' The simple answer is no, not I or any other user of the said cartridge can provide the person asking the question with the information sought, simply because each and every rifle barrel is a law unto itself. Just because a particular load is accurate in my rifle, there is absolutely no guarantee that it will be accurate in another. Hence, we have the process we know as load development.

This particular question is asked so often I am beginning to get suspicious. Are there in fact a large number of reloaders who do not know how to carry out the process? Or are the reloaders concerned not willing to expend time, effort and components and would prefer that someone else do the job for them at zero cost?



Four .270 cases from different makers. The weight varies also. Trimming will add to this discrepancy over time.

The situation is not helped by the fact that there is no specific laid down procedure on just how you should test ammunition. Eventually writers such as myself develop a 'system' to carry out the procedure. If you test numbers of cartridges or projectiles and other components there has to be a set of constant rules that are applied to each and every test. Otherwise, you are comparing apples and oranges and prove nothing. Of course, when you write about such a set of processes you are placing your neck on the chopping block.

There will be plenty of advice and criticism of exactly where you went wrong but nothing in the way of an alternative set of rules to carry out the process.

To prove the point on how careful you must be, a gunsmith in the US was asked

to build and load develop two identical benchrest rifles for a top-grade shooter. He did so, load developed the first successfully and used the same load in the second. However, he blew the primers.



The two cases on the left are properly annealed.

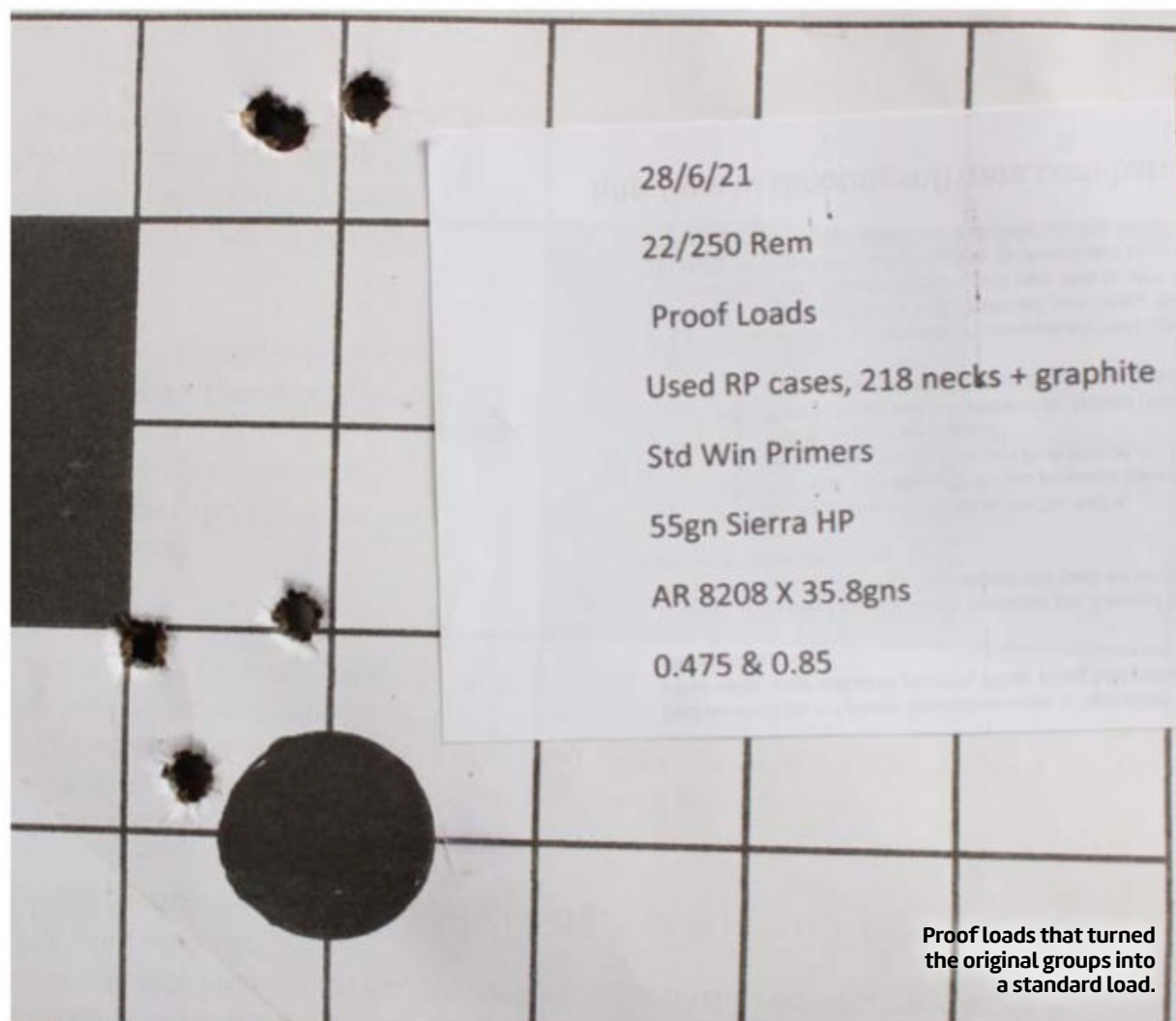
Yet the measuring tools were identical. The only difference was the composition of the barrel steel, both from the same maker. It just shows how careful you must be and take nothing for granted.

In addition, there are still reloaders who believe that manuals are so conservative that maximum loads can be used as starting loads – wrong again. The second problem is that a particular reloader has developed a load without any pressure signs that is a couple of grains above the maximum printed in any manual. He cannot wait to let all and sundry know how good he is and places the load on the internet. What our hero fails to remember is that the load was in reality, only good in his singular barrel.

Used in another barrel the result may be dangerous to say the least. The usual reason is that the barrel used to develop the load is well worn. No wonder it is possible to go a couple of grains above the maximum without pressure signs. A standard load in my .270 Winchester was 250fps below the original logged some 25 years ago. The barrel was simply shot out and was replaced. It is worth noting that the original barrel's best load was 54gr of AR2209 and 130gr soft-point projectile. The new barrel did not like the load at all and appears to prefer loads with AR2213SC powder.

It is correct to state that the amount of reloading information on the internet is vast. But it is totally uncontrolled in terms of content accuracy.

The other issue that seems to appear on the internet with some regularity is that of brass involving new or just slightly used rifles. I have written many times that



accuracy is the summation of many small items that all come together in a positive manner to provide the best accuracy in a particular rifle/cartridge combination. It is my opinion, after much reading on the internet, that many reloaders have only a casual attitude towards brass.

However, in the same manner, particularly in relation to brass, many items can come together in a negative way and cause problems. It usually involves new rifles because of less bore wear. Again, the problem usually occurs with maximum loads. Our new reloader surmises, incorrectly, that as the dimensions are all the

same brass of different makes, they can be mixed. This is a mistake. If you weigh different makes of brass, you might be surprised at the weight variation. Usually, premium brands such as Lapua and ADI will be much heavier, hence the brass is thicker and the internal volume less. This variation will alter over the life of an individual case as it is trimmed for being overlength.

This is rarely taken into account. For the purpose of this article, we weighed commercial cases of four different brands in .270 Winchester calibre with the following results in no particular order: 177.5gr/195gr/187.5gr/188.2gr.



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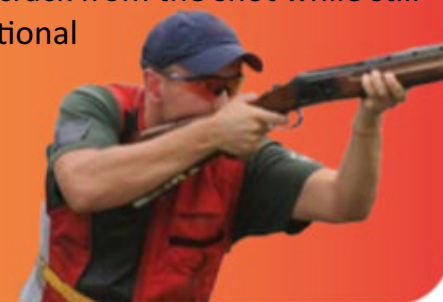


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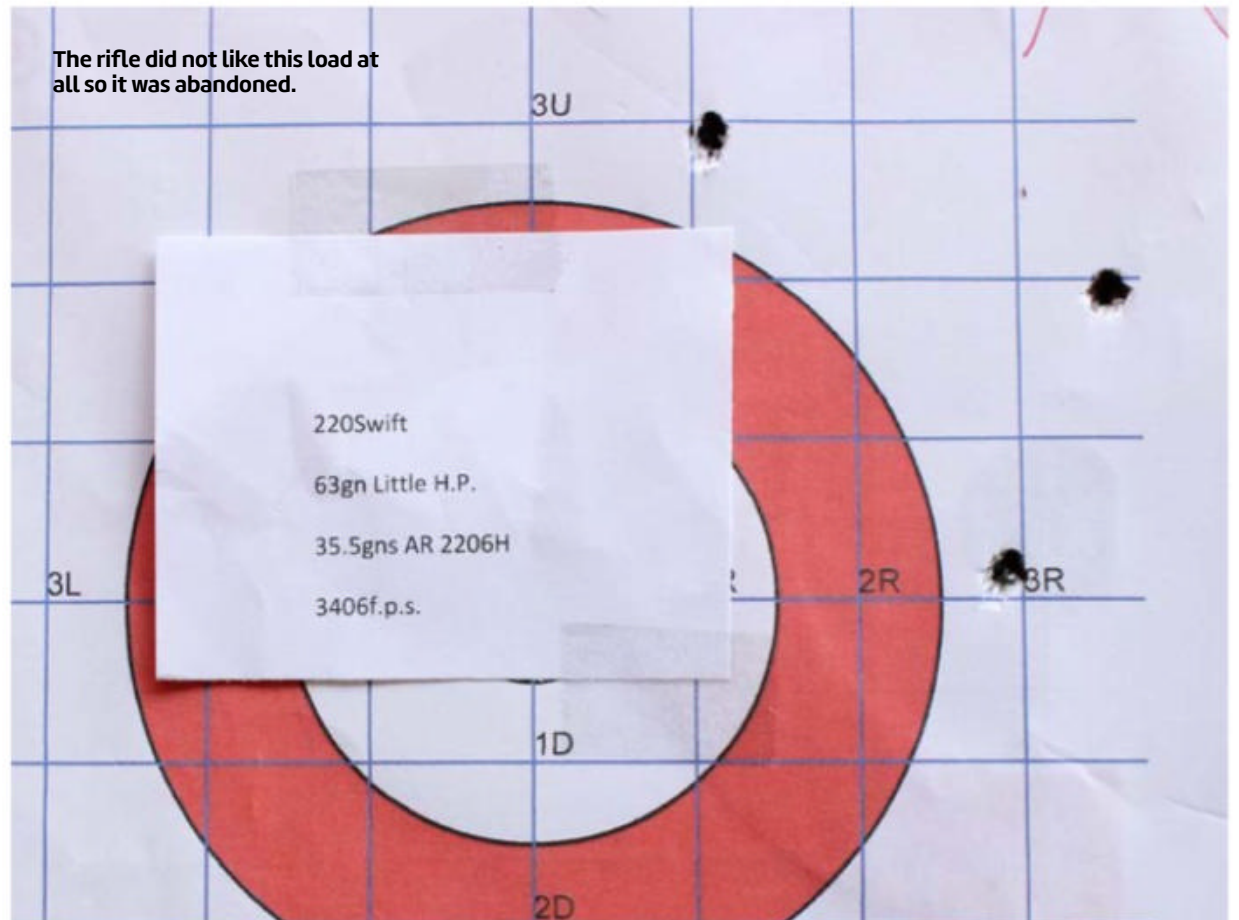


The simple answer is no

As you can see there is a wide variation, as these were used cases. Less internal volume for a given powder charge will increase the pressure when the cartridge is fired. Of course, we have no way of knowing except that the primer will have flattened to some degree, and the cartridge extraction may be difficult. If the load is developed in a light case that is near maximum, it will not take much to push pressure over the edge into dangerous territory.

The other issue in relation to such loads is primers. Over a long time reloading I have come to the conclusion that the difference between standard and magnum large rifle primers is somewhere between 50 and 75fps. Just what this translates to in terms of increased pressure I am unable to say. What is important is that you should not change primers on a whim. If we look at the worst-case scenario our unaware reloader changes from a light to a heavy case and uses a magnum primer to boot, so is a bit miffed to find that the new reloads are flattening the primers.

A recent posting relating to annealing is of interest. A reloader had inserted an article relating to the conversion of cartridge cases into a different calibre. Usually this is a straightforward exercise. He suggested, correctly, that there were several stages



during the conversion when the appropriate case should be re-annealed. Again, this is normal depending on the amount of alteration involved and in fact occurs in the manufacture of commercial cases.

What was incorrect was the suggested method of annealing. Our reloader stated that the cases should be placed in a pan of water that came about halfway up the side

of the case. The necks of the case should then be heated with a torch until they were cherry red and tipped over. A case of ABC if there was ever one. This method of annealing was discredited a long time ago. Heating the case necks to cherry red is excessive and the necks end up too soft, if the temperature is excessive. ■



First aid for your blade

Derek Nugent commends the Lansky Blademedic Sharpener for use in the field



The piece is lightweight and fits comfortably in the hand.

Spend enough time afield and you quickly come to appreciate that a sharp knife is an essential item of kit. Regardless of its design, age or designated function, a well-honed edge on your hunting knife – or indeed on any and every blade in camp – is a necessary thing.

From both a practical and safety point of view, a dull blade is not only unfit for purpose but can cause frustration and handling errors which could easily result in a nasty injury. With this in mind, there are few hunters who venture forth without being confident that the knives they are packing are 'good to go'.

However, beyond beginning a hunt with a sharp knife, there is often the need to re-sharpen or 'touch up' a blade while out and about. In this instance having on hand the means to do so is crucial.

A myriad of options

Fortunately, there are a host of products available to facilitate blade maintenance in the field. They vary from traditional stones and steels to quite complex industrial grade devices and everything in between. It often comes down to a combination of factors such as preference, price, size and camp situation as to what is favoured by individual hunters in this regard.

From a purely practical and convenience point of view, when actually on a hunt, a small, handheld preference is often deemed the best. Again, there are a wide array on offer and a good option, based on its compact design and overall performance, is the Lansky Blademedic Sharpener.

Lansky Sharpeners

Lansky have been producing a host of sharpening tools for decades. An American company, they are best known for their 'controlled angle sharpening system' first designed in 1979 by Arthur Lansky Levine.

This is a kit-based product which comes in seven configurations (with 3–5 hones per kit) that allows users to accurately marry the appropriate sharpening angle to a knife's intended function. Admittedly, while these kits represent the flagship of their gamut, Lansky also offers pocket sharpeners, kitchen knife sharpeners and picks for edging chisels and axes.

The company proudly boasts that 'whatever you need to sharpen, Lansky has a tool for the job'. It is one of their pocket sharpeners which has caught our attention as its features embrace those most hunters would find valuable to have on hand in the field.

The Blademedic

Lansky markets the Blademedic as 'tactical' – a first responder for field maintenance on any type of knife blade. The unit is compact and lightweight without being in any way flimsy. It features full metal construction and can be disassembled for cleaning as/if required.

The piece fits comfortably in the hand and is slightly textured to ensure a good solid grip can be had. It easily slips into a pocket or pouch and as a result is unobtrusive to carry, particularly as it is a light entity at about 75g. A sensible design allows the item to be threaded onto a lanyard or similar cord which in turn can be secured to your person or gear, meaning that it cannot be easily misplaced during use in the field.

The component comes with an extensive user guide which details the function and correct usage of the four sharpening options built into the Blademedic. There is also a reasonable library of videos available on YouTube reviewing and demonstrating it in action, such is its popularity in the United States.

The sharpening options provided are:

Tungsten carbide – To bring up a blunt blade in a hurry (very abrasive, employ with care).

Ceramic rods – To finish an edge.

Serrated blade sharpener – To hone serrations (particularly gut hooks).

Diamond tapered rod – To provide fast reconditioning of an edge.

These features easily accommodate any immediate sharpening needs likely to be encountered while tramping the hillsides in search of game. Indeed, at the conclusion of a successful hunt, with game meat to be harvested, being able to touch up a blade in situ makes field stripping a more efficient process in terms of time and effort.

Final analysis

This review is essentially FYI. For like most things pertaining to hunting, the choice of an appropriate sharpening accessory to maintain an edge on your knife is subjective and a matter of personal choice. In our experience, the Blademedic has shown itself to be a capable and reliable performer.

At about \$25 from various outlets, it is not the most expensive or sophisticated article on the market and without doubt at a higher price point potentially superior alternatives would be available. However, that being said, it is eminently suitable for returning a blade to a keen edge as required, on the spot, in the field. ■

Quality time

Gary Hall cherishes every second spent hunting and fishing in remote northern Australia

I was awoken from the land of nod by my mate Neil's alarm clock across the hallway. I quickly gathered up my clothes while sorting out my hunting gear. Ten minutes later, I was drinking coffee in my slippers hoping tomorrow morning my son, Matt, would wash some mugs.

Having packed the Toyota the night before, it was just a matter of moving the shotguns from the gun safe, topping up the icebox and grabbing the dogs, so it didn't take long before we hit the highway.

On the drive, Matt described the area we would be walking as a large almost impenetrable jungle dotted with wetlands. It would be hard going and hot, a bit like riding a pushbike in a sauna, but the good news was it held a fair number of quality pigs.

Matt hadn't been joking about the wild, tangled mass of vegetation as the instant the three bailing dogs – Ace, Mate and Rusty – entered the sunlight-deprived gloom, the labyrinth of forest engulfed them. It was thicker than a politician's wallet.



It was stinking hot and the vegetation super thick, but it was all worth it!

We had not gone far when the barking started a short distance up ahead. However, before Neil and I could move out of first gear we ran up against a solid wall

of thick, impassable undergrowth and had to quickly backtrack. I'd last seen Matt, coach gun in hand, legging it towards the commotion but had quickly lost sight of him in the scrub and shadows.



A pig down at sundown.



Any opportunity to cool off was taken.



The pig lacerated by a croc attack.

A short time later I was on my hands and knees ducking under a thick canopy of fallen timber while traversing a narrow, flowing spring. I was still ungraciously on all fours in the wet stuff when the sound of a splash to my left and close by instantly put the wind up me. Luckily, it was just Mate, my female kelpie cross.

After quietly chastising myself for thinking that every unexpected sound or movement was a big-toothed crocodile looking for a free lunch, I forged on. Seconds later, the distinctive boom of the double-barrel firing solids exploded into action.

By the time I arrived the hardy rough-looking porker had already packed its bags for hog heaven. Splattered in mud, scratched, stunned and saturated in sweat (that's me, not the pig), it was heavy going.

"Have a look at this," Matt exclaimed as he dragged the dogs' number one nemesis into a clear spot. It appeared to have been recently hammered by a large saltwater crocodile and by the deep lacerations inflicted across its shoulders was extremely lucky to have survived the encounter. After a few quick photos we decided not to hang around and pushed on.

Suddenly, up ahead the 'hairy-legged team' broke into chorus like the Three Tenors. Tucked in tight against a wall of dense foliage, a solid brute of a boar, head-down, shoulders bunched had stood its ground. While the dogs and the fired-up boar continued their stand-off, Matt moved in closer, got prepared and waited for a clear shot. When that came the coach gun did the rest. Firing solids at such close range is devastating.

We had just set up the fallen boar for the obligatory photo session when the dogs did a runner. The barking started shortly after.

I had just pushed my skinny legs up to max speed (which isn't that quick) when a large pandanus frond the size of a fridge door hit me square on the bridge of my nose, sending my glasses flying over the back of my head. Five minutes later, I finally rejoined the run-on side. The boys had added three medium-sized pigs to the morning's tally during my short absence.

A short distance away, under a thick stand of low hanging pandanus lying on his stomach Matt was taking aim on a portly porker so captivated by the dogs' vocal performance it was glued to the spot and unaware of Matt's clandestine approach. Boom!

Mid-morning the following day, with two vehicles packed to the hilt with enough gear for two overnights and both towing trailers, we headed off.

After unhooking the trailers and setting up camp, I thought we'd have a bit of a break, but didn't even have a chance to fold out my camp-chair. The lads were having the dogs collared up and the gear ready for a hunt.

Later, with Matt behind the wheel, we headed to a likely pig haunt and subsequently, with the help of the dogs, nailed three good porkers.

An hour or so before bad light would finally stop play, we returned to camp for a quick bite and a cold drink, then fired-up the side-by-side. My dogs, Ace and Mate, were on the sidelines having a well-deserved break. Matt's dog Sandy, small in stature but a pig finding machine, plus Neil's young dog Rusty, who was quickly piling the runs on the board, took up the bailing responsibilities.

Quality time



This buff thought it was starring in 'Crocodile Dundee'.

It was great to be back in the side-by-side with the wind in our faces as we cruised the well-used edges of a large, scenic area of wetlands. We had covered a bit of ground and only managed to spook a youngish buffalo from the scrub line.

Then all hell broke loose, as a fair lump of a black boar exploded out of the shadows heading for parts unknown with the dogs close behind. After a quick sprint the short-tempered, battle-scarred, old warrior spun on its pursuers and dug in for a fight – you have to admire the tenacity.

Using its brute strength, boof head and solid shoulders it tried in vain to inflict some carnage, but the bailers had seen it all before and what the boar displayed in hostility and sheer power the dogs matched with speed and agility. Once bailed, its days were numbered and the coach gun sent another one packing.

As the light was fading, a lone boar was sighted moving slowly through the countless maze of wallows from the water's edge towards the tree line. A short time later, as the sun slowly dipped over the horizon, Neil, Rusty and I celebrated the last pig of the day.

We swapped the buggy for the tinny and the shotguns for fishing rods the following day. The white sands of the beach seemed to go on for ever and the sea was crystal clear – what a top spot.

I'd be the first to admit when it comes to fishing, I'm no Rex Hunt, but did manage to land the first fish of the day which was a nice-sized sea mullet. Probably land isn't the correct fishing terminology, head-butted is more honest. It all happened so quickly – we were watching a panicked, school of sea mullet fleeing from an underwater predator (shark, barracuda or maybe even a crocodile) towards the tinny when I was stunned by a mullet to the side of the head. It dropped in the boat and I immediately claimed bragging rights for the day's initial catch.

The rest of the day was spent watching Matt and Neil reel in fish and pull large muddies out of crab-pots. What an awesome time. We had the ocean and rivers to ourselves and I had enjoyed quality time with my son and great mate.



Firearms were swapped with fishing rods on the final day.



R.I.P Matt

Matt was tragically killed in a buggy accident in September.

He wasn't just a son, he was my best mate. Matt started out on the game trail at a very early age and by the time he was five we were riding horses, motorbikes, quads and hiking the hills of Southern NSW together. We were inseparable, he was my little shadow.

Almost 30 years later and nothing had changed. We still cherished our time spent together, but I was walking behind him, so proud of the man he had grown into. His hunting, fishing and bush skills were second to none, but there was so much more to him. He was kind, gentle, generous and caring, he had a great sense of humour, a cheeky grin and was always up for a laugh. He was the kind of person people liked to be with – I know I did.

Matt certainly got 'a keeper' when he married Sally. They both shared the same sense of adventure, love of life and were totally in love and devoted to each other.



Matt and Sally.

Matt would have made a fantastic dad and shared the same unbreakable bond with his son we had shared.

Sally will be an awesome, loving mother and with the great support she will receive from family and friends. The little fella will be loved, very happy and follow in his father's adventurous footsteps.

My parents idolised Matt; he was the love of their lives. He gave everything he did 110 per cent, his enthusiasm to life was addictive and made everyone around him excited and happy.

Matt loved his mum and me, his family and friends, and was never too old to give the people he cared about a big hug. He will be sadly missed by so many and life will never be the same without him in it. ■

'He wasn't just a son,
he was my best mate'.



Well within *range*

Chris Wardrop reckons most hunters need look no further than the Vortex Impact 1000 laser rangefinder



With no thread for fitting the rangefinder to a tripod, moving into a stable position is a must for ranging anything beyond 400m.

The Impact 1000 is Vortex's entry-level laser rangefinder monocular, released in mid-2020. The name is derived from the device's ability to range reflective targets out to 1000 yards. This is a convention that is carried over in the brand's more expensive Ranger 1800 and Razor HD 4000 models.

Immediate impressions upon picking up the device are that it is light, without feeling flimsy or cheap. The unit weighs just under 160 grams (with battery and lanyard) and fits easily in an average sized adult hand. Included in the box are a wrist lanyard, soft carry case, lens cloth, instruction manual, a field card showing slope angle compensation in both MOA and MRAD, and a CR2 battery.

The rangefinder has 6x magnification and both the 24mm objective and the ocular lens have anti-reflective coatings for improved image clarity and lowlight performance. It is worth noting, the lens coatings are the lowest grade of Vortex's advertised finishes. As may be expected from a 6x24mm optic, colour and clarity in fading light is quickly lost in comparison to the naked eye.

Not that the light gathering capabilities of the optic is the limiting factor in the Impact 1000's lowlight performance. Unlike its more expensive stablemates and some competitors' similarly priced

rangefinders, the Impact 1000 does not have an illuminated display but relies on a simple black Liquid Crystal Display (LCD).

In very lowlight, for example when peering into deep shadows, the display becomes indistinguishable from the dark background. However, I personally cannot imagine the situation where I would be reliant on accurately ranging an animal at that time of evening. When I'm operating at dusk my shots are within maximum point-blank range. In the odd scenario when that may not be the case, perhaps varminting with rimfire or small centrefire

calibres, the most practical solution is to simply range and note likely target locations once in position and before the light fades too much.

Lowlight capabilities aside, the Impact 1000 is tough, simple and includes all the features that bowhunters and most rifle hunters need in a rangefinder. The device's operating temperature is minus 10 degrees Celsius to 55 degrees Celsius, well exceeding the comfortable and safe operating bracket of most Australian hunters. The rangefinder is also waterproof and impact resistant.



The included soft carry case offers a little protection. But the Impact 1000 will fit neatly in the side-pockets of most binocular harnesses.

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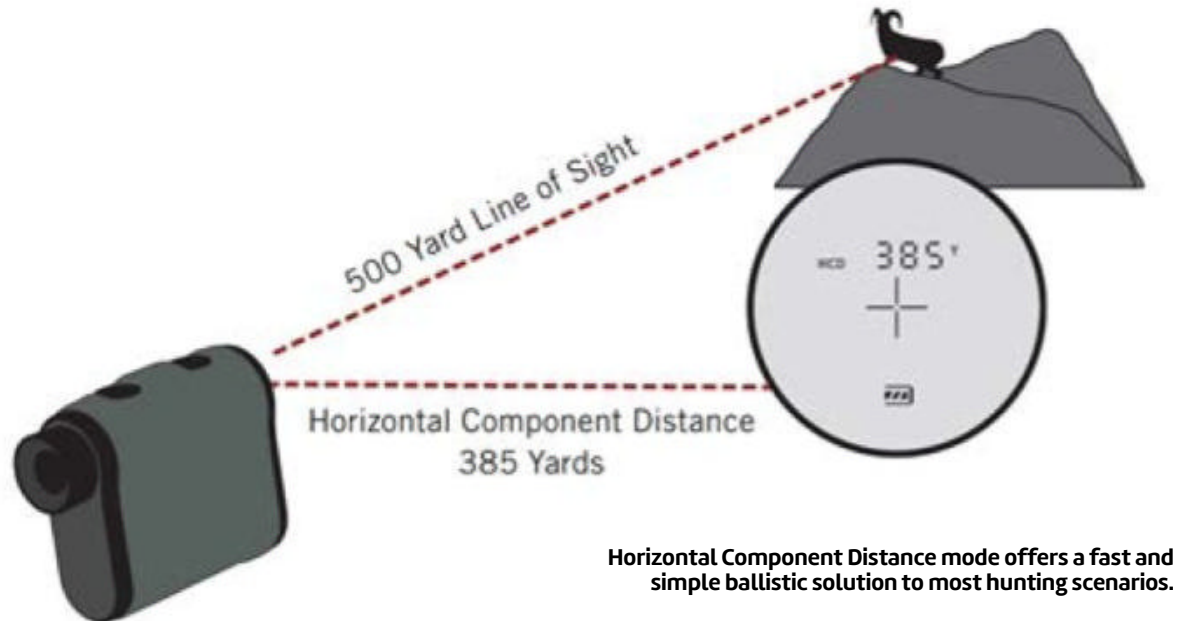
Well within range

I could not find published IK (impact protection) or IP (ingress protection) ratings, but this really does not matter as like all Vortex products the Impact 1000 is covered by Vortex's VIP Warranty. So should you accidentally drown, crush or break the unit in some other creative way Vortex will repair or replace it free.

Amazingly, the VIP Warranty is a fully transferable unlimited lifetime deal, with no receipt or registration required. The only things Vortex do not cover are loss, deliberate misuse/damage and cosmetic damage.

With only two buttons, 'menu' and 'measure', the rangefinder is simple to use. Should you need a guide to how the rangefinder works, the instructions are clearly written and well illustrated.

Once the battery is installed the Impact 1000 is ready to use. Pressing the measure button once turns the device on, activating the LCD display. Pressing the measure button again, a second time activates the laser and in less than a second the unit displays the distance to whatever was in the cross-hairs. After a few seconds of being idle the rangefinder turns itself off, saving battery power. One CR2 battery is advertised to last 5000 activations of the laser and the LCD display includes a battery gauge, so you should avoid any nasty surprises at the crucial moment of a hunt.



Horizontal Component Distance mode offers a fast and simple ballistic solution to most hunting scenarios.

Through the menu function the rangefinder can be set to yards or metres, and to provide either line of sight distance with angle or Horizontal Component Distance (HCD). In HCD mode the user is provided with a true ballistic distance to the target. That is a distance which accounts for the change in bullet drop as a result of the slope angle.

There can be a considerable difference between line of sight and true ballistic distance when shooting up or down steep slopes, while the maths is a little more complicated than I care to explore, the difference equates to approximately 30 per cent at 45 degrees (at least that is rule of thumb established by the US Army some decades ago). For a typical .308 load that equates to over 45cm less bullet drop at 500m, certainly more than enough deviation to result in a clean miss or worse, if not accounted for.

While in HCD mode the Impact 1000 calculates a compensated distance out to 730m for slopes to 15 degrees, and out to 366m between 15 and 30 degrees. If you find yourself in the New Zealand mountains and must squeeze off a shot at a tahr with a slope greater than 30 degrees, you can employ line of sight mode and the Vortex field card to calculate the adjusted bullet drop in either MOA or MRAD.

According to Vortex the Impact 1000 can range deer sized targets out to 500 yards or 457m, trees to 800 yards or 731m and reflective targets to 1000 yards or 914m. In my own tests I have consistently ranged deer and sheep out to 400m and trunks of large gums out to 890m.

No matter what I've pointed the rangefinder at so far, I have not had a reading beyond 900m. I've also found it difficult to obtain a range through intervening branches, light scrub and rain – something that the technology in the top of line Razor HD 4000 is able to overcome.

The stated accuracy for the Impact 1000 is +/- 1 yard at 100 yards. Although I have had no accurate means to test this in the field, the results returned at the shooting range out to the 500m mound have all been within a metre or two of anticipated distance.

The Impact 1000 will not suit every hunter and will be of no use to shooters trying to ring steel plates beyond 1000m. Despite its limitations, the Impact 1000 will meet the needs of most Australian hunters with its rugged simplicity. While there are comparable offerings from competitors, some with similar features at lower prices, the Vortex VIP Warranty provides the additional peace of mind that an Impact 1000 should be a once in a lifetime purchase.

The price at the time of writing through extravision.com.au was \$449. Be wary of grey imports as they are explicitly excluded from the VIP Warranty according to the fine print at vortexoptics.com ■



The Impact 1000 hard plastic case is textured but may still feel slippery in the tropics.

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HYDRATION

and the Hunter

Don't land yourself in deep water thanks to these universal H₂O tips from **Scott Heiman**

Even if it's overcast and damp, carry drinking water.

Water is essential to life. We know that instinctively. And as hunters, we also know it through the experience we gain tracking game. We observe, for example, that feral goats centre their movements around the availability of permanent water. And we see that pigs restrict their movement to the cooler parts of the day – following the game trails of other animals such as sheep or cattle towards water and food sources. But what else do we need to know? Like many things in life, much can be gained from experience – but much may be left to guesswork unless we look a little deeper.

Taking the time to learn a few salient hunting facts can go a long way towards improving our efficiency. And this is particularly true when we're considering the vital place that water plays in animal behaviour and survival – including our own.

Hydration is the foundation of everything that happens in life. Whether we're a human, a goat, a pig or any other living mammal; the fluids we lose need to be replaced to keep our bodies functioning. So, everything we do, and everywhere we go, is inextricably bound-up with our ability to stay hydrated.

Know your quarry

To gain the edge when we pit our wits against a four-legged feral, there are things

we can all do before we head out scrub. Hunting animals is a bit like going into battle. And wise men have been providing sage advice on that topic for thousands of years.

For example, in the words of the ancient Chinese General, Sun Tzu: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle." These are wise words. Apply this mentality to your hunting trips and you'll probably go a long way towards filling the freezer and improving your trophy tally.

Proficient hunters don't simply stumble onto their target species at the right place at the right time; they know the right time to be in the right place. So, to become effective hunters, we need to learn about our quarry's habits and habitats.

Water is life

Up to 90 per cent of your body weight comes from water.

The brain is composed of 70 per cent water.

The lungs are nearly 90 per cent water.

Lean muscle tissue contains about 75 per cent water.

Approximately 83 per cent of blood is water.

We need to understand animal behaviour to help us find our game. It's also important to know basic principles of ecology (the relationship between living things and their habitats). For example, the same species will behave differently in a cool temperate environment than it will in an arid zone. And when it comes to the pointy end of the hunt, knowing an animal's anatomy is essential to achieving effective shot placement – and for butchering the beast later on.

Goats provide a useful example. Specifically, research shows that goats obtain most (80 per cent) of their water requirements in temperate areas from shrubs, grasses or herbs. This means that goats in this environment have no driving need to loiter around waterholes. In wet conditions, goats will maintain a localised range, sometimes no greater than 1–10km.

However, in drier areas (or in times of drought) goats will need to drink more (between 2–4.5 litres per day depending on their size) which will necessitate them accessing open water regularly. In these conditions, you can almost set your watch by the regularity with which goats will arrive to drink at waterholes, often travelling in from considerable distances. Indeed, in dry times, herds may forage over a range as large as 50–100sq km.

The behaviour of goats can be contrasted with that of pigs. Unlike goats, pigs need daily access to reliable water to



When it's dry goats will come to you.



Put some of these into your first-aid kit.

provide the 2–4.5 litres of H₂O they require each day, and double this for a lactating sow (regardless of habitat). This means that, in normal conditions pigs live in small family groups and stay within around 2km of waterholes.

However, in times of severe food and water shortage or open country, their proximity to water – and group sizes – increase considerably. In these conditions, it's not uncommon to see large mobs of up to 50 wild pigs hanging around the remaining waterholes seeking out both food and water.

These examples simply scratch the surface of animal behaviour. You can (and should) do the same kind of research for deer, camels, donkeys, buffaloes and more.

Know yourself

While it's all well and good to understand the habits and habitats of our favoured game, we owe it to ourselves to be equally self-aware. After all, if we regard our water needs in the same way that we look at our game species, we'll soon realise that humans are relatively vulnerable to dehydration.

Unlike goats, as humans we typically gain only around 20 per cent of the water we need from the food we eat. So, we need to consume the rest by drinking. While water provides no calories nor organic or mineral nutrients, it's vital to replace the fluids that we lose all the time through sweat, urine and other bodily functions.

How much we need to drink depends on a range of factors. These include air temperature, altitude, humidity, airflow

and radiant heat. The level of activity we are engaged in also makes a huge difference; whether we're sitting on a dam on the NSW New England Tablelands or hiking up a mesa at the back of Charleville in Queensland. Other relevant factors include our fitness level, diet, amount of fatigue, metabolism and the clothing we wear.

While our individual water needs will vary considerably, the following figures provide general guiding principles for an adult's average necessary fluid intake:

- 1.2 litres per day to maintain vital organ function.
- 2–4 litres per day for normal body function.
- 4–6 litres per day for temperate climates.
- 6–8 litres per day in the desert.
- Up to 15–20 litres per day for arduous/heavy work depending on the conditions.

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Coconut water is nature's version of Gatorade.

If some of these figures sound quite high, consider this: a person in an open boat in the tropics can lose up to six litres of water in 24 hours in sweat alone. Walking in a similar region might result in a person sweating up to 14 litres of water per day.

The risk of dehydration is compounded by lack of acclimatisation. Consider these examples. A hunter from Melbourne goes chasing barra, pigs and buffaloes in the Top End. A hunter from the east coast goes west in the search of camels and goats in Western and South Australia. Now ask yourself, what's the difference between these hunting trips and a weekend outing to a state forest close to home? The simple answer is – lots!



Adding a little something to your water helps you absorb it.

Our capacity to function effectively drops when we're not acclimatised to the conditions. And hydration is a key factor. While we might know how much to drink when we're hunting in our local area, the situation changes as soon as we go further afield; with altitude, humidity, temperature and work effort all affecting our capacity to remain hydrated.

Watch for sign

As hunters, we're accustomed to watching for sign – most commonly game sign. We see a game trail and look for tracks and scat to tell us what is in the area, which direction it's going and how old the print is.

We know the subtleties in the sign left by two-toed ungulates, distinguishing between goats, pigs, deer or even cattle and buffaloes. Meanwhile, the contents of a cat or fox scat will tell us what they're eating and, therefore, where to find them.

But while many of us may be a dab-hand at interpreting animal sign, far fewer of us are adept at recognising what our own bodies tell us about what's happening inside ourselves. For example, the sensation of thirst is one we all know. But the truth is that if we experience thirst, we're already dehydrated.

And dehydration is a precursor to heat illnesses, referred to as hyperthermia, starting with symptoms including light-headedness and cloudy thinking and at the far end of the spectrum – death.

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail

Ways to supplement your hydration regime:

Regulate: Consider placing a thermometer in your first-aid kit to monitor your body temperature. Normal body temperature is around 37°C, whereas 39°C is dangerous for toddlers and younger kids, while 42°C or higher (particularly in the elderly) can permanently damage the brain. A three-degree change in your body core temp can induce heatstroke.

Improvise: In an emergency, consider making your own electrolyte mix with 1/3 tsp salt and 2/3 tsp sugar mixed in 1 litre of water.

Supplement: If you think you may not have a balanced diet, consume Berocca/multi-vitamin tablets as directed – with the appropriate amount of water – in order to help delay the onset of fatigue and dehydration. Hydralyte ice blocks and oral rehydrating salt satchels are a 'must' for your tucker box and first-aid kit.

Eat: Food helps counter fatigue. Cucumbers, bananas, watermelons and others are high in potassium, vitamins and water. Place these on your shopping list to help keep you on the hunt for longer.

Knowing this, what are the things we can do to ensure we don't put ourselves at risk? Simply put, if your urine is darker than usual, and not clear twice a day, you need to increase your water intake. While this is not a hard and fast rule (your urine colour may change if you are taking supplements), it's a sound principle to work with.

Pace yourself

Humans are known as endurance animals. We evolved with the stamina to cover large distances in search of food sources and we have effective physiological adaptations to help this occur. These include more

neuronal control over our sweat than any other animal, and we have reduced body hair to assist our bodies to remain cool. But we're not infallible.

Heat illnesses and injuries are conditions that sit on a spectrum from mild to fatal. They include:

Heat exhaustion – Fatigue due to an overworked heart trying to pump blood to the skin to reduce body temperature. Heat exhaustion may also include vomiting and headaches.

Heat injury – Physical damage to the brain, muscle, liver or other organs from a body temperature over 40°C.

Heatstroke – A severe condition often associated with changes in mental state such as aggression, slurred speech and loss of consciousness. Heatstroke can be fatal and should always be treated as a medical emergency.

To help our bodies to function, we are all responsible for setting the conditions for our own success. And when it comes to staying hydrated, there's plenty we can do to help ourselves:

R U hydrated?

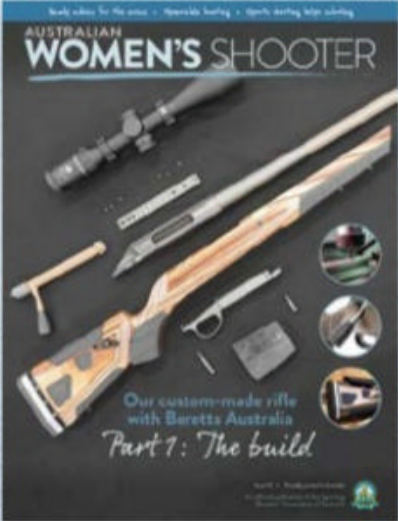
As a guiding principle, your urine should pass as clear water twice throughout the day. See the chart below.

Urine Colour	Description	Level of dehydration
	Continue current practice	Target colour
	Drink a little more or consider resting	Target colour
	Drink a glass of water	Dehydration
	Drink 2-3 glasses of water	Dehydration
	Stop what you are doing, seek shade, and drink water NOW. If you have heat illness symptoms seek medical attention	SEVERE DEHYDRATION

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

Australian Women's Shooter is a quarterly magazine filled with product reviews, expert knowledge and tips, profiles, and prizes covering all things women's shooting and hunting. AWS features a regular column from three-time Commonwealth Games gold medallist Laetisha Scanlan and practical pieces from experienced shooter Gemma Dunn.

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Hydration and the hunter

1. Start the day hydrated: Good habits of hydration start before we rise out of bed in the morning. Having a balanced meal at the end of the day – and a good night’s sleep – helps our body repair itself over-night. And if we’ve been drinking alcohol around the campfire, we need to ensure we drink around a pint of water before going to bed. Sure, it may mean that we need to be up before dawn to take a leak, but this is a mild inconvenience compared to the grievous health risks associated with severe dehydration. Besides, you have

to be up anyway for the morning hunt as dawn breaks.

2. Keep fluids up during the day: A good rule of thumb is 500mls per hour – or six litres per day.

3. Don’t overdo it: When you’re engaged in heavy exercise, you may need to drink more fluid than six litres a day, but you shouldn’t drink more than 10 litres. Note too that if you drink more than 500mls of water an hour, you’re likely to be losing essential salts. Eat salty food to supplement these losses (don’t use salt tablets). ■



Know the symptoms

According to the South Australian Government’s Department of Health, the symptoms and treatment of heat illness can be summarised as:

CONDITION	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENT
DEHYDRATION	• Profuse sweating • Increase in body temperature • Lethargy and tiredness • Loss of appetite • Being thirsty • Irritability	• Cease activity immediately if feeling unwell and go to a cool shaded place • Drink plenty of fluids (avoid caffeine and alcohol) • Try to keep cool by: – turning on a fan or air-conditioner – using a spray bottle of water on the face and body If you remain unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible
HEAT CRAMPS	• Muscle spasms • Painful muscle cramps in the limbs or abdomen • Twitching • Moist, cool skin	<i>As above and add:</i> • Go to a cool shaded place to lie down, with legs supported and slightly elevated • Try to cool down by having a cool shower or bath • Massage limbs gently to ease muscle spasms, or massage firmly if cramped, then apply ice packs If you remain unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible
HEAT SYNCOPE	• Dizziness and fainting	<i>All of the above and add:</i> • May be aggravated by cardiovascular disease and certain medications If you remain unwell, seek medical advice as soon as possible
HEAT EXHAUSTION	• Headaches • High temperature • Profuse sweating • Cold, clammy pale skin • Fatigue, weakness and restlessness • Nausea and vomiting • Weak but rapid pulse • Poor coordination • Circulatory collapse	<i>All of the above and add:</i> • Put cool packs under the armpits, in the groin or on the back of the neck • (or all 3 places) to reduce body heat • If remaining unwell, especially if vomiting continues in a younger or older person, seek medical assistance immediately Go to the nearest hospital emergency department, or if this is not possible, call 000 for an ambulance
HEATSTROKE	• Confusion, headaches, dizziness and nausea • Skin flushed, hot and unusually dry • Intense thirst • Dry, swollen tongue • Sudden rise in high body temperature (40°C+) • Disorientation, delirium • Slurred speech • Aggressive or bizarre behaviour • Sleepiness • Convulsions • Unconsciousness may develop rapidly • Seizures or coma	<i>HEATSTROKE is an EXTREME MEDICAL EMERGENCY – RING 000 IMMEDIATELY for an ambulance</i> <i>Treatment includes all of the above</i> PROVIDING ASSISTANCE Do not give aspirin or paracetamol to a person affected by the heat <i>If conscious</i> – give small sips of water or fruit juice and try to keep the person calm. Stay with them until the ambulance arrives <i>If unconscious</i> – check airway for breathing and monitor pulse rate until the ambulance arrives

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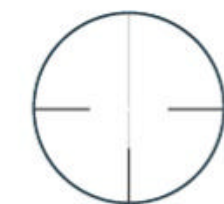
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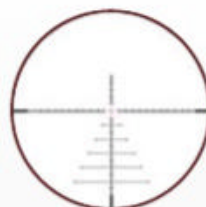


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More small block adventures

Mark van den Boogaart is back in pursuit of deer, with pigs thrown in for good measure...

Back home I began thinking about my next hunt when the property owner called. Knowing I had trail cameras set up across the estate, he had phoned to let me know they were planning a fuel reduction backburn. No big rush he said, the burn was probably a week or two away. No problem was my reply.

Over the course of the previous 18 months the property owner had come to appreciate the value of trail cameras, as twice we have recorded footage of two-legged interlopers while I had, in person, intercepted a third such visitor at the paddock gate. At the time I had taken the visitor at his word, though I checked in with the property owner and since then we have managed to keep him off the block.

My intention in placing the cameras before I headed south was to capture images of pigs. Yes, it is a Brisbane Valley deer block, though the best pig I've ever taken came from the same location and I wanted a repeat of the first encounter.

For a pig hunter I do all right on the deer. As a deer hunter, my luck on the pigs is mostly all bad. I suppose we want what we can't always have and I always want to hunt bacon.

After my drive up and back from the block I viewed the recorded footage and saw that my deer luck, and pig luck, held true. Plenty of deer, no pigs. Well, that meant only one thing – as soon I was able it was time to put boots on the ground.

A set of eyes in the scrub.



Deer, including young stags, from trail cameras.

The wild dog

It was a cool, crisp morning. The fog was out, swirling around, closing in, then opening out again. My hope was to catch pigs moving in the early light. The reality was the pigs were nowhere to be seen while the deer were out in numbers.

A meat animal for the freezer sounded like a great idea but the confines on the small block were working against me. The fog afforded me free movement, the few trees about obscured my outline. It was just that the deer weren't cooperating.

At less than 200m away, it wasn't the distance, it was the position. By that I mean they were skylined. Without a backstop the risk of my .30 calibre projectile passing through a deer and continuing to travel towards the neighbouring property was way too high.

So, I waited for them to slowly feed just a little downhill and place themselves between the muzzle of my rifle and a goodly chunk of earth. They didn't and I watched them feed along the top of the ridge and finally up into the hills and away.

With the wind and fog in my favour I decided to circle around and see if I could move myself and the deer into a more favourable shooting position. The concept was sound, it was just the deer didn't like the idea and I failed to relocate them.

Later, I stopped for a break in a covered position. It looked like it was once the home of a lone boar, his rubs still present low on the trees and against a protected bank. I even found a trace of thick black hair, but he was long gone.

I began thinking about the *small* block and realised that small was my view of

the world. To the animals, both native and game it was neither a block, nor small it was just part of their world. Sometimes they were in one place, other times another. For me I just needed to keep hunting and eventually we would both end up in the same place.

After a quick feed I was out again. In front of me was the bush block. It's really a scrubby corridor that runs through several properties and it nearly always holds game. Moving along the fringe I spotted a small wallaby on the other side of a creek.

It was above the bank on the opposing face and acting a little spooked. I continued watching the wallaby and slowly followed its focus, right to a wild dog. The dog saw me too and bolted. I was completely unprepared for a wild dog, so I moved a little further in and sat down.

Staying still, the wallaby continued to look up to its right and sure enough the dog appeared again. It was motoring downhill on a collision course with the wallaby. You don't often have second chances, so I shouldered my rifle and fired. I hit the dog centre mass, the .308 150-grain soft-point killing it instantly as it flopped, rolled and fell into the creek.

I'll be honest and say I've never liked shooting dogs, but I know they need to be shot. With that I pulled it out of the creek and left it high on the bank and away from the water line. Sitting there I heard another dog and figured they were young juveniles learning their trade.

Back at the farmhouse I showed the owner an image of the dog. He was one happy man, though did say that I had left money lying on the ground. My reply was it's his block, his money and it wouldn't take me long to solve that particular problem.

Close encounters

Hunting and time don't really work well together. In my hunting life I have planned trips that have taken years to come together. I've travelled by boat, plane as well as happily driven days to hunt. I've put countless hours in the field and intend to do so until I'm no longer able. In measuring all that time, it's obvious to me hunting really comes down to seconds.



Wild dog down.

More small block adventures



Again, I was up at the block early. I'd learnt that mornings were the best – the earlier, the better. I still hadn't spotted any pigs, but the deer were a welcome distraction. In fact, up ahead, almost imperceptible to the eye were deer.

They were on a partially open face. The lower section was long grass, with the trees starting to thicken up closer to the top. They were right there in the long grass. There were three with possibly a fourth a little higher up in the trees. All good freezer fillers.

Between me and the deer was a gully. It was more a drain than an impassable feature, but it had one very sinister aspect. Deer would congregate in that drain, and to the unwary, it was easy to accidentally walk up on them. They of course would see you first and pour up, out and away and take everything with them, so I approached with caution. I crawled into the drain, across it and then out.

Impressed with my stalking skills I started to sneak up through the long grass on the unsuspecting deer. But I went a little too ahead of myself and didn't compensate for the angle of the open face. I was too close and now couldn't see the deer though they were only 40m above me.

There was nothing for it but to stand and fire. It was like busting out of a blind to shoot ducks, or flush quail. Cycling the action of the Scout, I stood and fired, managing to drop one on the spot.

Fence jumpers and signs of pigs

Again, it was cold and foggy. Heading over a perfectly innocuous hill I decided to go low and managed to save myself the embarrassment of blundering onto a mob

of deer that included a young stag showing some good antler development.

There were a couple of shooters among them, but they were staying on the wrong side of the boundary fence. It was frustrating, but not devastatingly so. Watching deer is never really a burden and while it might include the odd thought of *what if*, the feeling of potential loss is often overwhelmed by the pleasure of watching them move through country.

Tempted by *what if*, I paralleled their course as best I could. My thoughts were to cut them off, but as in the past, the deer didn't read the memo and refused to fit into my plan. In this instance they stayed on the other side of the wire, declining to cross a boundary that worried them not, but was an impassable line to me.

Heading back, my fortunes changed as I spotted pig sign, lots of pig sign. It was fresh, clear, full of piggy prints and close to an area where I suspected they were holding up. It was time to set up the cameras.

Christmas deer

Things were as they should be. It was nearly Christmas, it was hot and I was hunting. While the pigs had so far evaded me, over the previous five months I had removed a threat to the farm's livestock, helped manage the deer, filled my freezer and had the opportunity to observe game and native animals.





I had also spent time just roaming hills with backpack and rifle and while I had no intention of stopping, my plan was to dial back a little on the shooting and increase the observing in preparation for the roar. I was, and remain obliged, to take deer off the block, but my approach is to annualise the total, a *more this time, less next time* kind of thing with my year resetting during the roar.

Of course, I didn't know in six weeks time a year's worth of rain would fall over a four-day period on the block, and just about everywhere else in South East Queensland, so was sticking to my rough plan.

In the heat, hunt early, or late. On the small block, early is the safest bet so I was sitting with my back against a tree waiting for first light. Moving, there was little sign of activity on the open faces and gullies, so I headed towards the scrub.

Going the long way round, while it took some time to reach there, the approach paid off as I spotted a deer in the scrub while again sticking to the fringe. Taking aim, I fired and experienced that momentarily sense of shock when a shot game animal moves. While totally automatic, my fear was unjustified as rather than moving, the deer was stumbling, slipping, and ultimately crumbling up at the bottom of a small drop.

Aware of the rising heat I went to work, broke up the animal and had it on ice as quickly as possible. As it was almost Christmas, I wanted to say thanks to the owner by way of a carton of beer so with everything done I headed to the farmhouse.

A little later that afternoon I went for my final hunt of the year. More akin to a stroll than a hunt I took it easy, kept my eyes open, and started thinking about March and roaring red stags.

• Follow all five episodes of 'More small block adventures' at ssaa.org.au/ssaa-tv ■



Exposed at last

Matthew Cameron questions why responsible, licensed firearm owners bear the brunt of misguided laws

In the Western world attempts by politicians and parliaments to protect the public and control the illegal use of firearms has resulted in a raft of confusing laws and irate firearms owners. This has involved continual posturing by politicians, the media and others who suggest that they know how to fix any potential problems relating to firearms in general.

Very much an emotive issue, it is also patently obvious that the powers that be do not know what they are talking about. Dare I suggest that they are listening to those making the most noise?

Of all the items most beloved by politicians the world over, registration of the potential firearms owner nearly always tops the list of preferred options. It gives the politician control, end of story. But in the light of recent events, we must question this particular method of possible firearms control. Is it as effective as we are told?

Registration is seen by some to be the ultimate tool of control, but exactly who are being controlled? The facts of the matter are, in reality only honest citizens register firearms of any sort, thus any laws passed

will have no effect on criminals who simply avoid the process. This seems lost on our political masters who continue to tinker with the laws available with the intent to make them stronger and hence supposedly protect the public even more. Again, reality is that only the honest are subject to even more restrictions which in the overall scheme of things have no influence on the criminal misuse of firearms as such.

It is often claimed by the unknowing that those who write about firearms, including myself, want total access to all types

Licensed shooters like this rifleman are not the problem with firearms in society.

of such items on an unrestricted basis as to when and where they may be used. Any such statements are simply wrong. And for the record I spent years working within the legal profession.

I consider it right and proper that there are sane, workable laws in place that control the legal ownership and use of such potential lethal options. What we all object to is the continual barrage of inane restrictions that are simply politics at work and have no influence on the ownership or illegal use of firearms. Furthermore, the word criminal is strangely absent. It is obvious that politics as such, and the perception that you are seen to be doing something effective are of more importance than sensible laws that will protect the population.

Over time I have had many debates with other citizens about such laws and their effectiveness. A common theme is to ban all such entities entirely, an interesting but totally ineffective method as we shall see. To the uninitiated and uninformed such a ban, while simple, overcomes all of the problems at once, or does it?

There are probably bans of such nature in existence in any number of places throughout the world but the one that exposes the lie of total banning and its lack of effectiveness, plus the ineffective role of registration, has seen exposure in the United Kingdom. The figures have never ever passed a politician's lips, nor will you have read about them in any media outlet. They are simply too devastating. It's funny how the truth will always come out and expose the lie.

In 1997 in the UK there was a horrific misuse of firearms. One of the results was the total banning of legal handgun

ownership within the country. To my knowledge there were no exceptions. While there were probably statistics issued on a yearly basis, of particular interest are those in the decade 2010 to 2020 supplied

in 2021 by UK Houses of Parliament, specifically by the House of Commons' Library.

I would agree that it is somewhat difficult to access the precise figures due to the nature of the graphs available on the



Hunters eliminate feral animals for free, thus assisting farmers, but this is never mentioned by the press.



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Exposed at last

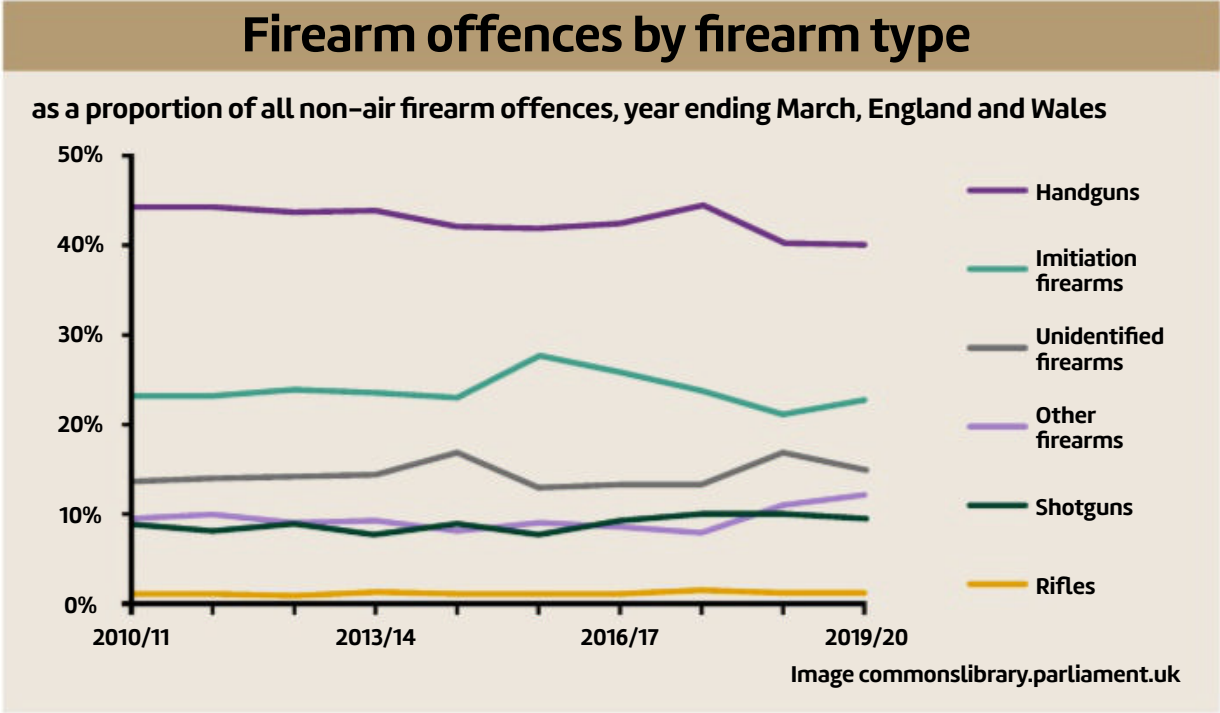
website. However, it is clear that the non-air firearm offences recorded by the police between 2010 and 2020 show a peak of some 7000 in 2010–11 and a low of just under 5000 offences in the years 2013–14 and 2014–15. The best average we could reasonably come up with was 5420 per annum over the decade.

The next graph of interest was that relating to firearm offences by type. With an average of approximately 42 per cent and topping the list for each year in the decade were handgun offences. They were remarkably consistent. But I can hear the uninformed spluttering already – how could such figures be correct? Well, you try to argue with the British Parliament. Oh yes, that translates to a minimum of 2276 offences per annum or 22,760 over the decade. With not a legal handgun or registration certificate among them. I suggest that these figures make a bit of a joke of the claim that registration of ownership will solve the problem.

Perhaps every Australian politician should be acquainted with these facts. The reply will be, they don't apply here. I would disagree. The various police commands and the media continually attack the legal ownership of firearms even when it is patently obvious that we are not the problem.

You might think I am being hard on police command. When myself and others within my family have asked police at the coalface, ie, the local Firearms Officers, how many problems have they had with licensed firearms owners, the answer is always the same – none. Attacking criminals is a much harder task than a legal owner with his details recorded within the government at several levels.

In addition, in a recent TV program it was shown that only 2 per cent of the containers that come into Australia are examined and/or x-rayed. It was also stated that to investigate further than this amount would simply clog up the system and this could not and would not be tolerated. Bearing in mind the huge illegal profits involved, I would suggest that any criminal or like-minded organisation might be willing to run the gauntlet and have a 98 per cent chance of moving its illegal produce of any sort into the country.



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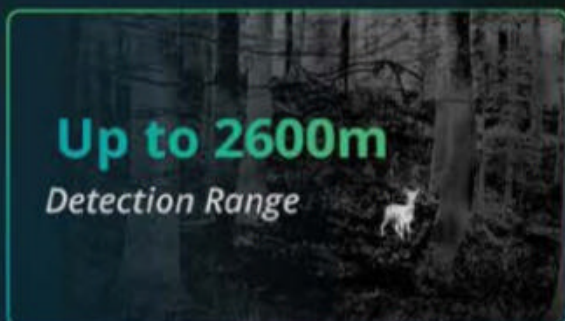


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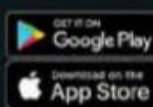
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Exposed at last

In the meantime, we, the licensed firearm owners, continue to be the whipping boys of politicians and the media. This is not good enough.

I would also suggest that aside from containers, Australia's vast mainly uncontrolled remote borders are surely being used to bring illegal contraband of all sorts into the country. But I am certain that this statement will be denied.

Of course, we are not alone, as there are other countries with similar problems to ours. Having been fortunate enough to have lived and worked overseas, we have seen the problems at first hand. One issue stands out everywhere. Politicians simply do not listen, as they are far more interested in the politics of a situation rather than curing a particular problem for those that they claim to represent.

A common complaint from many politicians is that shooters/firearm owners have a biased point of view. So what? We are no different to racing car drivers, fishermen or bushwalkers. If we do not represent our point of view, who will? I repeat,

responsible firearm owners are not against sensible laws to protect the public. However, it appears that the word sensible has been discarded for no good reason.

In 2015, the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission conservatively estimated that there are 260,000 illegal firearms on the streets of Australia. This tally is based on various intelligence sources, including firearms importation figures and seizure trends over time. Some 10,000 of this number are thought to be handguns. Some dispute this statistic. One claim related to the fact that a seized AK-47 was some 30 years old. Yet, this rifle may have only come into the country within the past few years.

It is interesting to note that any politician running short of the continual exposure that they constantly seek, has only to utter the words 'gun control' and the media will be panting at their doorstep. Logic has long departed the debate to be replaced by anyone with an axe to grind against the legal ownership of firearms of any sort.

Within the UK there is a situation where a whole class of firearms is no longer available to the general public, but the criminal misuse of such arms continues and is well documented. However, the powers that be and those against firearms in general are strangely silent.

Within Australia, many citizens shoot as often as possible, every day of the week and particularly at weekends. These are peaceful, responsible people who obey the illogical laws passed by politicians that are applauded by an irresponsible media. In the meantime, the media continues to report violence both with and without firearms on the streets of the nation. Such people are literally getting away with murder. The response of our politicians is to make even tougher gun laws relating to responsible citizens. ■

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OVER 50 RECIPES



Goodooga goats

Chris Redlich lands plenty of fresh venison and keeps his eye on future rewards

Josh whispered “found ‘em” as he signalled the direction of the billies we had been searching for. Moments earlier we had just run the gauntlet of what appeared to be 1000 prying eyes scanning side to side looking for a wannabe predator.

The scrub was literally crawling with feral goats of all manner of colours, sex and size as we painstakingly progressed through the thick vegetation to an opening of red dirt littered with weeds and grass. Ever vigilant nannies with their newborns were snorting and sneezing an alarm call whenever they caught our scent but thankfully didn’t alarm any chosen quarry as we closed in.

Finding a log to rest in the shade, I set up my Swarovski spotting scope to take a better look at the trophy-size billies. Zooming into a big boy of particular interest confirmed he was the one we had spotted a day earlier making a speedy dash for safety as our vehicle approached their water point. In the confusion as the mob bolted it was evident the big billy goat was something special as his horns danced back and forth with every stride.

Hunting partner and fellow SSAA member, Josh, had invited me on a hunt to his in-laws’ family property of which I gratefully accepted with much anticipation. As with most people our age, work and family commitments consume a fair amount of time, meaning spontaneous hunting trips just don’t happen without plenty of planning.

However, a break in my son’s hectic footy schedule enabled a long weekend and the countdown began. After a pre-dawn rendezvous at Josh’s house in drizzling rain we hit the highway westwards for the property located near the remote New South Wales town of Goodooga. Over the next few hundred kilometres we witnessed a vast array of landscape changes and how

much difference a drop of rain can make on parched land. Weeks earlier, South West Queensland and New South Wales had been enduring prolonged drought and the unseasonal winter rainfall was welcomed by all landowners desperate for some moisture.

Beginning to wonder if we’d ever arrive, the gates of the 30,000-acre block were a welcome sight. The property consists of typical red dirt country for this locality, with open patches of grazing land separated by thickets of mulga and brigalow, sandalwood and gidgee scrub.

Along with cattle, their main source of income is drawn from the mustering and sale of feral goats, now seen as a valuable commodity by some landholders. Although most of the predatory animals had been removed by other hunters, the place was not entirely clean of wild game. Josh was familiar with the place and its hunting zones and while making our way down the driveway to the farmhouse, he recommended a detour to a dam known for holding pigs in the past.



Glassing for trophy goats.

A dam frequented by the feral pigs.



Goodooga goats

Immediately inspired by fresh pig tracks in the soil, we carefully moved to the dam edge. Although there were no pigs at the time, they weren't going to be too far away.

After our prolonged entry, we eventually arrived at the farmhouse to be greeted Josh's father-in-law, Ray. Due to the limited amount of feral hunting species on the property we knew we had our work cut out for us, but as a bonus, Ray was granting us permission to hunt a meat goat or a trophy goat if we were lucky enough to find any.

It had been too long since my previous successful trophy goat hunt, so this was an offer that Josh and I were more than happy to accept and a challenge we were looking forward to.



Fresh pig sign evident close to waterpoints.

What was left of the day was spent scouting around the eastern end of the property in search of pigs and following up on any fresh sign we had found. Although we remained diligent, for whatever reason, the ferals (mostly pigs) were giving us the slip. Bright and early, just on sunrise, the process of the previous afternoon was repeated again in a different area and once again we turned up empty-handed.

However, I discovered the remains of a wild dog that Josh had killed months earlier and he explained the situation. The dog had turned up when he thought his hunt would end fruitless, but the opportunity arose as the stock killer strolled unexpectedly into his view and it became an opportunity Josh was ready for.

With a lot of hunting to be crammed into two full days we concentrated our efforts on another area of the property after breakfast.

Within a short distance from the homestead mobs of feral goats spotted my ute



Josh takes aim at the meat goat for the trip.

and began to run for the apparent safety of another tree line. Josh and I spent some time glassing the mobs for any trophies that might be worth a closer look, but none were revealed.

While approaching a main water point our vehicle startled another large mob of goats, and as they left the scene the horns of a large billy visible above all the others was definitely worth a second glance later. We let them go for the time being and moved onto another paddock. Since the goats weren't taking favour to the sound of my unfamiliar vehicle, we decided to explore the property further by foot.

Closing in on more goats close to another trough, they went about their business oblivious of our intentions. Using some sandalwood shrubs for cover, Josh and I closed in for a closer look with the binos. Although some of the feral goats were resting, they had others on sentry duty looking out for potential intruders.

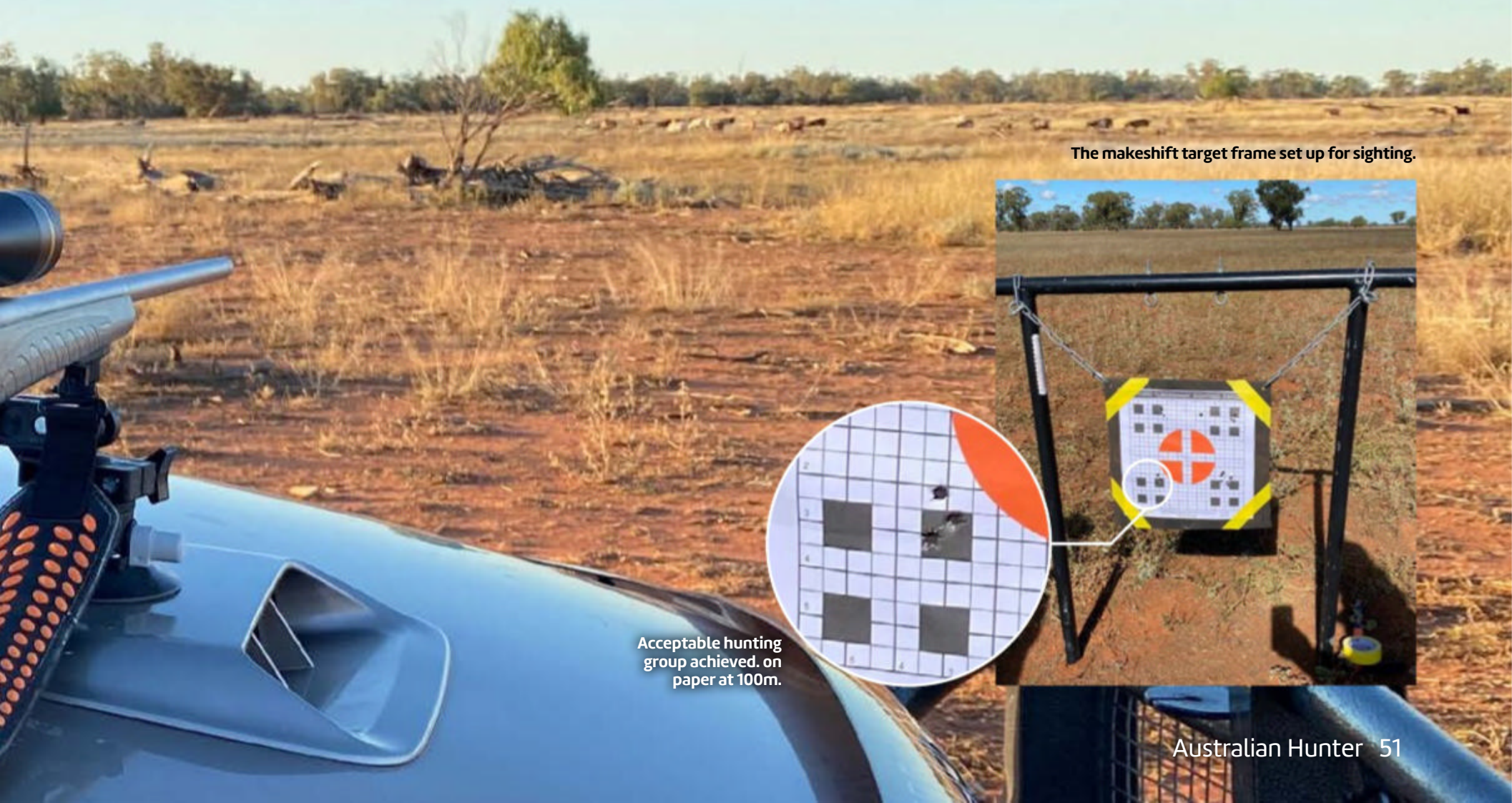
Breaking cover, ever slightly from the bush to gain a better look, we were busted and they picked up camp and made a run for it stirring up a cloud dust in their hasty exit. These goats weren't as silly as they look and made us hunters feel amateur. Among the mob, trailing close behind was a large billy of broad horn length and silver coat that had our full attention.



Relaxing with an afternoon target session.

We decided that he would be worth pursuing after lunch. A foot hunt from a different approach had us back in the same paddock as before and making a note of the goats' speedy departure earlier we positioned ourselves to hopefully cross paths again. Many a mob were located and accessed but the wily silver billy and his mates never showed. They had seemingly sought refuge in a myriad of sandalwood and mulga scrub that filled the paddock.

By the time we arrived back, the sun was setting and we arranged the HiLux for spotlighting. It had been a busy first day hunting with no sign of ending soon, so without hesitation we departed the warmth of the homestead for a stint of spotlighting after dinner. The spotlight fanned side to side as we drove down the track and just when I thought the ferals had tucked in for the night, the bright reflection of a pair of eyes caught our attention.



The makeshift target frame set up for sighting.

Acceptable hunting group achieved, on paper at 100m.

Goodooga goats



Digiscoping the trophy goats.



The spiral of the second goat clearly visible thanks to the spotting scope.



The large feral cat removed from the environment.



The two trophy billys on the right feeding and caught on the Swarovski spotting scope and phone adaptor.

A large feral cat was on the prowl. This time I had my .22 PPC rifle at the ready and shooting from a distance of 110m, the cat fell instantly. We were both happy to have removed another native wildlife killer from the mix. As it turned out, the feral cat ended up being the only pest spotted that night and the only feral taken for the trip but our groundwork for a trophy goat was well underway.

The next morning was a frosty one and although my blankets were warm, we didn't drive 600km from home to stay in bed. A hot coffee heated us and we spent the next few hours glassing the billy paddocks again for potential sightings of the trophies from yesterday.

Although we enjoyed stalking and glassing numerous mobs of feral goats, the big billys were proving to be elusive. However, a target session after breakfast gave us a chance to wind down and hone our target skills, with Ray joining the action. Success

favoured us for our afternoon hunt though, as we located the elusive big billy.

The bonus in this instance seemed to be that the billy was paired up with what appeared to be a brother goat of similar size. This created a new opportunity for Josh and me to potentially take a trophy each. Zooming in and accessing their trophy credentials, it was clear they shared similar genetics. The new billy of interest had similar looking horns with a little more spiral but slightly shorter in span. His coat with shades of colour slightly lighter to the other which enabled it easy to differentiate the two.

Although a difficult one, Josh and I made the hard decision to let the goats go and let them grow for another year in the favourable feed conditions. This may prove to be a gamble but with most of the wild dogs removed from the property we figured it was a chance worth taking. Retreating quietly, unnoticed from the

feeding goats, was a tough call but we arrived back to the home-
stead with plenty of inspiration for resuming our trophy hunt again
next year.

Wrapping up our long weekend's hunt later the same afternoon,
ended with us taking a meat goat from a grass paddock that had
been recently cleared for improvement. The mob was easily visible
in the open and Josh secured a goat with a single round from his
Sako A7 .243

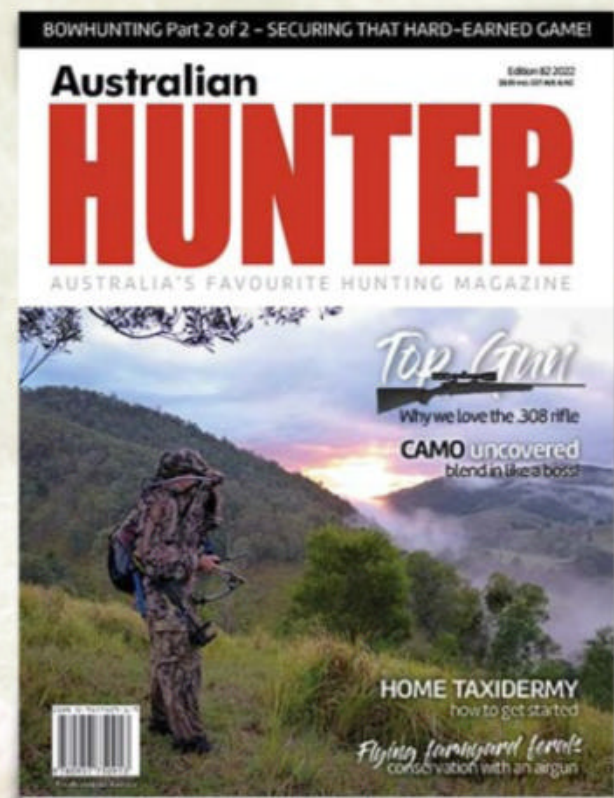
Arriving back just on dark we promptly dressed the entire
animal for our freezers. Our start for home the following morning
wasn't entirely uneventful as a massive black and white boar was
spotted meandering through some brigalow scrub. Not ready for
the encounter, I promptly grabbed my Sauer 100 in 6.5 Creedmoor
and pursued the fleeing boar on foot. He just managed to stay out
of range with the tight scrub being the difference for a clear shot.

He escaped for now and lived to see another day. With any luck,
part two of this story will reveal dual trophy goat success for me
and my hunting buddy and us hopefully better prepared for the
big boar, should we cross paths again. ■



The meat goat taken at last light.

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A simple yet tasty goat curry.

Kashmir goat curry

Peter d’Plesse and Alison Purdon combine to serve up delicious subcontinent cuisine

The Kashmir Valley in the Indian subcontinent is home to rich and flavourful cuisine. The daily staple food of Kashmir Muslims is plain cooked rice supplemented with meat, cooked with a herb called asafoetida. However, Kashmiri Pandits use onions and garlic to replace the asafoetida.

Asafoetida is the dried latex gum exuded from the tap root of several species of perennial herbs native to the deserts of Iran and mountains of Afghanistan. It has a pungent smell, giving it the local name of ‘stinking gum’. The odour dissipates while cooking to deliver a smooth flavour similar to leek or onion. As we don’t have access to asafoetida, this recipe uses the ingredients of Kashmiri Pandits to produce a similar result.

It delivers a wonderful flavour with goat and works just as well with lamb or mutton. Mutton and large goat will require longer cooking times until the meat is tender.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1kg diced goat (lamb or mutton also work)
- 1 large onion
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed and diced
- Grated fresh ginger – 2½" piece (4 to 5cm)
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 2 teaspoons turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 3 bay leaves
- 375ml (1½ cups) chicken stock
- 125ml (½ cup) cream
- 2–3 handfuls English spinach

Method

- Heat the oil in a heavy pan and brown the meat. Remove and put aside for later.
- Add diced onion and garlic and cook for 2–3 minutes or until the onion is soft.
- Add the spices and cook, stirring for 1–2 minutes or until fragrant.
- Add the meat, bay leaves, chicken stock and ginger. Bring to the boil and reduce heat to simmer, covered for 35 minutes or until the meat is becoming tender.
- Add the cream and simmer gently, covered for 20 minutes or until the meat is tender.
- Add the spinach and cook until softened.
- Season to taste and serve with rice. ■

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The low rings on an S&B scope.

Jan Kaptein sets his sights on Warne Maxima Permanent-Attachable Scope Rings

For many of us, scope rings teether on the fringes of our imagination. They can be a pain in the proverbial rear end when setting up a new rifle and installing a scope, but from there, if properly done, they fade into the background.

Those who do not want to bother with installing, then shops will do you a favour and connect the rings and scope for you. If you trust your local dealer to do a good job, just let them deal with it. That said, there are those among us who regularly switch optics, use different ones on the same rifle or for some other reason regularly change things up.

While there are various mounting solutions that allow quick attachment and detachment of an optic to a standardised base, few are as flexible and accessible as Weaver/Picatinny based solutions. It is likely that your rifle does not have a Picatinny base when it comes out of the box, but conversions are readily available and worth considering. This applies if you have multiple platforms across which you intend to use your optics.

Once you have the base sorted, there are endless numbers of rings you can put your scope in. How to properly mount a scope is beyond the capacity of this review, but I will try to shed some light on my personal experience with Warne Maxima scope rings.

Warne is an American company that prides itself on being 'passionate about designing, manufacturing and selling world-class MADE in USA firearms accessories'. They offer a huge array of scope bases, rails and other products, most of which are readily available in Australia. Products vary from cheap solutions to rather exotic and expensive ones.

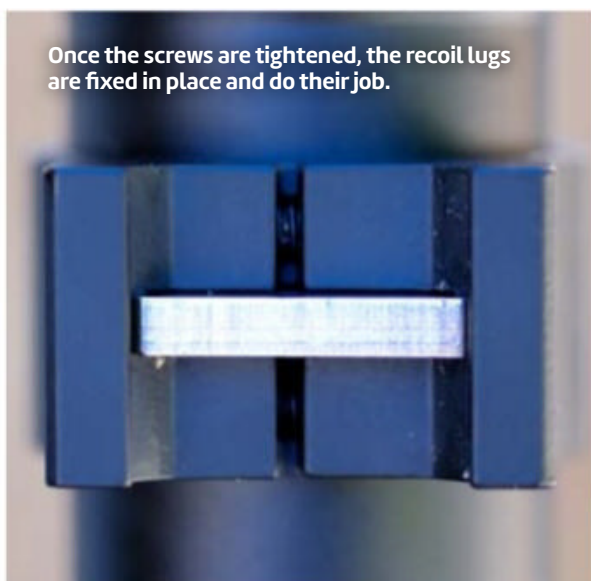
Warne Maxima scope rings are likely to pop up when you search for a new set. They are not as cheap as some of the stuff that comes out of China, but nowhere near as

expensive as many of the offerings from European manufacturers. They sit comfortably in the middle.

Warne Maxima rings come in low, medium, high and extra high and in all common scope tube diameters. There are matte and gloss versions as well as silver ones to match that stainless steel action. Furthermore, they have a few versions, from standard fixed (permanent-attachable) rings, quick release and tactical. The design is either vertical or horizontal. The review model is one of the most commonly found, the fixed vertical in matte black for a 30mm scope tube. These are in 'low', but make sure to check which is suitable for your given application and objective diameter.

As far as rings go, the Warne Maximas have a level of fit and finish that is well above many other solutions and probably not too far behind some European alternatives. That said, their design is puzzling on some fronts. Let me explain. The vertical rings are two-piece, which is fine. However, this also means that to uninstall them, you have to undo the bottom bracket, as well as the top. This is not likely to be an issue for those of us who install a scope once and forget about it.

Once the screws are tightened, the recoil lugs are fixed in place and do their job.



However, if you, like myself, switch scopes and optics on a regular basis, it is a huge hassle. As you undo the Torx screws, the scope is no longer held in place. It will move in the rings, no matter how careful you try to be. The only way to prevent this would be to grow an additional pair of arms and hold things in place.

In short, switch rifles, realign your scope. In addition to this, the metal bit that serves as a recoil lug is not fixed to either side. This means that once you open the rings, it drops out. No huge deal as it is easy to put back in, but a nuisance. A two-piece integrated lug (a part of the lug on either half of the base ring base) would not have a lower structural integrity and be more convenient. In all fairness though, the rings are marketed as a permanent mounting solution.

So where does that leave the Warne Scope rings among available alternatives? That depends. If your rifle comes with a Weaver/Picatinny rail by default and you install a scope upon acquiring a rifle without removing it afterwards, the Warne Maxima vertical rings provide a solid and cost-effective way to fix your optics. Machining and materials are good and once mounted, you will never have any problem with movement of any kind. However, if you are not going to unmount your scope, consider using rings that match whatever scope base your rifle has out of the box.

Likewise, if you intend to switch optics or mount and unmount on a regular basis, there are more convenient alternatives.

Specifications:

Reviewed rings: 213M Warne 30mm, PA, Low Matte Rings

Ring type: Fixed

Available heights: Low, medium, high, extra high

Tube diameters: 1", 30mm, 34mm, 36mm

Compatible base: Picatinny/Weaver

Material: Steel

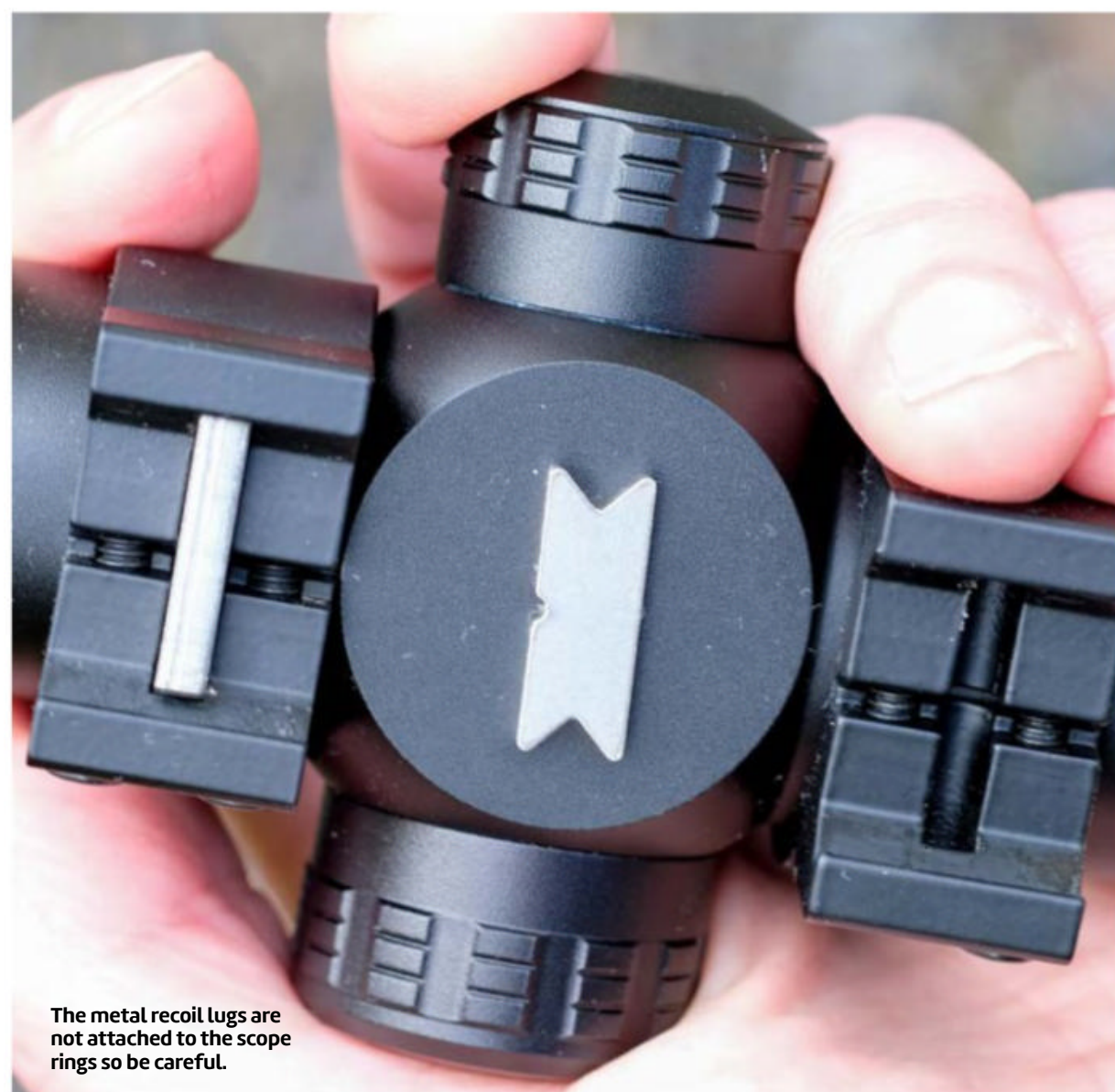
Weight: Approx. 130g

Price: Around \$110

Distributor: TSA Outdoors

Sticking with Warne, the same rings come in a quick release version that keeps the scope mounted in the rings, albeit at a price premium.

Visit warnescopemounts.com for their full set of products. Should you buy them? If a one rifle, one scope person, yes. If not, go with the quick release version or another alternative from your local gunshop. ■





Salvaging velvet antlers

Joseph Nugent explains
how to fill the freezer
and secure a trophy at
the same time

The finished product.

Each hunter's motivation is without doubt a personal thing. For some, it is simply being outdoors engaging with nature, regardless of whether an animal is taken or not. For others, particularly those on the land, feral animal control is an outright necessity.

Many are seeking that elusive perfect trophy, while others are out to fill the freezer and provide for family and friends. I find myself firmly in the latter category, hunting primarily for venison, with any head taken being the byproduct, not purpose, of the hunt. As such, I sometimes take a stag in velvet.

Naturally, trophy hunters are reluctant to take a stag in velvet, being mindful of losing a trophy head. While acknowledging the validity of this position, once an animal



Head in velvet.

is taken for the freezer, a quick assessment of his rack could indeed provide an opportunity to actually salvage a set of velvet antlers, rather than discarding them. All is not lost. The assessment to be made is simply whether the underlying bone structure has reached a sufficient degree of maturity so as to be hard and stable, therefore lending itself to salvage. Being familiar with the growth cycles of deer and knowing what to look for in fully grown (if still velvet covered) antlers is a must.

Antlers are shed annually and are the fastest growing of any mammalian bone structure. Each antler grows from a point on the skull called a pedicle, with growth being driven by the stag's testosterone levels. This development occurs via a process known as calcification, whereby cartilage growth is converted into bone.

The velvet seen on a stag's antlers at this time provides the oxygen and nutrients necessary to facilitate bone development. During its growth cycle, the antler is quite sensitive, soft and malleable. However, towards the end of its development, it will be fully formed but still covered in velvet. If you have taken a stag at this point of his development, with calcification complete, a meat animal in velvet may yet result in a nice trophy. With a few extra steps his rack can be treated much the same as any other European skull mount.

The first step after a rough preparation of the skull by removing the bottom jaw and skin, is to strip the antler of all its velvet. To do this, soak the antlers overnight in freshwater. This enables the velvet is to soak up some of the water, making it



Velvet being manually stripped.

easy to strip. The stripping process is similar to skinning the head. Make long incisions up the back of the antler, from the base to the tip, branching off for each tine as needed. From there, carefully use a knife and a set of pliers to manipulate the velvet away from the hard antler bone underneath. Once free of velvet, proceed exactly as you would a standard European mount.

Follow this basic three-step routine with European mounts:

Step 1. Natural decay

After skinning and removing as much tissue from the skull as possible, secure the skull in a tree, safe from predators, for three weeks. This allows ants and maggots to remove most of the remaining soft tissue and the brain. With naturally coloured antlers, it is worth using the shade of a bush or tree to protect from the sun, as they may lose some colour over the three weeks if left exposed to the elements.

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Salvaging velvet antlers

Step 2. Boiling

After the natural decay process has occurred, simmer the skull in a solution of freshwater and liquid detergent. Typically, simmering for one to two hours will soften and loosen the tissue, allowing any remaining matter to be manually removed. Perhaps by using a multi-tool to pull, cut and scrape anything that comes loose. Careful use of a hose or Kärcher type appliance can also hasten the cleaning-up process. It is important to inspect the skull and remove as much tissue as you can every 30 minutes or so, as you want to spend as little time as possible boiling the skull to avoid damaging the more delicate bone structures or losing the teeth.

Step 3. Whitening

After the skull is completely clean, it can be left to soak in a mixture of water and three per cent hydrogen peroxide. Use two bottles of hydrogen peroxide with five to seven litres of water and let the skull soak in this solution for about three days before allowing it to dry thoroughly in the sun for a further few days. This solution will not harm naturally coloured antlers, so don't stress about the base of the antlers being submerged in the solution. It will only whiten the skull. It is important not to use bleach as a substitute during this process, as it can damage the skull, causing it to become brittle over time.



Simmering the skull.



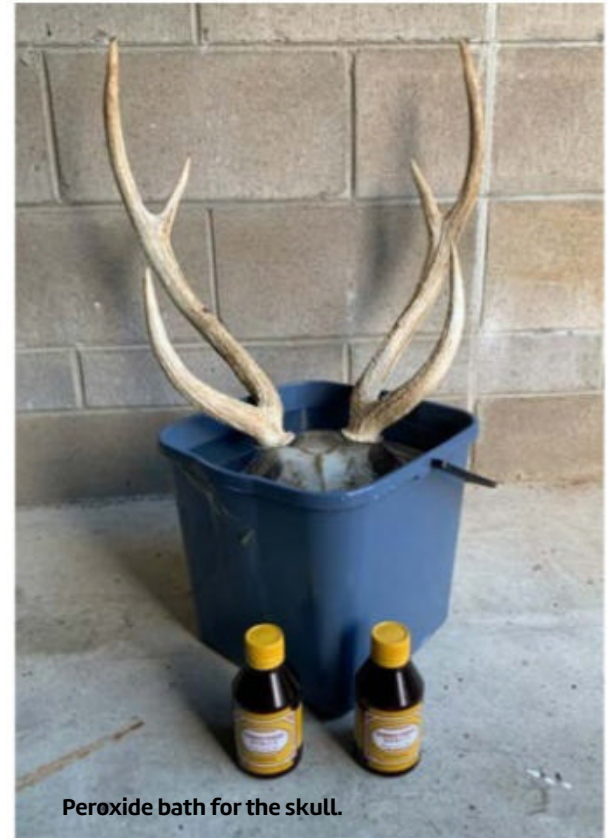
Head after three weeks natural decay.

Step 4. Colouring (velvet antlers only)

Once the skull is clean and whitened, it is time to focus on the antlers themselves. Having been taken while in velvet, the antlers will not have been naturally stripped or rubbed by the stag. This is the process, which in the wild, would colour them and shape the tines. So, the antlers will be bone white.

To add a natural colour, treat as you would a cast antler. Boot polish, wood stain or even coffee grounds might be used to colour the antler. However, to achieve the most natural look, use potassium permanganate, also known as Condyl's crystals. Originally a disinfectant found on the shelves of most pharmacies, when repeatedly used in a highly concentrated dose, it creates a natural colour.

With Condyl's crystals, the stronger the better; pour ¼ of a bottle of the crystals into a small cup or container then add some water to dissolve all the crystals. Now simply apply regular coats (two is good) each day, allowing adequate drying time in between, until the desired colour is achieved. During this stage, place a bag over the whitened skull to protect it, as the colouring solution will stain anything it touches. Once at the shade you want, use some fine grit sandpaper to lighten the stain on the points to mimic the look of a naturally coloured set and highlight the pearling of the antler.



Peroxide bath for the skull.

Job done, ready to be mounted to a board or directly on the wall. A memory preserved for years to come.

To the purist there is a definite window of opportunity each year to take a trophy head – one fully formed, stripped, coloured and shaped by the stag himself. However, it is inevitable that the meat hunter will encounter a situation where an animal taken in velvet could, with a little work, result in a wall hanger and a freezer full of venison for the perfect double. ■



Staining with potassium permanganate.

The winning formula

Winchester Super-X .308 150-grain bullets and boars are the perfect match for Dick Eussen

While I handload most of my ammunition, I generally buy 100 rounds of factory ammo to start, in this case for my new Sako .308W Lightweight. The Winchester flat-nosed 150-grain bullet load is ideal for pigs of all sizes, including solid, big boars who can take a surprising amount of punishment.

They are effective with .223 Remington Magnum, .243 Winchester and .270 Winchester rifles on game and are coupled with long life of the shells.

The Winchester Power-Point line of projectiles have been out for a long time and are proven performers on game. Available in a wide range of calibres the Power-Point bullet is noted for its tough contoured jacket that is bound around a solid alloy lead core, which with its blunt point, assures a quick, instant kill that is made possible by the retained weight and deep penetration of the inner core. The core jacket, when recovered, has classic mushrooming.

The impact of the bullet was aptly demonstrated when I flushed a big boar from some rubber vine below a dam wall where he had been enjoying a dust bath and a nap after a watery dip, before he was suddenly alerted that something was not right in the neighbourhood. He rushed out into the open. I led him with the Leopold scope's cross-hairs on his nose and squeezed the trigger, the bullet hitting him with a solid whack where it counts, in the heart/lung area.

What was memorable was the dust cloud that rose from the boar on the bullet's impact, as it almost hid him. He collapsed in the dust, never completing the next step



in his rush to escape. He had almost 50mm of thick, dried mud on his shoulders. The bullet had punched through it and into the body, the solid impact having raised the dust cloud.

Muzzle velocity is 2820 for the .308W 150-grain Winchester loading, ideal for meat hunters not wanting it spoiled by a massive spread of impairment from a high velocity round impact. The 150-grain bullet's velocity is spot on when it comes to avoiding meat damage.

While other bullet weights, ranging from 130 to 180 grains, are fine for pigs, the 150-grain is the best all-round choice for medium game such as pigs, deer and kangaroos. The 130-grain is a good killer on average pigs, but can fail on big boars, while the 180-grain is too heavy and shoots right through on the largest of boars. Not good, when they are cranky and focus their eyes on you.

I sighted the Sako Lightweight rifle, which is fitted with a Leopold 4x12 scope, in over a benchrest and sandbags. The initial sighting was at 50m, before locating the target at 100m. The 3-shot groups were impressive, being under 60mm, with one at 42mm. I set the cross-hairs 50mm high at 100m, which gives me an ideal hunting trajectory, being exact at 200m, the farthest I shoot game these days, unless conditions are ideal.

Game on

In a four-day hunt with the new rifle and ammo, my mate Wayne and I accounted for more than 40 pigs, many large boars that were covered in dry mud from wallowing in stock dams and river pools. Both of us were using .308W rifles and we enjoyed one-shot kills.

It took two hunts to shoot up the 100 rounds. I trimmed the cases to proper length, inside and outside reamed the mouths and primer pockets, primed them and reloaded them with 150-grain Nosler AccuBond bullets, behind ADI AR2208 and CCI Large Rifle primers that equalled the Winchester load.

On the range the reloads proved a tad better in accuracy than the Winchester Power-Points, though I reckon the Nosler kills a little better, but that may be wishful thinking because there is no way to prove that as it matters little which bullet is used. If hit in the right place, the game dies – end of story.

The cases have been reloaded eight times and look good enough for another few rounds. No neck splitting or primer pocket enlarging has happened, so the initial purchase was a good investment.

Winchester supplies a lot of ammo to Australian shooters and its quality is way up there. Cost is competitive, with a box of 20 rounds for these mentioned bullets about \$40 from selected dealers. ■



Scott and his trusty Remington 788.

The Heiman family heirloom

Scott Heiman covers why his beloved Remington Model 788 in .22–250 reigns supreme

For more than 200 years, Remington Firearms has been a leader and stalwart of firearms manufacture and design. However, at one stage, company mismanagement forced them to file for bankruptcy. Luckily, in 2020, RemArms acquired the Remington Firearms manufacturing facility in Ilion, New York, and with it the opportunity to restore their proud reputation.

If you’re looking to acquire a piece of Remington’s rich history and a quality firearm for continued use, don’t turn a blind eye to the Remington Model 788. It was designed to compete in the growing sporting rifle market of the 1960s that accompanied the end of World War Two. The 788 carved a competitive edge with its design, accuracy and low price compared to the high-end sporting rifles available at the time (think Remington Model 700). Credit for this goes to Remington’s own Wayne Leek.

Serial number blocks

- 1967 – 010001 to 068460
- 1968 – 6200000 to 6899999
- 1974 – A6000000 to A6199999
- 1978 – B6000000 to B6199999

Courtesy of remarms.com

Over its 15 years of manufacture (1967–1983), 560,000 of these firearms were produced in nine calibres and varying barrel lengths. Left-handed versions were produced, created in .308 and 6mm calibres.

Notably, few changes were made to the design of the Model 788 over the period. When it comes to the stock, the majority of Model 788s were outfitted with plain, birch hardwood stained to resemble walnut as a cost saver. So if you sand back the varnish, you’ll reveal a plain white stock. The only significant change throughout its production history came in 1980 when the stock was revised to include a fluted comb, thicker pistol grip and wider fore-end.

Another revision was the locking bolt. Earlier models required the safety to be in the ‘fire’ or ‘off’ position in order to rotate the handle and actuate the bolt. However, later rifles (manufactured from 1975 to 1983) have non-locking bolts which can be actuated while the safety is engaged.

The distinguishing design features of the Model 788 are:

1. It has a rear-lugged bolt. The bolt locks into the receiver behind the magazine well, as opposed to the breech, where the lugs are in three rows of three (similar to the Weatherby Mark V, but its lugs were at the front).

Due to this design, the 788 has more clearance for scopes compared to other (more common) two-lugged bolt-actions. This is because the bolt handle only lifts 60 degrees in comparison to the 90 degrees required for the Model 700 and other two-lug rifles. Being rear lugged also gives the 788 a reduced bolt travel.

Rifle calibres and years of manufacture		
Rifle	Year	w/18½" barrel
.222 Rem	1967–1980, 1982	
.223 Rem	1975	
.22–250 Rem	1967	
.243 Win	1968	1980
6mm Rem	1969–1980	
6mm Rem Left Hand	1969–1980	
7mm–08 Rem		1980
.308 Win	1969	
.308 Win Left Hand	1969–1980	1980
.30–30 Win	1967–1970	
.44 Rem Mag	1967–1970	

Table courtesy of remarms.com



The Rem 788 steel magazine contains three rounds.



The 788 bolt clearly showing three rings of three.

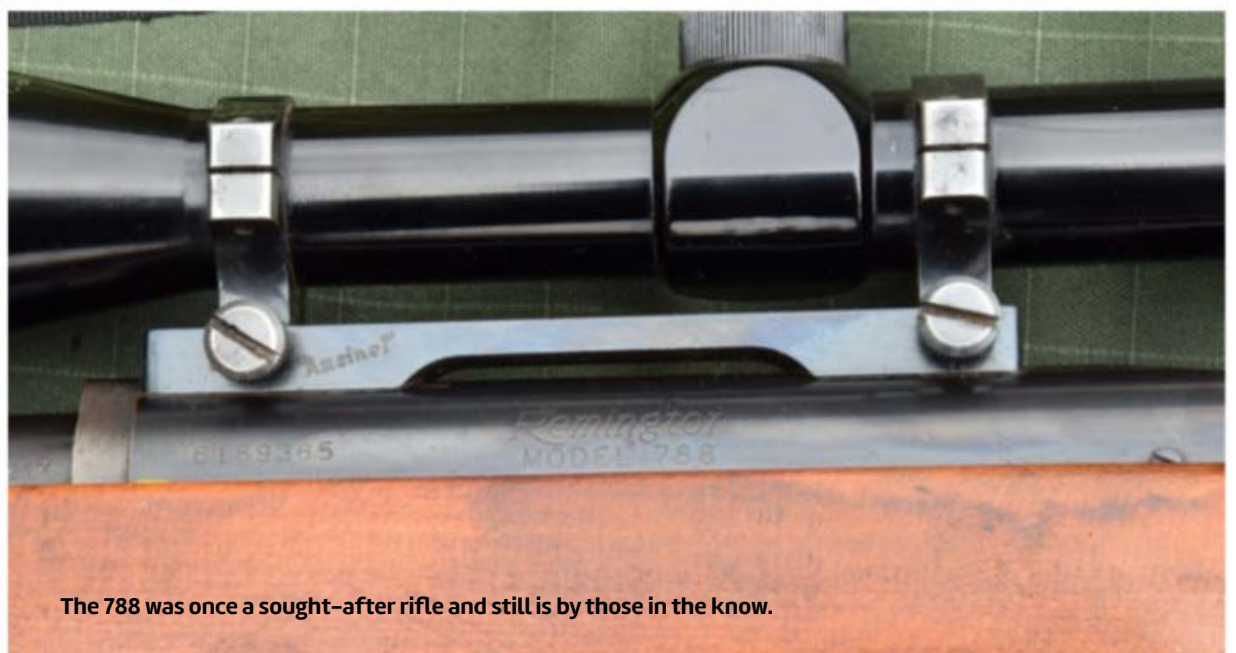


Care for the rifle and it will last longer than you.

2. It has a smaller ejection port than similar bolt-action rifles and no bolt lug raceways. This feature, combined with the single stack detachable magazine design, yields a smaller feed opening in the bottom of the receiver compared to rifles using a double stack magazine well. The result is more steel remaining in the receiver between the ejection port and adjacent feed port, and significantly more steel overall where all receivers have the least strength.

Combined, these two distinctive characteristics make the Remington 788 receiver more rigid and stronger than most – if not all – competing designs, including the Remington 700 which shares the same outside receiver diameter.

Mix this rigidity with the 788's longer shank than the Model 700, as well as its thick recoil lug and the rifle's accuracy tends to increase slightly. This is because, as the rigidity of the receiver rises, barrel deflection during firing is reduced. Thus,



The 788 was once a sought-after rifle and still is by those in the know.

the Remington 788 has the structural foundation to be a highly accurate rifle.

Indeed, in some match shoots conducted when the rifle was originally released, the 788 is said to have outshot its big brother in accuracy – a fact that was embarrassing for Remington. So much so that some believe Remington discontinued the 788 in 1983

because it had simply become too popular, cutting into the 700's sales.

The only problem with the 788 concerns the trigger sear. While I've read of some people having issues with the sears breaking, it's not a hurdle I've faced. Others have complained about extraction. However, the Model 788 has the same style extractor as

Salvaging velvet antlers

the 700. Relatedly, ejection has also been a topic of objection due to the port size. I have had this occur occasionally but more generally have trouble finding the ejected brass to pick it back up.

I was gifted my .22-250 Model 788 at the age of 16, over 30 years ago by my dad. He received it from my grandfather, a gunsmith and dealer, who in turn had acquired it second-hand. Having been manufactured in

1967 I've owned it for more than 65 per cent of its 55 years. And given the care I lavish on this family heirloom, I've no doubt it will go on to outlast me.

During my period of ownership, it's been used with both factory ammo and reloads. All have performed favourably, with minor inevitable differences. However, for hunting I have found that soft-points behave more beneficially. The .22-250 calibre with its laser-like trajectory lasting some 200m (combined with the 788's accuracy) has harvested everything from rabbits, hares, cats, foxes, goats, pigs and fallow deer.

Overall, the Remington Model 788 was manufactured as a well-made, accurate, economy rifle. I consider it to be better designed and more attractive, practical and under-valued than most budget bolt-action rifles on the market today. In fact, if I were lucky enough to find them, I'd sooner buy more good quality 788s than most other makes or models.

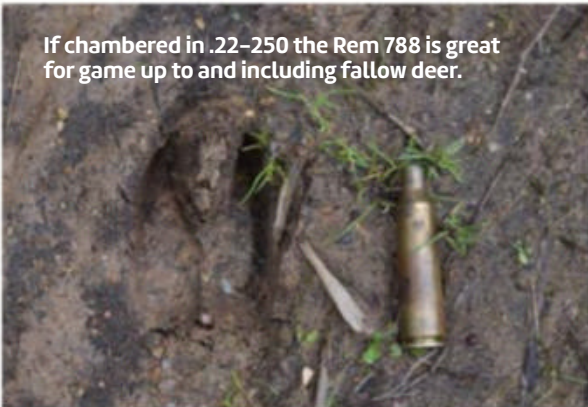
Frequent ssaagunsales.com in the hope one pops up. ■



For small game it is recommended to go for head shots with a Rem 788 in .22-250. It helps with field cleaning.



The 788 is nicely balanced for shooting from any position. Photo taken by remote means.



If chambered in .22-250 the Rem 788 is great for game up to and including fallow deer.

Specifications:

- Maker:** Remington Arms, LLC
- Country of origin/make:** USA
- Model:** Model 788
- Cal:** .22-250 Rem
- Year of manufacture:** 1967
- Barrel length:** 24" (other calibres vary from 22-24 and 18½ for carbines)
- Barrel twist:** One in 14 (note twist rate varied for calibre - eg, the .243 was one in 9)
- Trigger:** 3lb non-adjustable
- Safety:** Thumb-operated top stock
- Magazine:** Steel, single stack, three-round detachable box (.222 and .223 can take four rounds)
- Price range:** \$400-\$800 depending on condition and aftermarket accessories

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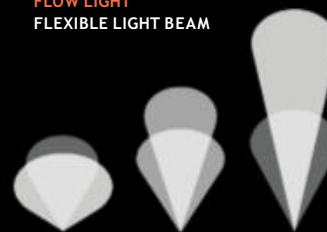
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A wish comes true

Ant Atkinson ticks an item off his bucket list on an interstate hunting adventure

Ant's first chital stag taken broadside at 25m.



The trip of a lifetime, which had been planned in my head for many years, finally came about when a hunt was booked for chital deer in North Queensland alongside my girlfriend Emma's father, Dave.

Having a few days up our sleeves for travel, we took it easy, making our way from Portland, Victoria through Outback New South Wales and into Queensland. We eventually arrived in Charters Towers after 32 hours on the road.

We had a few hours to spare before meeting Mick, our hunting guide for the week. We decided to take advantage of the freshwater swimming holes and relax while sharpening some broadheads and having a few practice shots.

Mick arrived and we drove the last part of the trip before arriving at the station where we would be spending the next five days. Upon arrival, I finally laid eyes on

my first chital deer, then my second, then my third. One by one the deer fed their way out on the clearing below the house to enjoy the last couple of hours before dark. What amazing animals they are. I could have sat there all afternoon videoing them and watching them go about their activities. After unpacking our gear and having a quick run around part of the property on the quad looking for a pig, we called it a night. Excitement was high for the following day.

Morning would consist of a bit of sitting and waiting just to see where the deer were heading when the sun rose. Sure enough they weren't where we were, as they went to the opposite side of the clearing before taking cover for the day under some trees just off the main tree line. This is where they would continue to go the rest of the week. I did have an exciting encounter with a young fawn that had split and wandered

in to about 15 yards from me before taking off again and joining the rest of the mob.

After having a quick bite to eat at the house, we headed back out and managed to track down three stags and a couple of does bedded up for the day in a small clump of trees.

I had to gain about 250m across some open ground consisting of only grass and a few small trees. With the deer frequently sitting and getting back up one by one the stalk was slow. Forty-five minutes passed and I was within 70m of them, sitting behind a fallen tree watching through the gap of the branches waiting for them to bed up to make my final stalk.

I sat behind that tree for 30 minutes until finally the coast was clear. I had picked a spot I needed to get to, where I knew I'd be comfortable to take the shot. The bigger stag had bedded back down, giving me a stalk to within 30m where I stood



This hind fed in from behind a tree stand and continued feeding into 25m from Ant before sniffing his scent.



Four hinds semi-alert on the clearing below the house upon arrival to the property.

A wish comes true

patiently, waiting for him to move back up. Everything appeared perfect – the wind was right, the distance was right, the deer were calm. It seemed too good to be true and quite often as bowhunting goes, it normally is.

Unfortunately, the first deer to stand wasn't the stag I was after. Instead, it was a hind who had been bedded facing my direction and as she stood up, she realised quickly that the tree 20m in front of her certainly wasn't there when she laid down. So, I watched these deer run downwind from me and disappear into the creek bed.

At first, I was disappointed but looking past that, I was over the moon to have successfully stalked within bow range of an animal so known for their quick reflexes and great sense of danger. I could have easily taken a shot at a deer that morning when they were in their beds, but I chose not to as I wasn't certain of a clean kill. I would rather watch the deer run away than risk injuring one.

That afternoon I was positioned beside the flats below the house yard, waiting for the chital to make their way back to where they spend the night feeding. I slipped

in the black spoil, instinctively sending my hand into the mud to catch my fall. In doing this, I covered my release aid in sticky, black mud. I managed to wash it out as best I could in the small stream beside me, hoping that it would be enough if the opportunity would present itself.

Dave and Mick were exploring the swampy country towards the basalt wall in search of pigs. The night was pretty slow but eventually 30 minutes before dark the deer were on the move, feeding out into the paddock in front of me. Unknowingly to me, Dave had arrowed a chunky boar and they were on their way back to the yard.

This worked perfectly in my favour as the noise from the quad coming over the hill sent the deer in my direction. Closing the gap from 150 to 50m pretty quickly, I picked out a young stag from the mob, the only one to follow the trail I was on. He was my target.

The deer funnelled one by one past me until the stag was at 35m, where I stopped him with a doe call and squeezed the trigger on my release aid, only to have it not open straight away due to the mud from earlier. A brief delay was enough for my concentration to slip and my sight to drop

from the stag's body, sending my arrow clean under him. I was absolutely gutted to say the least, I couldn't believe it.

The following morning, I made my way to a tree stand close to the house while Dave pushed his way further up the creek to another tree stand. Dave didn't have much success but hunting with the longbow can be a tough gig at the best of times. He managed to gain a good look at a few decent stags and secured some awesome footage.

I had a few hinds feed out and around me, but unfortunately not within range. As the sun crept higher and started to light up the clearing, I watched a big mob feed into a gully system while a few fed their way up the rise towards me. I filmed a young stag as he got rid of the last of his velvet but eventually the wind swirled and he joined the rest of the mob, which had bedded down further along the ridge.

After a three-hour stint in the tree stand, it was time to move in on the bedded mob. Not having an exact location on them, it was a game of cat and mouse before I finally gained a glimpse of the antlers above the grass. There were three stags, and a few does, each gradually funnelling

Dave shot this boar broadside from 12m with his longbow.



This boar was in the wrong place at the wrong time and copped a slick-trick to the vitals from 5m.



While waiting for stags to bed up for the day, this fella popped out and found the only patch of sun.



Not the biggest pig but it definitely doesn't dull the excitement when at close range.

up and down a gutter in and out of sight. I managed to close the gap to 70m where I waited for an hour, as the three stags were up on the rise and in plain sight, with nothing but grass between us. Eventually a doe broke cover and ran around us with the three stags hot on her trail, giving me a chance to draw my bow, but they weren't sticking around. They moved downwind and that was the end of that.

It was onto another stalk when we hadn't travelled far before Mick spotted a set of antlers through the scrub bedded in under a fallen tree.

It was an unreal spot, as even after Mick tried to point them out to me I couldn't see him. It wasn't until we were within 80m and the cockies started which made him stand up, that I saw him for the first time. He was a young hard velvet stag, bedded up by himself but it was going to be hard to take a shot.

At first, I had no intention of shooting him as I didn't think he was big enough. Instead, it was going to be a practice stalk to see how close I could go. At 15m my heart was beating out of my chest, as it was at this point where it dawned on me that I was going to be just as happy shooting this deer with the bow as if it was a 30"-specimen sitting in his place.

So, the waiting game began. I wasn't going to shoot him lying down as he was facing me, which meant it would have to be a neck. With wasps chewing on my legs I almost blew my stalk when I choked on a drink of water from my Camelbak; it was a long hour-and-a-half in the 34-degree Queensland sun.

Eventually I gave in and decided to find a position where, if possible, I'd take a shot. At this point he was still behind the fallen tree with no clear view of his body. Slowly inching my way forward and over some branches, I made it to 6m.

Thankfully, it wasn't long until he stood, but he knew something was wrong. After an intense stare down, he made his decision to turn and walk away. I could finally draw back my bow and wait as he made the fatal mistake to stop, turn broadside and look back at me from 15m away.

I settled my pin over his heart and let the arrow fly, hitting perfectly. I knew he was done for, but nothing is certain until you see the animal hit the deck. But it was lights out for him. I was ecstatic and couldn't wait to cape and dress him out for as much of the delicious meat as possible. A lifelong dream of taking one of these animals was finally fulfilled.

Coming from Victoria, the chance to chase pigs are few and far between. So, I didn't

waste the opportunity the following afternoon when we decided to make our way out towards a basalt wall in search for them.

As we scouted the flats it wasn't long before we caught sight of them. They were heading back into the scrub so instead of chasing them, we decided to wait and let them become comfortable and hopefully stumble across them not too far in.

As the pigs disappeared into the brush, we began our stalk, trying to move around in front of them. It didn't take long before we found a young boar rooting around in a small clearing with a creek running through it. With only a handful of this species under my belt, I didn't hesitate on weaving an arrow into his vitals from 12m. He let out a few squeals and all of a sudden there were pigs everywhere. All the mayhem then died down and the sun was inching lower, so we poked our noses out of the scrub back onto the swamp to start the walk back to the quad.

Dave ended up arrowing another boar with the longbow through the high grass, after all that was seen was a black blob no more than 3m in front of us. A slick trick to the vitals had him down in no time.

On the fourth day, high winds and a storm blew through late in the afternoon. I had a couple of stints in different tree stands with no success. That night I

A wish comes true

decided that the following morning I would bring the rifle out to see if I could bag a big fella for the wall to go alongside my one with the bow.

Up at sunrise and the rifle in hand, I was pumped. The mob on the flats below the house were the first to be scanned with the binos and sure enough, there he was. I couldn't believe my luck. I tipped him at 30". He was long but skinny with reasonably short inners, but he was the one. I wasn't wasting any chances, knowing that this was the last day on the property.

I snuck down the hill and in behind some cattle yards out of sight. With plenty of eyes looking at me I knew it wouldn't be long until the mob would work out something wasn't right and move on. One side of the mob fled but luckily enough the big stag held his ground and stayed with his does in the creek bed.

Off the side of the yards, I took aim and squeezed the trigger, watching the stag hit the deck instantly. I could finally breathe a sigh of relief as I held him in my hands – he was mine.

With capes salted, skulls cleaned and fridges full, it was time to say our good-byes and hit the road for the long haul back to Victoria. Definitely a bucket list item ticked off and a place I will no doubt visit again one day. ■

At just a touch under 30" long, this stag taken with the rifle was a standout animal among the mob.



The good oil

Timber stock care with **Don Caswell**

I have always liked traditional hunting rifle stock design, along with timber and blued steel. Even so, over the past couple of decades I had mostly opted for synthetic stocks and either stainless steel or coated steel barrels and actions. The reason was purely utilitarian, like my move to bolt-actions. I needed fast follow-up shots and a rifle that could handle moisture and hard knocks.

Recently, I followed my heart back to what appeals to me most in what is my last rifle. I treated myself to a Merkel K3 single-shot with a blued action and a walnut stock. As appealing as it is to the eye, this is my go-to hunting rifle and it has a lot of field use. That

means, in the wet tropics of Far North Queensland, it sees more than its share of rain, plus it is dragged through deep, wet grass on early morning outings.

Most of my hunting is for wild dogs and I do that on foot. When trying to stalk wary canines across open pastureland, I have to pick my approach to maximum effect using folds in the terrain and any bushes or trees I can use for cover. That means a lot of the time I am obliged to climb through barbed wire fences rather than just head for the most convenient gate location. It also means that, occasionally, I have to push through thick scrub.

So, that walnut stock was starting to show some wear and tear. Apart from a good collection of minor dings and scratches, there were a growing number of watermarks on the timber from rainy mornings and the odd dob of mud. I had been taking good care of the metalwork using applications of Birchwood Casey Barricade oil. Birchwood

Casey have a useful array of products and I have employed a few to good effect over the years.

So, I made a trip my local gunshop and browsed their shelves. I spotted a bottle of Birchwood Casey Stock Sheen & Conditioner, read the label and figured that was just what I wanted. Back home, I broke down my K3 rifle and laid it out in the sun to warm the timber. That was not part of the recommended procedure, but I reckoned it would only assist the process.

Application of the Stock Sheen & Conditioner could not be easier. I rubbed the timber with a clean, soft cloth that had been dabbed in the solution. I left that to soak in for a while, then buffed the timberwork with a clean, dry soft cloth. The timber came up looking fine. I repeated the process a couple more times; not because I needed to, it was just so straightforward and I had plenty of the solution.

I was completely happy with the result. I will now give the stock a treatment whenever it needs it, just like I look after the metalwork. ■

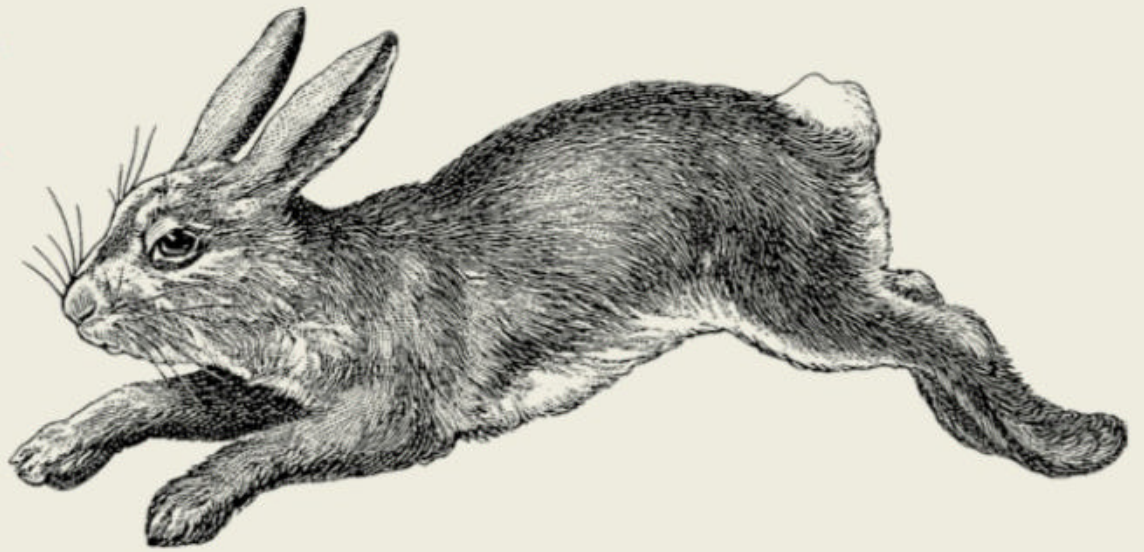


Birchwood Casey Stock Sheen & Conditioner for timber stocks.



The timber was warmed in the sun then rubbed in the Birchwood Casey solution.

The Rabbit of OZ



Bob Boland goes rabbit hunting for the pot and employs a good ol' recipe from a shearers' cook

Rabbits were introduced to Australia with white settlement as a food source, game animal and to remind the settlers of home. However, rabbits adapted incredibly well. Indeed, their spread across Australia is the fastest of any mammal anywhere in the world.

Not only did rabbits multiply wide and far, but they also soon became huge pests and continue to be a major problem for both conservation and farming, costing Australia between 600 million and 1 billion dollars each year.

While rabbits have been hunted for both meat, pelt and fur (for instance, Akubra hats), during the Second World War they were primarily taken for their skins which were used to make a military explosive called cordite.

Why rabbits are so successful

Humans have strong binocular vision (a design feature which gives us depth perception and thus enables us to hunt). However, rabbits have 360-degree vision with limited depth perception (grass does not run away). Furthermore, rabbit ears not

only rotate 270 degrees they also swell in hot weather and contract in cold to adjust body temperature.

Additionally, rabbits are efficient at absorbing water from their food, as evidenced from both their ability to live in arid environments and the fact they pass hard dry pellets rather than cow pats or horse apples. Finally, as heavy snow is rare in Australia, rabbits can breed throughout the year.

Breeding like rabbits

The average size of a rabbit litter is usually between four and 14 initially blind kittens (baby rabbits), which results after a short 28–31-day gestation.

Male rabbits can reproduce as early as seven months of age, and females as soon as four months. This means in one year a single female rabbit can deliver as many as 800 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Times that by a lifespan of up to 10 years and the numbers become even more astonishing. Thus, it is unsurprising rabbits have traditionally been associated with fertility and spring (eg, the Easter Bunny).

A flash of the tail

The reason rabbits break their camouflage and flash their white tails when startled is to communicate with land-based predators they have been spotted and the bunny has taken evasive action. On the topic of camouflage, there is more than some truth



Bob's .22 rifle did the job on these three rabbits.

The dressed rabbit was chopped into quarters and soaked in water overnight.



in the old hunting joke: What looks like a rabbit? A stick! Basically, it's saying don't worry about trying to catch me I'm gone. This strategy is also used by some deer and bird species.

Rabbit recipe hunt

This recipe comes from my mate Les who is now 85, who in turn received it from a shearers' cook in about 1952. As shearers will strike if the tucker is not up to scratch, its history means it's a great concoction.

The history is also indicated by the fact it only uses ingredients which are common, non-seasonal and do not require refrigeration. In fact, this meal can easily be cooked in the bush with a camp oven.

I prepared my .22 and checked the scope (the last time I went out I missed everything) but as normal the issue was the 'nut behind the butt' not the rifle so I drove to a nearby farm to target some bunnies. Last time at

the farm I had seen only two flashing tails, so I was not confident but if you are not out there you won't land anything.

On the drive in at a large stack of logs I saw about five rabbits, but they were all simply flashing tails, yet at least that was more activity than last time I had been there. When I reached the old and decrepit cottage, I again saw lots of flashing tails but after a quiet stalk I nailed two kittens.

The arrangement with the landowner is to shoot all rabbits and at least they will be tender. After having a chat to the farmer, I slowly and quietly approached the log stack and squatted behind a tree. Being bitten by numerous mosquitoes left me feeling like I was prey rather than predatory and about to call it quits when a good size young rabbit bounded out. That made it three rabbits, which was enough for the recipe.

Port flavoured rabbit

Serves 2-4 people

Ingredients

- 1 rabbit cut into quarters
- Plain flour with salt and pepper to roll rabbit in
- 1 large onion, sliced

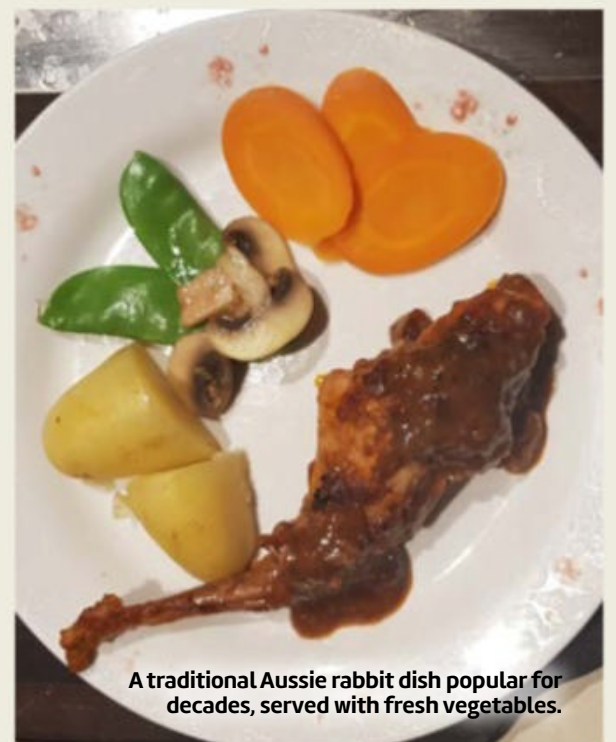


The delicious, cooked rabbit in flavoursome sauce straight out of the oven.

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 tablespoon dark plum jam
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce (some people may prefer less)
- ½ cup tomato sauce or puree
- ½ cup port
- ½ cup hot water

Method

- Roll rabbit quarters in the seasoned plain flour.
- Fry the onion in the oil until tender, then place it in the casserole dish.
- Seal the rabbit quarters in the pan used for the onion, then place the quarters on the bed of onion.
- Simmer the rest of the ingredients until they thicken.
- Pour the simmered ingredients over the rabbit, cover with lid or alfoil and cook in the oven (180°C for 40 minutes). ■



A traditional Aussie rabbit dish popular for decades, served with fresh vegetables.

Australian HUNTER



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A hunter's haven

Mick Chapman has put together a shipshape reloading room with the ultimate add-ons

Fortunately for me, when learning to reload, my next-door neighbour was the late Graham Skinner, who managed Hall's Firearms in Townsville when it first opened.

Graham grew up with my wife's mother and was a close family friend, a renowned hunter/shooter in Townsville at the time, who took me under his wing. Graham insisted on a methodical approach to reloading.

By developing a system, it creates muscle memory, similar to rote learning. With muscle memory the aim is to be perfect or as close as you can be. Errors may or may not be embarrassing but can be dangerous to you or any bystanders. We have all heard those horror stories of guns being blown apart. These are generally accredited to one of two reasons – a mistake in reloading or an obstruction in the barrel. If it is a mistake while reloading it then can be attributed to a breakdown in procedures.

Reloading can be a cost-effective means of maintaining your shooting budget. It also allows the reloader the distinct advantage of tailoring ammunition to their firearm. Whether it be for target shooting or hunting, it means loading premium projectiles for pure accuracy or to kill quickly and humanely. The shooter gains confidence in their chosen outfit by knowing their loads were tailored to their firearm. The beauty is you can just dip your toes into the waters of reloading, or you can plunge head first in as deep as you desire.

To me, reloading is natural extension of my hunting and shooting time. All of which I find extremely relaxing and rewarding. I almost never buy factory ammo, not because it isn't good, but I love the challenge of developing ammo suitable for my

rifles. Though my passion to reload, while serving in the RAAF, was challenged by where to do so.

Living mostly in married quarters, my reloading spaces were often ad hoc. This necessitated me to reload several hundred rounds each session, then pack my reloading gear away to lay dormant for weeks on end. When the need arose to do more reloading, it was unpacked again.

Though I had been as conscientious as I could, when packing the gear away, it was not unusual for an item to be misplaced. Sure as hell the misplaced item would be essential to reloading. This requires a replacement item to be purchased. Commonly within days of the said acquisition the misplaced item would be found, in some obscure corner of my gear. I would end up owning two pieces when one would have sufficed.



The two containers in place with a roof in between them created the trophy room.

Packing things away for weeks on end is a sure way of losing track of what you have in stock. Primers and projectiles were always bought, by me, in lots of 5000 or when on special. On one occasion, I walked into my local gunshop as the salesman was discussing an expected primer shortage. Not wanting to be left out in the dark, I purchased 5000 primers. When I arrived home, I immediately put my primers into their storage area, only to find another 5000 primers. It certainly pays to be organised.

To me the best way to overcome these problems was to establish a dedicated area to reload. Now this may not be practical if you don't own your own home. But there are ways around the situation if you have some elementary skills for making things from second-hand materials.

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to purchase an old shipping container, at a much-reduced price. In fact, they were so cheap, I bought two. One became a workshop, the other a dedicated reloading room with a cool room come butcher shop attached at the rear. Having always been passionate about do-it-yourself projects,



One of the old buildings purchased to make the reloading room.

I set about designing and building my reloading room.

With little materials on hand and limited money, I was challenged to become creative. We had bought a home in a rural area which in a previous life was used for dairy farming. Many of the old milking bales and cream rooms were still standing but showing signs of neglect. Fanning out from my property I began calling on farmers to see if they were interested in selling their old buildings, if I pulled them down. The first

place of call was only too willing, then I spent months cold calling with no luck.

By the time I had exhausted the source of old buildings in close proximity to my home, I had one set of milking bales mostly consisting of weather boards. There was nowhere near enough useable timber for what I had in mind. While travelling through the neighbouring town of Kilkivan, I came across a completely deserted dairy, including an old weather board garage, cream room and workers' cottage.



Part of the trophy room. By separating the two shipping containers it gave the necessary space.

A hunter's haven



The reloading room, where organisation is key.

A little sleuthing on my behalf had me unearthing the owner. During our brief discussion I learnt he was preparing to bulldoze and burn the old buildings and found him ready to receive a little cash for them if I dismantled and removed them by a given date.

I must admit this gave me a hefty workload. Both demolition sites I had purchased had stood for some 75–100 years. I was soon to find out just how much work was involved dismantling and transporting timber. A couple of weeks later, I had a pile of undressed timber complete with old nails. Denailing was laborious and time consuming, but I soon had a stack of nail-free timber necessitating the purchase of a thickness planer to dress the timber.

During dressing the timber, I discovered some interesting wood species. Readers in my age era will know that crow's ash was considered to make great dance floors and often had beautiful grain. Hoop pine was utilised for furniture. There was also kurrajong, a soft wood that makes a plain plank but nonetheless, its colour matched well when stripped of 100 years of grit and grime, with the other timbers.

When the kurrajong was originally milled, it was probably during the infancy of the timber industry, when they trialled most woods and wasted little. The combination of timbers were to form the lining for my gunroom. The experiences of years of makeshift reloading rooms had told me space was not critical, but organisation of the available space was essential.

Laying out the floor plan for my reloading room was an interesting exercise in time and space management. My objective was to be able to remain in front of my reloading press, with minimal effort to reach whatever item I needed at the time.

My room measures 2.5m wide x 2.2m deep with a U-shaped bench measuring 500mm wide, running down one side across the room then back up. Another big consideration is lighting – you literally can't have too much.

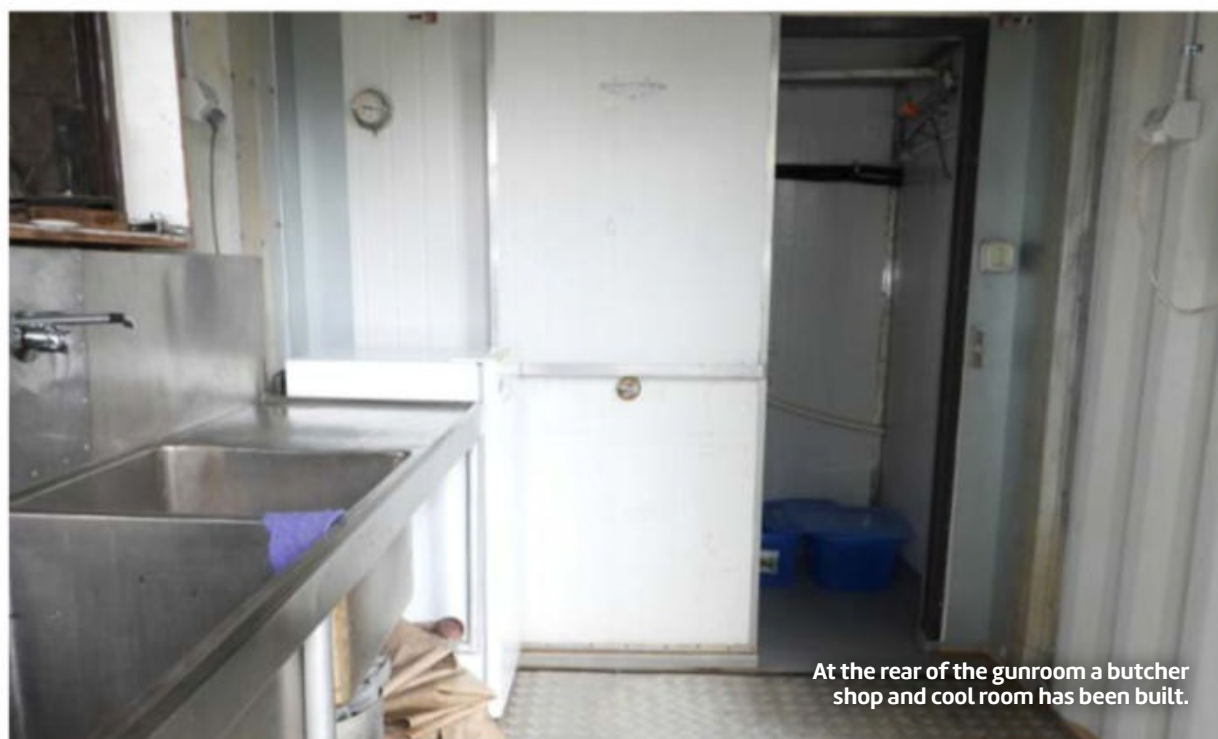
In between my service with the Army and RAAF, I briefly worked at the T&G Insurance office in Townsville, where they were renovating the office while I was there. One piece of furniture caught my eye – the front counter. It was an Art Deco era bench, which I thought would make a great

reloading bench. That bench followed me all over Australia and today stands proudly in my reloading room.

I have attempted to keep cupboards to a minimum as I find items tend to be put away, then forgotten if not visible. The utilisation of wall space by building multi-teared shelves to place most of my reloading equipment overcame my storage problems. A large shelf, running under the entire bench, enables me to place camping gear tidily away yet it remains visible. The old T&G front counter, a self-built lockable ammo cupboard, built-in gun safe and an old fridge for powder storage are the only cupboard space required.

A paramount feature of having a dedicated reloading room is the ability to be able to leave the job at hand and come back, whether it's been a minute or weeks later. You need to instantly recognise where you left off. This of course relies on my systematic layout with a few personal indicators I have established over the years, telling me what stage of the reloading process I left the room at.

A simple but effective method is to leave unprocessed cases upright in the reloading tray. Cases left upside down tell me they have been resized and are ready to be primed. Of course, a visual inspection is carried out at each step to confirm where and what part of the process I am up to. For safety reasons I will not leave my reloading process once the powder is thrown until all cases are reloaded.



At the rear of the gunroom a butcher shop and cool room has been built.

It has taken me decades of reloading, in some of the worst conditions imaginable, to have the set-up I have today. I fine-tune my systems and gunroom until I am satisfied. They provide a safe, productive and enjoyable locale for reloading.

As stated earlier, reloading has always been an integral part of hunting for me, educating me as regards to basic ballistics. Time reloading is always relaxing and well spent. I try to never be in a rush but always follow my systematic procedures, or muscle memory.

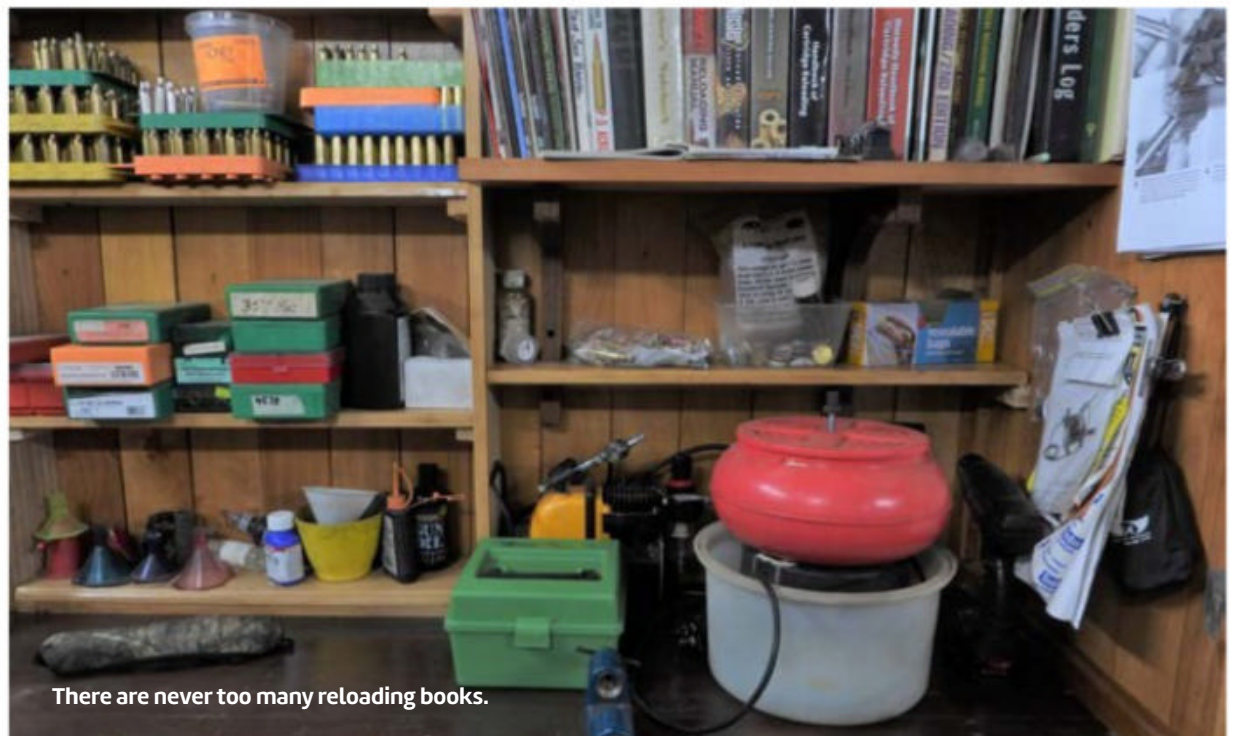
A reloading room doesn't need to be elaborate. But I can attest to the fact that reloading in an area dedicated to the task is worth every dollar, drop of blood, sweat or tears spent obtaining it. It is my contention it would benefit all shooters/hunters who reload to dedicate an area of their workshop, garage or home as a permanent reloading area.

To reload is to dabble into the science of ballistics. Unless schools are holding classes for reloaders, you are probably going in uneducated. Seek mentors and

a guiding hand from someone you trust. There are many good books and people who have been experimenting for years, creating a wealth of knowledge for others to learn from their experiences.

Look for a mentor, as most reloaders love to share their knowledge. Also buy reloading manuals, as each has something

to learn from. I have some books dating back to the 1950s written by Cyril Waterworth, a notable Australian reloader of the time, along with many of the latest books published, purely on monolithic projectiles. I hope this article has helped to inspire you to dust off your tools and build your own dedicated reloading area. ■



There are never too many reloading books.

Invaluable for anyone taking up shooting!

- Now in its 6th edition, the *Comprehensive Guide to Hunting and Shooting in Australia* is a complete resource for anyone wanting to take up shooting as a hobby or sport.
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Home run honing

Don Caswell
slices through the
competition with
the potent Nirey
KE-280 Electric
Knife Sharpener

A sharp knife is an essential tool for any cutting application, but none more so than in hunting and the kitchen. The old saying that a sharp knife is a safe knife holds true. In exerting significant effort to force a blunt knife to cut, the operator greatly increases their chance of suffering an unpleasant mishap. A sharp knife glides through its duty with minimal effort and is a joy to use.

We are nowadays blessed with a broad selection of quality knife brands and styles. It is not difficult for anybody to track down the exact cutlery they wish to use. However, the challenge is in keeping the selected blade adequately sharp. And sharpened your knife must be if you are to safely enjoy using it to its best.

There are three principal methods of sharpening a knife. The age-old use of a whetstone for manual sharpening has its adherents and can produce excellent results in the hands of an experienced practitioner. Next, are various rigs and jigs that ensure the correct angle is used for whetstone sharpening a knife, eliminating the need for experience and finesse required in purely manual sharpening. Thirdly, there are the electrically powered devices that are fast and convenient, easily used by even the most inexperienced to quickly achieve a sharp edge.

I learned to use a whetstone as a boy, emulating my dad who most afternoons spent some time honing his butchering knives. So, I have never needed to use rigs



A good blade test – shaving tissue-thin slices off a tomato.

and jigs to sharpen my knives. Similarly, I have also avoided electrically powered sharpeners. While I was impressed by their convenience and speed, I always harboured reservations about overheating the edge and ruining the temper of the blade.

Blade temper is worth exploring briefly before we move on. I have seen clueless individuals, who should have known better, destroy the temper of quality knives in a few seconds on big, powerful abrasion discs. The damage is done way before the blade's edge reaches red-hot and, believe me, that can be done in an eyeblink. Sure, knifemakers use abrasive wheels and lapping belts in the shaping of blades. But that is before a final tempering and not after that step.

A knife blade commonly has differing metallurgy through the blade. While the metal composition throughout the entire blade is uniform, the crystalline structure

varies because of tempering the hot blade. The inner core of the blade is most often of a softer steel that provides necessary flexibility and strength. The edge is of a harder, more brittle steel that will take and hold an edge much better than the soft core.

This is why a well-used, and much-sharpened, knife can evolve into one that no longer sharpens and holds an edge like it used to. Over time, the hardened edge has been worn away by much sharpening and is now into the softer, core steel.

Blade hardness is measured by Rockwell hardness. Typically, kitchen knives range from the softer HRC 42 up to HRC 62. Higher values are possible but come with greater risk of chipping the hard and brittle edge. While not a logarithmic scale, HRC is not linear. A difference of 1HRC can manifest as a significant variation in blade performance. Most high-quality knives are to be found in the HRC 58–60 region. Lower

HRC can still produce excellent blades, albeit at the cost of more frequent, but easier, sharpening.

Due to a bit of arthritis and old injuries, I was finding my usual whetstone sharpening becoming more of a chore rather than the pleasant meditative exercise it had always been. With the knives a little neglected, and not as sharp as they should be, it was time to consider electrically powered sharpeners. After researching electric knife sharpeners, I decided on the Nirey KE-280 model. The factors that drew me to this product were as follows:

- Taiwanese made – invariably higher quality than Chinese items.
- The KE-280 has been available for more than 20 years, winning numerous industry awards and gaining a solid reputation from commercial butchers and chefs.
- Nirey have a number of patents over their knife sharpening technology.
- The sharpening abrasive used is corundum (aluminium oxide) which is a close second to diamond in hardness. Corundum abrades metal at a significantly cooler temperature than silica abrasives. The fine dust generated by corundum is chemically inert and has none of the health hazards that silica dust poses.
- I was happy to pay a bit extra (about \$100 more than the similar but lighter duty KE-3000) to gain the commercial grade robustness of the KE-280.

So, I purchased the Nirey KE-280 kit. This came as a convenient hard case and contained the device fitted with fine belts, a spare set of belts, a set of spare wheels fitted with medium abrasive belts, instruction DVD, printed user manual and a cleaning brush. I acquired this from my local Kings of Knives store at the importer's RRP of \$549. The Australian agent is Total Knife Care (TKC).

Having noticed some differences in the quoted belt grit size for Nirey between websites, I contacted TKC and received a quick response. The difference comes from some confusion over comparing whetstone grit size to abrasive belt grit size. Without going into the intricacies of explaining the nuances around that, the TKC quoted size can be considered a more appropriate guide. Three different belt grit sizes have been available for Nirey, fine at 600 grit, medium at 400 grit and rough at 200 grit. More recently, a new size has become available, the superfine at 1000 grit.

I find the medium belt quite aggressive and only use that (carefully) for a worn and dull blade. The fine belt is fairly uncompromising as well. I can keep my knives nicely sharp by using the superfine, only resorting to the fine belt occasionally to reshape the blade profile.

Nirey advise that the abrasive belts are good for about 50 full sharpenings. The belts can then simply be reversed on the wheel for another 50 sharpenings, because the machine only uses a half side of the

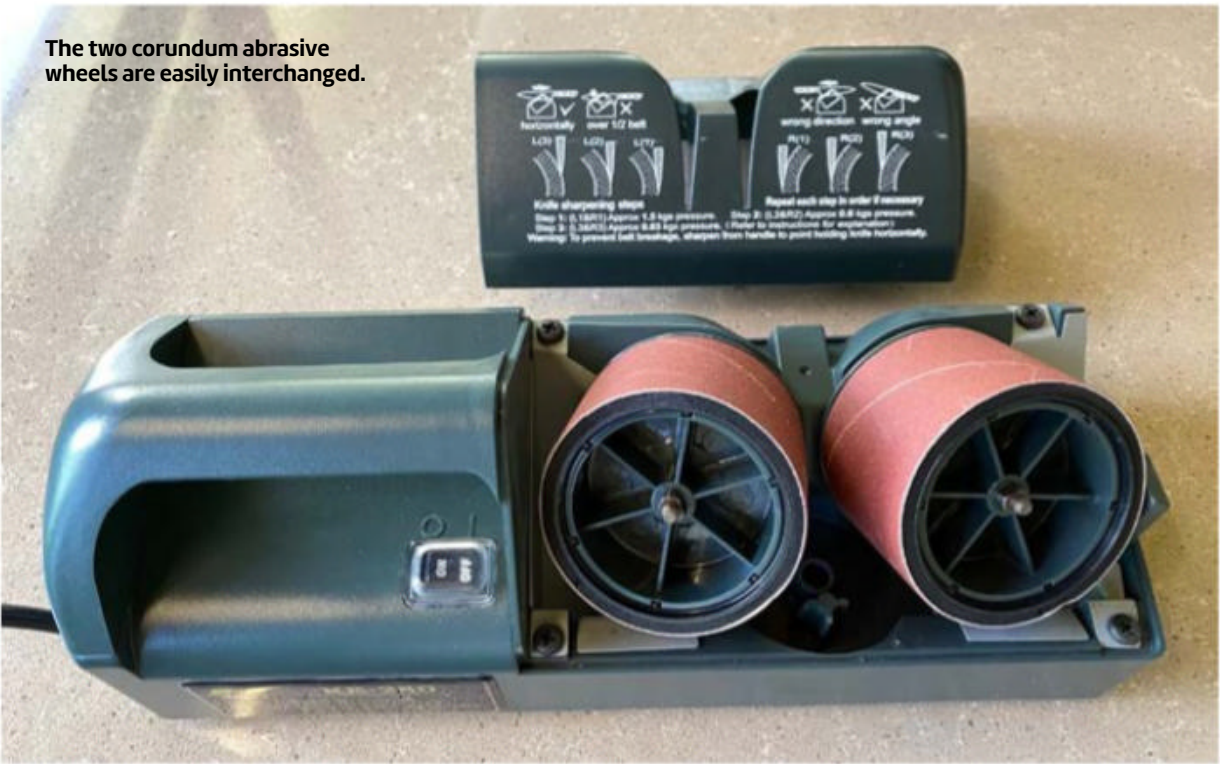


The Nirey KE-280 electrically powered knife sharpening kit.

wheel. More sharpenings per belt are possible if the wheels are only being used to lightly touch up the edge.

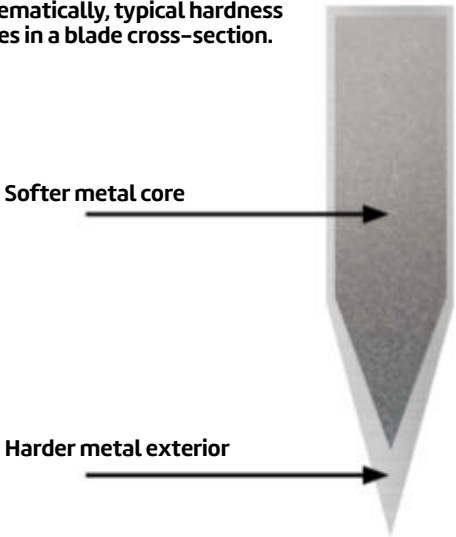
Wisely, I began employing the KE-280 with some well-used and worn-down kitchen knives. The Nirey power sharpeners do require a little manual touch to obtain the best from them. One key aspect is how lightly the knife must be inserted into the sharpening zone, even at the maximum metal removal setting. I sat the KE-280, unplugged, on a set of kitchen scales to better develop a feel for how lightly the knives should be pushed into the abrasion wheels. The user guide and a number of video tutorials demonstrate that clearly and are worth viewing. Search 'Nirey-KE 280' on YouTube for a great video and peruse further online.

Finally, I have to say the Nirey KE-280 will put a true razor edge on a knife quickly and easily. You can appreciate why this model is so well represented in commercial application. It is a great time-saver and does not require the experienced finesse that whetstone sharpening does. Grab one and your knives will never have been so sharp! ■



The two corundum abrasive wheels are easily interchanged.

Schematically, typical hardness zones in a blade cross-section.



Scope this out

Chris Redlich is suitably impressed with the affordable ZeroTech Thrive 3-12x44 riflescope

I couldn't wait to get my hands on the ZeroTech Thrive 3-12x44 riflescope, as the ZeroTech Trace HD 3-18x50 R3 rifle-scope had proven a winner in the field.

ZeroTech state their riflescopes are designed and built to suit harsh Australian conditions and Australia after all, is one of the most rugged and diverse landscapes on the planet.

TSA Outdoors (Tasco Sales Australia) have more than 50 years experience in the optics industry partnered with various other manufacturers. TSA Outdoors gave birth to ZeroTech, a subsidiary company,

using their own engineers and researchers to develop riflescopes by Australians to suit Australian shooters.

Thrive 3-14x44 uncovered

The Thrive 3-12x44 scope comes fully supported within the box by foam blocks, ensuring it arrives unharmed by potential rough transportation. Accompanying the scope in the box, as per ZeroTech standard, is a neoprene protective cover, lens cleaning cloth, two ZeroTech promotional stickers and a user manual.

In the hand, the Thrive is by no means a compact scope but with a 30mm main tube manufactured from aircraft grade aluminium, it isn't expected to be. With a total length of 345mm and weighing just a mere 607 grams, the scope feels light yet is robust enough to handle riding on the back of a 'hard kicker' hunting rifle.

By all accounts though the Thrive 3-12x44 is a well-balanced and symmetrically designed hunting scope.

Observing the scope from the southern end and working north, the dioptre adjustment dial is a knurled alloy ring, gripped easily and rotated for a clear view and reticle image, offering 85-90mm eye relief.



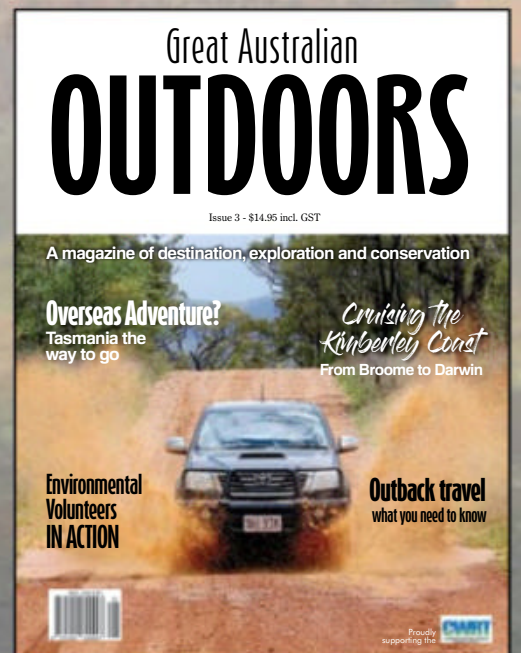
Rachel familiarises herself with rifle and new ZeroTech scope combination prior to the first hunt.

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SCAN AND ORDER

Scope this out

Forward of the ocular lens housing is the 3–12 magnification dial with all numerical adjustments highlighted in white. The dial has well pronounced lugs that promote a firm but easy grip for turning to your chosen magnification. Occupying the standard six and three o'clock position on the centre of

the scope is the elevation and windage turrets protected by large alloy caps.

The turrets are clearly marked for a .25 MOA adjustment and both have a full 60 MOA of travel. Occupying the nine o'clock position is the parallax adjustment dial that can be set from 10m to infinity. The scope

internals and components are O-ring sealed and purged with Argon gas, making it completely waterproof and fog-proof while the external surface is protected by a matte black, non-reflective coating.

Finally, perched at the northern end of the scope is the 44mm objective lens providing clear light transmission with 12.2m field of view at 100m on low power and up to 3m on 12x magnification. The fully multi-coated 44mm lens is protected by ZeroTech's weather shield coating.

Duplex (SFP) reticle

The Thrive model of scopes offer a variety of reticle choices including Mildot, PHR II ('point ability' hunting reticle), PHR 3 and the ever popular, Duplex style.

The Duplex type offers practicality for hunting. The reticle is glass etched and located in the (SPF) second focal plane within the ocular housing or magnification end of the scope.

For ease of understanding, when a reticle is located in the second focal plane, its size will not alter with varying magnification. For those that aren't familiar with Duplex, all four outer sections of the quarter posts are heavy and parallel until they reduce to a fine cross-hair centre. This simplistic design draws the hunter's eye rapidly to the centre, providing better visibility of the target. The ZeroTech duplex is as clear as any.

Range and field testing

With my daughter Rachel's end of year 'schoolies' hunt with dad fast approaching,



ZeroTech Thrive 3–12x44 supplied with full neoprene protective cover and lens cleaning cloth.



First sighting-in session proves easy with the Thrive scope.



Easy sub-MOA group achieved with the Thrive 3–12x44 and 7mm-08 when sighting-in.

I didn't waste any time mounting the Thrive scope to my wife's 7mm-08 hunting rifle. Secured within medium rings on a Picatinny rail, I set about my first few rounds of sighters using a reliable and accurate load of 140-grain Nosler Ballistic Tips.

The low position of the scope mounting allowed for a comfortable cheek weld and the 90-degree bolt throw just cleared the scope's large ocular housing. A 7mm-08 Rem is by no means a heavy recoiling calibre, but my wife's custom Savage Weather Warrior rifle bedded in a light synthetic stock allows for a bit more push than your standard set-up. However, after less than

five rounds downrange, I was on target and the scope and rifle combination were ready for hunting.

Prior to stepping off for our hunt together, Rachel familiarised herself with the 7mm-08 on the bench and my pre-sighting required no alteration as she immediately nailed a tidy sub-MOA group at 100m. With both of us now confident of the rifle and scope arrangement, we embarked on our first late afternoon stalk together.

Disappearing into what looked like an abyss of thick vegetation, I was surprised to discover the lowlight quality of the ZeroTech Thrive (non-HD) lenses with the

magnification set on 6x power. The sun was close to bedtime and although we were hunting an area enveloped in forested shade, Rachel managed to take a clear and unobstructed sight picture of her first mountain boar of the trip. She secured it with one shot, off the shoulder.

The pair of us were rapt with the outcome and I was pleased with the scope's performance so far. The weather for the rest of the week was bleak to say the least and although the conditions were not ideal, we managed to jag a few reasonable breaks to continue hunting. Rachel secured some more hard-won pigs thanks to the perfect mate of 7mm-08 rifle and Thrive 3-12x44 scope combination.

More recently, I mounted the 'Thrive' to my Sauer classic in 6.5 Creedmor and during the 2022 roar my son Carl bagged his first trophy red stag. He had no trouble gaining perfect shot placement in the thick stuff and the results speak for themselves.

Conclusion

During the duration of the week's hunt, I would often ask Rachel if I could take a glance through the Thrive scope in fading light to satisfy my own curiosity of its optical performance. The Thrive 3-12x44 is not marketed as an HD (high definition) scope and it should by no means be compared to a high-end European scope. However, it does provide a clear picture for a well-priced scope.

At a recommended retail of \$399 (at time of writing) for the Thrive 3-12x44, ZeroTech have delivered on the sales pitch of 'providing the best quality at the cheapest price.'

ZeroTech don't hide the fact that their scopes are manufactured in China but backed by their 'Any Owner, Any Problem, Always Covered' lifetime warranty you're guaranteed a bargain, especially for the hunter that's looking for a good scope at a budget price. With the versatility of four reticle options and illuminated models available, the Thrive 3-12x44 is a scope that would suit a vast array of hunting rifles and calibre combinations.

For more information on the ZeroTech variety of scopes and your local stockist's location, visit tsaoutdoors.com.au ■



Carl landed his first trophy red stag thanks to the Thrive riflescope.

Be one with nature

Improve your hunting prospects with this environmental insight from **Sam Garro**



Sam on a sambar hunt taking time to stop, observe and look around for signs.

Understanding and appreciating animal traits and behaviours can improve a hunter's chances of bagging game or scoring a long-pursued trophy beast. Sometimes it's more a matter of accumulating knowledge and applying logic and reasoning, rather than trying to overthink or unsuccessfully outsmart game.

Simplistically, what's essential for any living creature is food, water, shelter plus the right terrain and climatic conditions. As long as these settings prevail game tends to remain in the general area unless disturbed by excessive shooting, eradication measures or similar disturbances. Evidence of their presence will be apparent by their browsing, scat or droppings, tracks and used trails. Property owners' observations are always invaluable as they are out most days driving around and note animals' movements, times and likely places to cross them, especially around established crops and water storage places.

Aside from wild dogs that can indiscriminately predate on livestock like sheep and cattle, there are no real threats to medium and large game animals in Australia such as large predatory cats or wolves found in other countries. While they are unlikely to conflict with one another, especially when feed is plentiful, opportunist pigs won't hesitate to make a meal of a dead carcass.

Livestock and feral game interaction

There are times when feral animals like goats, pigs and deer are seen feeding among livestock. That shouldn't be surprising when we consider they were once domesticated animals that escaped or were let loose. While it may take a few generations to fully achieve wild status, they still carry the same DNA except now their defensive senses are more acutely developed to better survive in the wild.

When hunting Outback areas or generally undisturbed places, I've found livestock, feral animals and native fauna seem to cohabitate in unison or tolerate each other and share like warning systems. If one animal or bird in the area emits a certain sound or reacts in a way associated with a threat or danger, then all the animals rapidly depart.

In the forests of India, the distress call of a peacock, rhesus macaque monkey or the stomping sound or belling of a sambar deer alerts the whole forest of a leopard's or tiger's presence, as described in *Jungle Lore* by Jim Corbett, the big game hunter. Red-billed oxpeckers that are seen on rhinos and rid the animal of parasites also warn of approaching danger. Similarly, egrets work on cattle in the Top End where ticks tend to hover over the beasts – the examples are many and varied.

Understanding animal and bird sounds and behaviours can also assist in better locating game. The repetitive lazy caw of a crow or the monotonous shrieking of a cockatoo can be the norm but a heightened and quickened screech when stalking can signal a disturbance that will draw the attention of other animals in the vicinity.

Kangaroos usually depart way before approaching them, but should a mob be suddenly disturbed in close while stalking, stop for a few minutes before proceeding to allow any other possible game in the area to settle and resume feeding or whatever they are passively doing. You might be surprised to find other game that weren't immediately detectable.

Shared animal behaviours

Livestock in varying terrain from hilly and mountainous to dry barren flats instinctively strike a path that is the easiest route to food or water. Feral animals will often share the

same tracks. In Brisbane Valley red deer and dingo prints were observed on a frequently used cattle track and on a cattle station in the Northern Territory a cattle track was also used by feral pigs and donkeys.

Persistence in following such trails can be hugely rewarding. On a particular wild boar hunt in NT, an early morning stalk on a bait station proved unproductive. Discussing our next option with Kurt McGhie, temporary guide with Muckadilla Safaris at the time, we spotted a medium pig trotting down a well-worn trail in our direction, obviously following the scent of the carrion. At 30m, suddenly aware of our presence, it quickly turned around and trotted back from where it came.

The prospect of potentially locating other pigs saw us following the trail for a couple of kilometres before dropping down into a large spring-fed basin. Through an opening in the trees, a couple of boars were spotted wallowing in a pool of muddy water. The biggest succumbed to my 6mm Schultz & Larsen without knowing what hit it. On alternative days in the same area a buffalo bull, scrub bull and a couple of howling dingoes were also observed.

At another time while hunting feral pigs on the plains of northwestern NSW, a flock of crows were sighted in the distance randomly fluttering off the ground a couple of metres and landing again in a repeating nature. A closer look through the binos revealed the bird activity was



Feral pigs feeding among sheep.

Be one with nature

around a partly obscured boar in a small depression, ploughing up the ground for grubs and roots. He was collected by my mate at 150m using his Wilkinson custom-built .30-06 Springfield. It just goes to show how unusual or unrecognised animal behaviour can lead to game.

Understanding game habits

It always helps to learn about the game species hunted to optimise your chances of success. While red deer are best hunted at first light and evenings, they also favour showery conditions exiting the concealment of the forest onto open grassy slopes.

Feral pigs, for instance, don't have sweat glands so in hot, dry conditions they revert to shady places and waterholes to cool off and wallow in the mud. Following creeks, soaks and waterways with overhanging banks or hollows are perfect places to find them.

In the Northern Territory and Outback places, feral pigs often feed during late evening into the night and early hours of the morning, returning just before first light. Water buffaloes have similar habits, feeding in the early hours before retreating to waterholes or creeks to escape the heat of the day and cake themselves in mud. And where hunting pressure is minimal and temperatures are mild, game from rabbits to pigs and goats can be observed feeding throughout the day.

During spring, it's not uncommon to encounter feral pigs feeding among sheep. Rabbits don't like windy or blustery cold conditions, preferring to stay underground. Such knowledge is useful and better prepares a hunter when pursuing game.

Animal shelter and protection

Protective cover to rest and shelter from the elements is an essential habitat requirement. Dense impenetrable cover like patches of tangled lignum, shadowy spaces under tufts of thick, long grass and tree branches are favoured places for feral pigs. They are also adaptive, as found in harsh dry country strewn with ferrous like rocks near Pine Creek, NT where they occupy dugouts or caves at the base of escarpments.

Some animals will choose high scrubbed or wooded ground surrounded by clearings or low growth to maintain clear vision of anything approaching. If you anticipate game in such locations, particularly if there are fresh signs about, it's important to stop for a while, take your time to glass around and keep your eyes peeled as you go forward. A mob or herd of animals can also be challenging due to their many eyes with group members like sows, nannies and hinds acting as sentinels.

Opportunistic creatures

Wildlife, feral game and predatory animals adapt and take advantage of any opportunity. Ospreys, crows, pigs, dingoes and feral dogs will scavenge on carrion. I've shot ducks in season over rice late in the evening

where birds of prey and crows took advantage of the felled birds before I could reach them or collect them early next morning.

While pigs generally feed on grasses, insects, frogs and other bits and pieces, in times of drought they will feast on carrion as alluded to like dead cattle, donkeys and horses. Hence, this is why in challenging terrain they are sometimes hunted over bait stations. Mature boars will still demonstrate a propensity for meat even if their usual food is plentiful.

Similarly, deer will feed among cattle and sheep as observed at night through thermal monoculars and raid fruit groves, vineyards and other crops. Even brows on lemon trees and flower beds of residences situated close to deer habitat. And sometimes animals demonstrate uncanny cleverness and ability. In South America mature feral pigs, through their sense of smell and taste, have learned to suckle milk from penned cows.

Animals and birds move in search of water and food. In times of drought, extreme heat, fires and floods, some will perish through lack of food, but if other food sources are available then it's a natural survival instinct to resort to them.



A boar resting in the shade next to a dam in Cape York.



Sam inspects a pig hideout or rest in tangled lignum in Outback NSW.

Hunters' movements

Game animals, in particular deer, are accustomed to other animal, bird and associated nature sounds including a property owner's operating equipment like a tractor, water pump and vehicle.

Apart from their acute sense of smell, hearing and sight to warn them against approaching danger, a hunter's walking steps through the forest or scrub is different to the norm and can be interpreted as an intruder, more so if the animal has been previously stalked. Staggering your steps as you move forward quietly and stopping frequently can assist.

To avoid detection, deer can remain perfectly still and concealed without our knowing it, until they depart crashing through the thicket with a honk. When stopping to glass your surroundings take your time and look for shapes, forms and colours that don't belong.

Should the hairs on the back of your neck rise because you feel an animal's presence, trust your instincts, stop and take a good look around and ready yourself just in case game suddenly breaks cover. You have nothing to lose and plenty to gain,



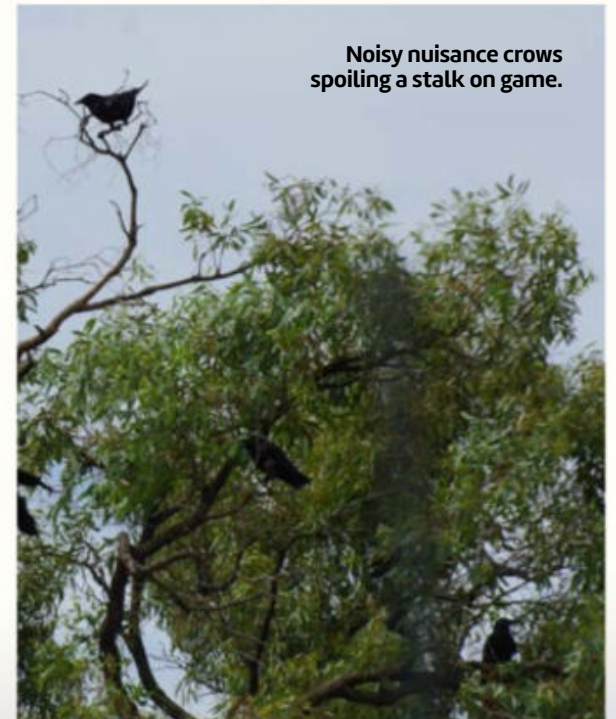
Looking for what doesn't belong – on closer observation not a dead log but a solid boar.

and if it eventuates, don't discount it as a once-off but treat it as a hunter's internal or innate ability to detect.

Conclusion

Understanding animal behaviours and habits, and how they interact with other birds and animals in a collaborative way enables the hunter to better strategise in locating game, and when successful, greater satisfaction is derived for applying the knowledge and effort.

It doesn't matter how experienced or knowledgeable you are, it's a continual process of learning, observing and improving as nature is a great teacher that often surprises. ■



Noisy nuisance crows spoiling a stalk on game.



A boar shot over an animal carcass while rabbiting in Outback NSW.

Kudos

for Fällkniven Kolt Knife

Jan Kaptein finds a little pearler for around camp and in the field

Regular readers may have seen my review on the Fällkniven F1 in issue 76 of *Australian Hunter*. While the F1 makes for a great multi-purpose knife, smaller knives are particularly handy when hunting birds or soft-skinned animals like deer.

While you may be hard pushed to pick between a modern folding knife and a fixed blade, the fixed blades are useful on longer trips and easy to clean.

A great compact fixed blade is the Fällkniven Kolt Knife (KK). It is offered as one of the premium models by Fällkniven which means it is not the cheapest of knives, but it is well made with good blade steel, is small enough to fit in a pocket and has a grippy handle.

To avoid duplicating information, please refer to issue 76 for a more detailed company background. Suffice to say Fällkniven are based in Sweden, where they have produced knives for over three decades.

The KK is actually made in Japan. It's a versatile knife weighing just 84 grams, is solid and it keeps an edge well. The overall length is 185mm, with the blade measuring 85mm. The width on the spine is 3.85mm. The steel used for the blade is CoS (cobalt special), which is laminated between 420J2.

The former gives the knife its excellent edge retention with a hardness of 60 HRC, while the 420J2 provides the blade with good resistance to oxidation. The laminated blade should also be stronger than

a non-laminated one, but in a blade that is only 85mm long and nearly 4mm wide across the spine, that is not really a concern.

The edge is convex, like that of many other Fällkniven knives. The tang runs nearly to the end of the thermorun grip, which has a lanyard hole. Nowadays, the KK comes with a leather sheath with a belt loop, along with a zytel blade cover. Previously, it only came with the blade cover.

The knife can be used for almost everything. It is small enough not to be in the way, sharp enough to cut through tough skin and sinews and has just enough belly to do a bit of skinning. Fällkniven advertises the knife as ideal for dry meats, and it certainly works a treat with various types of biltong as long as the strips are not too thick.

My guess is that this has more to do with the convex grind than anything else though. The KK lends itself particularly well for processing birds and quickly pulling backstraps from deer and pigs. It is

small and compact enough to work well as an everyday carry too and makes for a good companion around camp.

Depending on how long you are away and how much you use the knife, it is not likely to require sharpening in the field. That does assume you take care not to hit bones when removing backstraps and are not processing tough-skinned animals like buffaloes.

If the knife does need sharpening, the convex edge may seem a bit of a challenge to hunters who normally sharpen at home or are used to straight edges. In practice, convex edges are fairly easy to touch up. By gradually increasing the angle between the blade and the stone as you draw the knife across, you round it. Do this at home a few times and you ought to be fine. Stropping is another good way to sharpen convex edges.

The CoS blade steel is a bit of a drawback. While it takes a super sharp edge and maintains it well, micro-chips can occur if you're too rough on animals. This can be



The Thermorun grip is smallish but offers a good grip.

easily remedied on a stone, but be careful when using the knife.

Fällkniven indicates the knife is designed to be carried as a neck knife or in a pocket, using the lanyard hole or leather sheath that comes with it. Another potential issue is the length of the grip. Being a compact knife, the grip is just that – compact. It is both narrow and short. While the lack of girth should not be an issue, the length could be when doing more substantial work with the knife where some force is required.

Combine this with a pretty much lacking finger guard and those with large hands might not find the knife pleasant to work with. If you routinely carry more than one

knife, the KK can be used for light work and skinning. With little or no force required, this makes the grip adequate but not great.

All up, the KK is really likeable. It is a solid little knife that takes and keeps a sharp edge well. Be careful not to hit too many bones to avoid chips though. Like the larger Fällkniven knives, it has a Thermorun grip, which is something to appreciate. It does not seem to wear much and provides a good grip in almost any condition. This is particularly important with the KK due to the limited size of the grip.

It works but may be uncomfortable or too small for those with large hands. You can attach a loop of paracord to the lanyard hole, both to keep the knife in your

hand when in use and to hang it from a carabiner when in camp. There doesn't seem to be any issues with oxidation, which suggests the laminated blade is well-made.

The KK has processed countless numbers of birds and removed even more backstraps from deer. Would I recommend it as the only knife to carry when you go out bush for a week? No, I would strongly suggest to carry something larger. That said, it makes a great secondary knife for dedicated tasks and use around camp and for this, it is strongly recommend, as long as your hands are not too big.

Check out knifeshopaustralia.com.au ■



Looking at the edge you can see the blade is laminated.

Specifications:

Style: Fixed blade

Overall length: 185mm

Blade dimensions (LxW): 85mm x 3.85mm

Blade shape: Straight back

Type of blade steel: Laminated CoS/420J2

Hardness: 60 HRC

Edge: Convex grind

Material handle: Thermorun

Weight: 84 grams

Right or left-handed: Ambidextrous

Price: About \$300



The compact Fällkniven Kolt Knife and zytel blade cover.

Hot Hunt for a Damara springbok

The real adventure begins after the shot for **Mike Arnold** in Africa

The Namibian summer sun blazed down as we weaved our way through the leafless mopane scrubland. And as I grew up in West Texas, trust me that I can recognise a smiting, summer sun.

The 38-plus degrees temperature scorched our brains through our large-brimmed hats and our lungs as we breathed in the super-heated air. Professional Hunter, Kabous Grünschlöss, of Jamy Traut Hunting Safaris, and I were out in the brilliant sunshine of the Kaokoland region of Namibia, chasing after a beautiful old Damara springbok ram and his ewes. We spotted the group at 300 yards as we drove along in Kabous' LandCruiser. It didn't take my PH long to confirm through his binoculars what he already knew with his unaided eyes – the ram was a great trophy. We grabbed the

4StableSticks rest, my MG Arms Ultra-Light in 7mm Remington Magnum, and headed towards the quickly disappearing springbok backsides.

As we progressed, we kept losing sight of the ram and his harem as they wound in and out of the head-high vegetation and through the shallow spurs that dotted the landscape. There were no leaves on the mopane trees and the ochre-coloured ground was bare and hard-packed. Clipped off by the goats of Herero squatters, there were neither mopane leaves low enough to reach, nor blades of grass to cause the springboks to hesitate in their wandering.

Instead of slowly browsing, they were single-mindedly heading from somewhere-to-somewhere-else and that resulted in them outdistancing us. We finally gave up on the stalk after not seeing their wiggling tails for 15 minutes or so.

We made our way back to the truck – seemingly having to shoulder aside the heatwaves radiating upwards. As I crawled back into the still running and blessedly air-conditioned truck, I chuckled and said that we would probably see the springboks run across the road as we headed back towards camp. The words were hardly out of my mouth when across the track in front of us streaked the ram and his eight ewes. Again, we bailed out of the LandCruiser and started weaving our way through the heat, dust and aromatic vegetation.

On this side of the track, the springboks were finding some limited leaves to munch on the trees, causing them to be slower and a bit less aware of their pursuers. We made it to within about 80 yards of the group, but they were behind a screen of mopane trees. The ewes were in front of the ram and eventually they began to file



through a break between the trees that was the length of two springboks.

Kabous spread out the legs of my rest and I settled in with the riflescope trained on the opening. He called out the progression of animals and finally whispered: "The ram is next. I'll try and stop him with a whistle." The ram entered the field of view of my scope and just as he reached halfway, Kabous let out a whistle. The ram either didn't hear or chose to ignore the foreign sound. I was expecting some hesitation and so my shot was a bit far back, but the effect was immediate and the animal went down for the count.

Kabous had warned me as we headed out on our first stalk that, if we were successful, we would need to be careful about how we handled the ram once he was down. Even in the sparse shade of the mopane trees, it was well over 38 degrees. He knew that the heat could cause hair slippage – the hair could fall out later from rampant bacterial growth, releasing individual hairs from their follicles. An experienced PH, Kabous also recognised that the extreme heat could cause the skin to blister when it encountered the super-heated ground.

When we reached the ram, Kabous and our tracker, Kapetja, pointed out the ram's opossum-like 'pouch' which had now opened to reveal the ridge of long, luxurious, snow-white hair along its back. There



Mike with his MG Arms Ultra-Light rifle in 7mm Remington Magnum and the Damara springbok ram.



A house that belongs to Herero goat herders.



Hot hunt for a Damara springbok

is a scent gland buried in this ridge that releases a smell similar to cotton candy when the hair rises skywards.

The photography session took only a few minutes. As soon as we finished, they grabbed the springbok's legs and jogged back to the waiting LandCruiser. This is when the trophy triage really kicked off. They gently laid the ram on the ground and Kabous reached into the bed of his truck to lift out a carboy full of water. He began to pour the water over the entire animal, paying particular attention to the thin and delicate ears. Once the ram's hair was saturated, Kabous and Kapetja placed him in the back of the LandCruiser on a soft bed made of cloths.

We hopped in and headed towards camp, interrupting our trip twice on the way back. Kabous stopped first in order to again wet the ram's coat and ears. It did not take long for exposure to the extreme heat and wind in the

open bed to begin the drying process. The second halt occurred when we entered an area that had obviously received recent rain showers. Unlike where we collected my trophy, the mopane scrub in this region wore a thick coat of leaves.

Kabous and Kapetja wanted the leafy branches for a covering over the ram's body. After again wetting the ram, they headed out into the surrounding scrub with their machete-like pangas. It only needed five minutes to collect the branches and weave them into a green roof. Kabous reached for the water carboy one last time, directing the liquid over the leafy roof. My experience in growing up in hot, dry regions of North America made me realise that Kabous and Kapetja were taking advantage of the low humidity and wind passing across the wet leaves to create evaporative air-conditioning.

It was another 45 minutes before we reached camp, but when we arrived the entire springbok,



Wetting down the springbok, especially around the thin, delicate ears.

including its sensitive ears, was still damp and thanks to the evaporation from the wet leaves, cool to the touch. After placing the trophy onto the pad used for skinning, Kabous grabbed a water hose from a large tank, giving the ram one last dousing.



The mopane branches covered the water-saturated springbok to protect it from the sun.

The marsupial-like pouch on a springbok's back really does smell like cotton candy.



Kabous wet the springbok one last time before skinning began.

Then our skinner, Alfons, took over. Like Kabous and Kapetja before him, Alfons wasted no time in order to protect the delicate hide and hair from the oppressive heat. Alfons used great skill in making the incisions. His artistry belied his 'disability' from a congenital defect that left him with only two fingers and a thumb on his right hand.

From beginning to end, the caping process took 25 minutes. Because of Alfons' care and skill, at the end of the time not only was the cape separated from the skull and horns, but the hide was free of meat and fat. This prevented the need for additional fleshing of the hide, allowing its immediate burial in the bed of salt inside

the comparative coolness of the shed next to the concrete skinning pad.

After the triage

Nine months after the safari in Namibia's Kaokoland the report from my taxidermist is that the work on my springbok by Kabous, Kapetja and Alfons was more than effective. The hide and skull are in great shape despite the conditions they encountered.

The crucial steps were keeping the animal from remaining in the extreme heat without continual wetting and protection from the intense sun and wind. The other key was speed and efficiency, not letting any individual step in the processing of the springbok take more than a few minutes to one half-hour.

From my shot at the trophy ram until the hide ended up in the salt bed, spanned only two hours. That is why the springbok skin and skull, according to the taxidermist, are in excellent shape for his part in this story. The final step, seeing the beautiful ram on the wall of my trophy room, cannot come soon enough. ■

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SSAA WA Conservation & Wildlife Management

SSAA WA has six individual branches that undertake Conservation & Wildlife Management activities throughout the state.

All participants must be full members of SSAA WA. Prior to taking part in sanctioned field activities, members must complete accuracy and safety tests, as well as a written assessment covering navigation, bushcraft and hunting ethics. In addition to formal programs, the branches conduct a range of social and training activities.

Our branches are involved in a variety of conservation-based activities in cooperation with private property managers, local municipalities and state government agencies. We work closely with other conservation organisations. Projects cover a wide range of feral and pest species, as well as agricultural protection.

For further information or membership inquiries, phone the State Coordinator on 0429 847 590 or email conservation@ssaawa.org.au

SSAA NT Conservation & Pest Management

SSAA NT Conservation & Pest Management operates in the north of NT as part of the SSAA Conservation and Wildlife Management group, providing a free community service to government, pastoral properties and traditional landowners to assist with eradication of feral pest animals.

Membership is open to NT residents who successfully complete a theory and practical assessment. All field activities comply with NT Parks guidelines for the destruction of pest animals, the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals and the Model Code of Practice for the Destruction of Feral Animals.

Each year there are six to nine one-week field operations on remote pastoral properties and National Parks, involving four to five members.

Meetings to plan and coordinate activities are held as required at the SSAA Darwin Branch Range at Micket Creek Shooting Complex in Berrimah. Further details, including membership forms, can be located within the Darwin Branch clubhouse or through the contacts below.

For more information, write to CPM (NT), PO Box 90, Karama, NT 0813, email pduff@inet.net.au or cscousins64@gmail.com

SSAA SA Conservation & Wildlife Management

SSAA SA Conservation & Wildlife Management contributes to the preservation of South Australia's natural heritage through the humane removal of pest animals that impact and threaten the survival of our native flora and fauna. Activities are undertaken in conjunction with government departments, non-government organisations, private landholders and universities.

Membership is open to SSAA members. To participate in field activities, you must successfully complete our accreditation course (theory) and safe firearms handling and marksmanship competency (practical).

Activities are run throughout the year, ranging in duration from one to eight days and often involve camping out. As well as undertaking pest animal control activities, members are involved in wildlife monitoring, undertake working-bees at key sites and can attend regular range days throughout the year.

For further information or to attend a quarterly meeting or range day, please visit cwmsa.com.au, contact us via email on secretary@cwmsa.com.au or via post to Conservation & Wildlife Management (SA) Inc., C/O Secretary, P.O. Box 188, Kent Town, SA 5071

SSAA Victoria Conservation & Pest Management

The SSAA Victoria Conservation & Pest Management program is an initiative started in conjunction with Parks Victoria operating under a Memorandum of Understanding. Accredited SSAA members volunteer to control pest species and problem species in national parks, state forests and on private holdings. The CPM provides accredited members the opportunity to participate in conservation, whereby effective methods are adopted to achieve real and positive conservation outcomes. To participate, you must be a member of the SSAA, then participate in an accreditation course with a written test and practical shoot.

For further information, write to SSAA Vic CPM at Unit 2, 26 Ellingworth Pde, Box Hill, Vic 3128, phone 03 8892 2777, email cpm@ssaavic.com.au or visit ssaavic.com.au

SSAA Qld Conservation & Wildlife Management

THE SSAA QLD Conservation & Wildlife Management Branch aims to assist in the protection and restoration of Australian biotic communities by developing feral animal control programs in conjunction with landholders, government departments and community-based groups.

Accreditation is open to SSAA members. Members must pass a written test and a marksmanship test before attending field activities. We conduct quarterly training and information weekends, covering a wide range of topics for members and prospective members. Among other things, training weekends cover conservation, hunter ethics, teamwork, bushcraft, navigation, first-aid, marksmanship and hunting techniques.

Durations range from one day or night to 10 days and usually involve camping on a property. Activities include hunting, shooting and trapping pest species (typically cats, pigs, foxes, wild dogs, feral cattle, deer and goats), and monitoring endangered species by data collection and radio tracking.

For further information, email cwm@ssaaqld.org.au or visit cwm.ssaaqld.org.au



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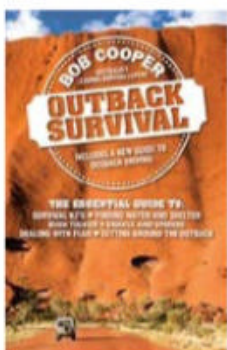
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Around the campfire with John Denman

I always carry a rangefinder in my backpack. It's not one that can capably give you an accurate reading out to 2000m. It pretty much pulls up at 700–800m, which I'm not going to shoot at anyway. But I reckon there's been more fertiliser spread when hunters gather regarding distances than anything else.

I had a bloke once tell me that he had shot a deer, on the run, at 700m. Now most sensible hunters would be rolling around in helpless laughter but there's always the odd one who might just believe it, even a little bit. Nobody has any business shooting at game from that distance. This is why we call it hunting – not target shooting. I have spent time on a range and fired a rifle out to 1000m. The target was not moving and I was using a \$600 benchrest. You don't have that in the field.

Now I have no doubt that there have been some amazing shots taken but as the range increases, so does the margin for error. Then there's the bloke who has seen too many war movies. The army can shoot a target at over a mile they will say, as if that makes it just fine for everyone with an entry level .308 to do likewise. There's a few holes in that idea. One is that the military marksmen are highly trained and shoot a lot of ammo. Two, if they wound the target it's considered successful and three, the gear they use is way out of reach of the average hunter's budget.

The military shooter can wound a target because it takes others out of the fight. If

we wound an animal we are bound by our own ethics to follow it up. Hunting means going as close as you can to make certain you ensure a clean kill. Banging away at extreme range usually means you are too lazy to try and go closer. Let's face it, if a bowhunter can move within 25m of an animal, is it unreasonable for a rifle shooter to venture within 200m?

This comes down a matter of skill. Deer in particular are not easy to hunt. They have the best early warning system of just about any animal. The does in a mob are usually the most vigilant, and there's always one that has its head up looking around. Trying to sneak up on a deer is not the simplest job to apply for. Scotland is probably the home of deerstalking and they do it in a highly civilised manner.

For a start, the guns are not removed from their cases until a deer is sighted. Then the ghillie will tell the sportsman to "get down on your belly sir, and crawl in the heather." He will load the Rigby and hand it over. At this point the round has not been chambered. The hunter wriggles as close as he can to the deer, usually with the ghillie beside him, until he's told to take the shot.

Of course, we don't do that, nor do the Americans, mainly due to our lack of that sort of tradition. But there's no reason we should not at least try to see how close we can go. To me, it's a matter of pride. Crawling is not always popular in Australia or the US. It could be due to all the rocks and the mongrel scrub we often have to

contend with. Certainly, there's no heather. But we can still have a decent crack at it.

I realise that there will always be the exception, where terrain doesn't make going close much of a real challenge. Cross-gully shots are one of the situations where a problem arises, but this is where you have to make a decision. If you cannot be sure of a clean kill, the best option is to not fire the shot.

A hunter looking across a gully at the trophy of a lifetime with wind going in all directions is going to be torn. He may not secure another chance. But if he wounds the animal, the cross-gully shot may be just as hard to follow up as the 700m shot. The animal has a pretty good head start – only really good trackers need to apply here.

People talk about 'brush guns' often thinking that the bigger the bullet, the better to have complete disdain for the branches and leaves between the muzzle and the target. The news is that even slower moving medium calibre bullets will still be affected. It may not throw the bullet way off course, but it might deflect it just enough to wound instead of kill.

Not all yarns around campfires should be taken as gospel. ■

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