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Australian

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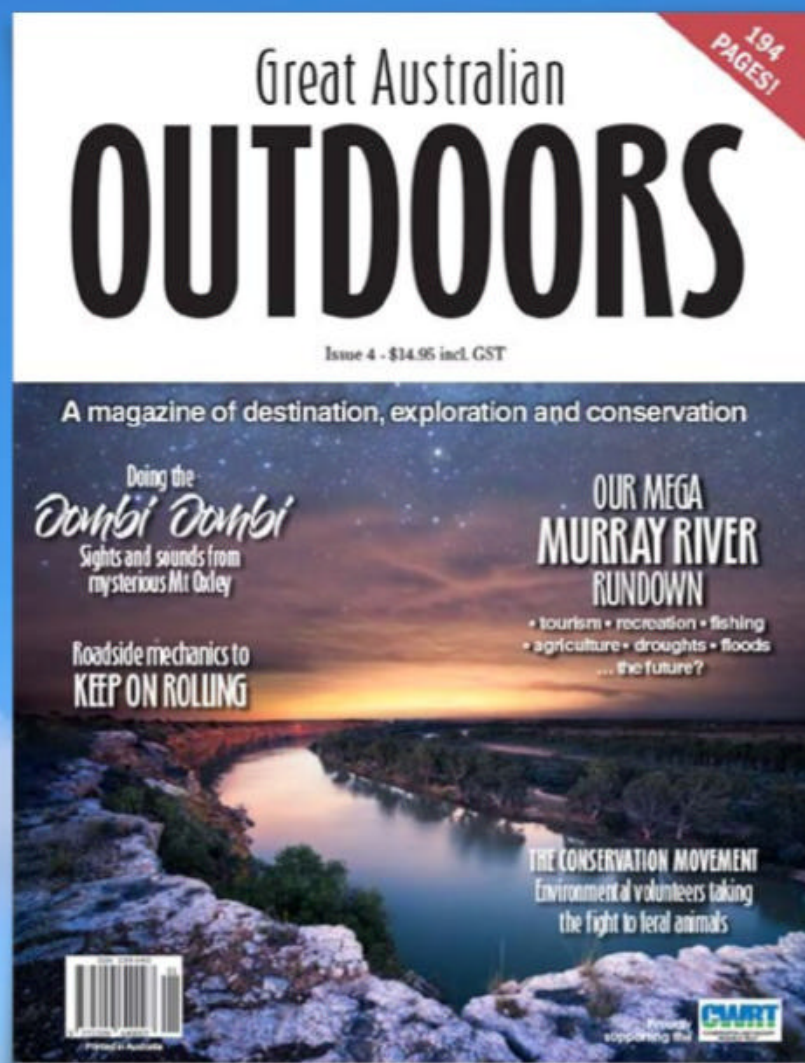
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From the Editor

As we usher in 2023, now is an exciting time for so many hunters with the roar primarily upon us and plans in motion to set out for that alluring fresh and tasty venison or impressive trophy. It's about the challenge of the hunt more than anything and being out there in nature doing as mankind has for centuries but why not turn the tables slightly in your favour while the deer are frolicking? Like the deer themselves, seasoned hunters know a trick or two and in Part 2 of our red deer hunting guide Don Caswell provides some key insights to better your odds.

And no matter what your thoughts are on the various game on offer or your reason for hunting, we have plenty to choose from in Australia, whether for conservation, trophies, meat or all of the above. Sam Garro looks at the game we hunt and for better or worse, why in many aspects we really are the 'lucky country'.

We all want to move on from the COVID pandemonium but it really displaced a lot of hunters with its abrupt halt on our way of life. However, this led to Mike Arnold experiencing a series of fortunate events in Africa and he provides worldwide food for thought as he reflects on the hunting opportunities provided after a significant break.

And with the tumultuous times we have faced recently, you'll read how Perry Magowan and Mick Chapman dig deep to reinforce what matters the most in life, with a pertinent reminder to honour each hunt.

With pigs, goats, firearms, ammo, knives and other reviews and advice wrapping things up, there's plenty of hunting goodness to keep you entertained. Be sure to check out our comprehensive field testing of the Helia 2-10x50i riflescope from Kahles, who you may just find deserve their place in that high-end European class of optics.

We round things off with delicious venison and duck recipes; 'tis the season – Enjoy!

Thomas Cook
Editor

Red deer hunting guide

stags in the roar

Part 2: Get to know their behaviour as **Don Caswell** covers the optimal hunting time – the mating period

Seeking red deer during the roar is a major interest to many hunters. While deer hunting is never easy, the month or so of the roar offers the best chance of bagging a stag as they are concentrated into the smaller breeding grounds and their natural wariness is diminished by a flood of hormones as they compete with other stags for breeding access to the in-season hinds.

After the roar, the stags carry their hard antlers through until September. In that period, they return to their preferred location, usually quite distant from the breeding grounds, and regain their acute circumspection once more.

By December, the older stags have significant velvet-covered antler growth. The stags, gathered together into 'companies', favour areas of more open brush and avoid fences where there is less risk of damaging their delicate new antler development.

The stags urgently need calcium to support antler progress and seek food sources rich with that mineral. They will gnaw on cast antlers and bone at this time. By February, as antler growth is completed, the velvet becomes itchy and annoying.

The stags strip the irritating fraying velvet off their antlers with vigorous sweeping through light bushes. By early March, with now bare antlers, the stags then look for

solid trees to rub and polish their new antlers against. The stags feed voraciously on the late summer growth, seeking to build body mass and strength for the approaching roar.

In early autumn, from around mid-March, the stags become agitated. Their daily movements increase, and they exhibit a high prancing gait. The companies break up as the stags travel, sometimes long distances and at night, to their traditional rutting sites.

These areas can be 10 kilometres, or much more, from the stags' home ground. The rutting zones are situated on the edge of the less-mobile hinds' territory. By the time they reach the rutting grounds the stags have begun to spar with similar sized males. The more vigorous jousts come later in the rut.

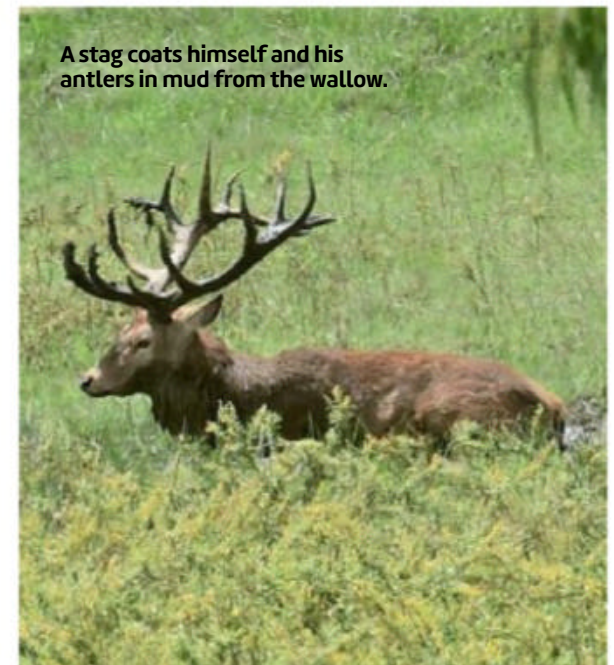
The stags begin their preparations for the roar by reopening the wallows used every year. Stags will frequent a number of wallows, depending on the prevailing weather conditions. Visits to the wallows increase through to the peak of the roar when the stags will regularly immerse themselves in the muddy water and roll about vigorously. The stags urinate frequently into the wallow, which quickly develops a strong smell of stag.





The monarch of the glen.

Red deer hunting guide – stags in the roar



The stags use the keenest senses of their species to announce their presence, which is smell and sound. Each stag has its own unique aroma and they emphasise that by urinating, wallowing and by wiping a strong-smelling scent from their pre-orbital gland on trees and sticks.

For most of the year stags occasionally bark, similar to the hinds. However, as the roar begins, stags begin to grunt. Initially, this is just single grunts. As the roar develops, this evolves into a series of as many as 10 short roars, all from a single big breath. The frequency of these series of roars is indicative of the size of the stag.

Stags will seek out formations in the terrain that have the effect of amplifying their calls, especially when weather conditions, such as still frosty mornings, assist

the roars to be heard over great distances. These efforts at broadcasting their signature by sound and smell are all for one purpose only – to identify themselves as ready to mate and bring the hinds to them. The goal of every stag is to amass as big a harem of receptive hinds as possible. This creates a major workload for such stags as they need to constantly herd their hinds together, check for mating readiness, mount receptive hinds and fight off the many challenging stags that appear to contest ownership of the harem.

The fighting of stags is a carefully orchestrated affair that ensures only similarly matched stags actually engage in combat. A lengthy ritual precedes this and in fact most challenges are resolved during the ritual lead-up.

The initial step in the process is the competitive roaring. Mature stags can judge a rival's size and strength by the frequency of their roaring, which can be assessed from afar. Only those stags rated to have equal, or lesser, roaring abilities are sought out for the next step. The stags now approach to within about 100m and a serious, prolonged roaring duel ensues. This is the intense, full-blown roaring of the rut. Only about 50 per cent of these contests proceed to the next phase as half the challenging stags assess that the odds are against them based on the strength of the close-range roaring clash.

Those stags who believe they still have a chance then advance closer and the pair slowly parade up and down in close parallel. During this time, they have the opportunity to assess the size and power of their





A magnificent red stag keeps close guard on his harem of hinds.

opponent from close range. Once again, only about 50 per cent of confrontations go any further.

Stags that have determined they are likely to lose a physical challenge are free to break off and retire from the field. Physical combat begins with one of the rival stags lowering his antlers to invite contact. The other stag then locks antlers and an intense pushing struggle begins.

The stags exert all their brute strength seeking to dominate their rival. An experienced old stag will also use a number of tricks, such as pushing harder to one side and neck twisting, to steer its rival into a downhill or other unfavourable position. The contest, a series of such pushing episodes, continues until one stag realises it cannot match the strength of the other.

Mostly, the loser quickly departs the scene of the meeting. It is unwise for beaten stags to dally about and there are many recorded cases of losers being gored, sometimes fatally, by the victor if they are slow in retreating. If uncertain spiker wannabes show up in the vicinity of a mature stag guarding a harem, the juvenile is sent packing with a single, gruff warning bark from the ruling male.

Towards the end of the roar the ruling stags, exhausted by weeks of intense activity and combat, are often displaced by younger ones that have not been so stressed. However, by that time, most of the hinds have been serviced and have begun drifting away back to their nearby domain. By the end of April, the rutting season has generally petered out and the

remaining stags and hinds have gone their separate ways.

Hunting the roar

During the roar the hinds and stags are all gathered into a relatively small area. The hormone-addled stags lose a lot of their natural wariness during that time, but the hunter must still be totally vigilant to the wind. A stag coming into a hunter's roar will still most times circle around to test the wind before approaching closer.

When roaring to draw in a stag you have heard, match your roaring to his, maybe even slightly less. The stag may slip away if the hunter is too convincing with the roar of a big, mature stag.

A soft hind, or fawn, call will often bring in both stags and hinds. A red deer bark will likely scare away any nearby spiker stags.

A successful stag hunt in the roar is based on many visits throughout the year. Find where the hinds are living and then work the edges of that area looking for wallows that indicate the immediate proximity of the rutting grounds.

Reference

The information presented is greatly sourced from the *Red Deer in New Zealand – A complete hunting manual* by Roger Lentle and Frank Saxton. There is a wealth of guidance and anecdotes in this book, which is highly recommend for any red deer hunter. ■



Small young stags drape vegetation on their antlers in an attempt to look bigger.

Coping with the current shortages

With all things ammunition becoming as rare as hen's teeth, **John Moore** runs through what he does to stay in the game



.38-55 Win loaded with 265-grain WW metal cast bullets, Hi-Tek coated, GC.



.250 Savage loaded with 75/76-grain (depending on the alloy used) FPGC, Hi-Tek coated bullets cast from WW metal in a homemade mould.



.308 Win ammunition loaded with Hawkesbury River Bullet Company's 165 RNFP silhouette GC bullet.

Right now, cartridges and components are not always in ready supply. So, how can we help ourselves to keep shooting?

Many sports shops are reporting patchy supplies of commonly used ammunition and real shortages of powders, primers, projectiles and brass. One owner tells me he expects his placed orders to arrive in about 18 months.

If you rely on bought ammunition, apart from shopping around to find the stock we are after and conserving what ammo we do have, what can we do? Well, we can hunt with another suitable calibre if we're able to do this and for practice use whatever we can obtain, even if it's the humble .22LR.

For those of us who handload, we may have a few more options. Let's go through the components, starting with brass. We can usually squeeze a bit more life out of our cases by being more diligent with neck annealing by neck sizing only full-length sizing when necessary and by not loading hot loads.

We can't do much about primers, although I did read of a respected writer from the US who was using small pistol primers for low velocity cast loads in his .223. These were 1800fps loads and he said the small pistol primers gave better results than when he used small rifle primers.

The dimensions of small rifle and pistol primers are the same, but as we're aware, the cups of pistol primers are made of thinner material and for low pressure loads only. Large rifle and pistol primers are not the same dimensions, with the rifle primers being .008" longer.

I have used large rifle primers in experimental high pressure .44 magnum handgun

loads which required some flattening of the primers to seat them flush with the case. Not your recommended practice, you'll say. But I found they worked faultlessly. And, of course, wearing safety glasses is mandatory whenever seating any primers.

Now to powders. I recall a long time ago reading of the Afghan hill tribes that fought the British in the 1800s. They used crude muzzleloaders and made their own powder, a component of which came from the animal dung from under their houses. They did not keep any equipment captured from the British because they didn't want to be reliant on a supply line that came from another country. Sound familiar?

We're not about to attempt making our own powder, so what can we do? It appears the only powders currently available in Australia are the world-class ADI range. However, their new factory appears to not have been commissioned successfully, causing them to discontinue production of their new APS lines. Plus, we have the issues of interstate transport, with some states only receiving one or two shipments per year at last report.

ADI does keep handloaders informed of their situation, the last I read said the popular AR (Australian Rifle) lines such as 2008 and 2009 are in regular production, with other AR lines being made occasionally. So, it seems that we may be okay with the rifle lines but the discontinuance of the APS (Australian Pistol and Shotgun) lines for the foreseeable future is of concern. Check their website.

So, what to do if what we need isn't currently available? I expect most of us who've been handloading for a while have a number of partly used canisters of powder on the

shelf above our loading benches. Perhaps we can use some of these? And, what about lower velocity loads?

If your shooting is strictly long range, then you'll need your HV ammo. But if your shooting is out to around 150 yards, then lower velocity loads are worth thinking about.

Remember the advice that used to be given to novice hunters on their first trip to Africa? Go as close to the game as you can, then go closer. HV loads are really only needed to give the trajectory to successfully hunt at long range. This is because to humanely kill the larger game we hunt, with a single shot, only requires a decent entry and exit hole to allow fast loss of blood pressure and collapse of our quarry. Lower velocity loads around 1800–2500fps, especially with flat noses, can achieve this with ease.

Our longstanding spotlighting small game load in .222s is the Winchester 40-grain JHP, the projectiles they load in their factory .22 WMR driven by seven grains of AS50 at 2260fps. Effective out to 100 yards, it's quiet, cheap to load and a canister of powder goes a long way.

A pistol shooting friend is utilising some Nobel 60 shotgun powder he has for target handgun ammo. We're using up some Nobel 78 and 64 we have on the shelf for a

number of LV loads and another colleague managed to buy some powders from a friend who had ceased shooting.

Consider straight walled cartridges if you can. These are loaded with faster burning powders and to produce a given muzzle energy (ME) often require only about three-quarters of the weight of powder, compared to the slower burning powders we have to use in our bottleneck designs. You may have some faster burning powder on the shelf that's not used regularly and if you can use some to load one of these cartridges you could be able to make your other powders go a little further.

A word of warning about old powders. Most are fine, but check. Smell them. Any acrid smell or stickiness of the grains, mean it would be wise to dispose of it. That said, smokeless powders are remarkably stable. I've been handloading for well over 50 years and have only had one powder fail with age.

Now to projectiles. A few handloaders have swaging dies and presses and can make their own jacketed projectiles. After World War Two a lot of fired .22LR cases were repurposed to make .22 projectiles. I still have a few 55-grain SP made by Myra, from Broken Hill. These have the Eley 'E' headstamp and an indentation in the base of the bullet caused by the .22's firing pin. Again, the long-range shooters need the

very best currently manufactured projectiles – and a friend of mine tells me he now has his .300WM working well out to 500 yards.

But for the rest of us who hunt at much closer ranges than that, we have a few more options. First, there's cast bullets, usually good to about 1800fps. Then there's paper patched bullets, which I still use occasionally with heavy loads at 2000–2200fps. These are for deer in thick bush – think a 350-grain .45 cal WFN. No wounded game here.

If you are after higher velocities, this seems to be achievable with them. We have a 270-grain PP .375 H&H load that shoots well at 2550fps – a full power load if this amount of energy is what you're after.

Of much interest is the newest option, Hi-Tek coated bullets. If you're not aware, this is a recent Australian invention and is a bake-on coating applied to cast bullets that forms a thin jacket. I prefer to use Hi-Tek coated bullets for metallic silhouette handgun shooting and find they shoot better and are faster to make than the cast bullets I often struggle with.

But what about higher velocity rifle loads suitable for hunting? My time for experimenting is limited so I bought some rifle bullets from Hawkesbury River Bullet Company (HRBC). These are hard cast and beautifully Hi-Tek coated. The plain based .25 and .30 cal I tried failed – a grey cloud and a barrel coated with lead but add a gas check and it's a different story.

I'm still trying to get my own coating up to scratch and wanting loads for my favourite deer and wallaby rifle, a Browning double in .30-06, I decided to see if I could work some up. I'm looking for a load about 2000fps for wallabies at close range in one barrel and a higher velocity one for longer range shots in the other.

The loads I ended up with are 29 grains of AR 2205 (you can use 27 grains of 2400 if you have some) to give about 2100fps and 53 grains of 2209 for 2650fps. Bullets were HRBC 165-grain RNFP silhouette with gas checks fitted. The bonus is that these two loads regulate – both bullets have the same point of impact. In this case, please note, the test range was 50 yards. I help to manage a forestry property so this rifle may come with



Coping with the current shortages

me when I walk fence lines and fire trails.

Commercial hard cast bullets are made from an alloy that contains 6 per cent antimony, which is what makes them hard. Les Moncrieff, of HRBC, says that if the lead alloy is hard enough, velocities of Hi-Tek coated bullets a bit over 3000fps are possible.

These hard cast bullets are great for practice, target shooting and light game, but they can be brittle and disintegrate when they hit a solid target. I won't use them for deer, so in deer season I'll load the top barrel with a jacketed bullet.

I'm also finding this bullet very accurate in our Brno .308/12-gauge combination which, as I can't use iron sights, is fitted with double peep sights. For use on running wallabies, the load is 25 grains of AR2205 giving 2140fps. A great light game load. You can make your own Hi-Tek coated bullets if you wish or buy them in Australia as there are no overseas supply chains. HBRC bullets are made near Mildura.

Tin is what makes hunting bullets tough, but it's expensive. So, if you make your own and as I do use wheel weights as metal, add more tin to one pot full of alloy and cast the lot. Keep these apart as your hunting bullets. A Lyman recipe is 5.5lb wheel weights, 1lb 50/50 solder and 3.5lb lead to make their famous No. 2 hunting alloy.

The lead alloy grids in lead acid batteries contain a lot of antimony. If you're thinking of using some of these to obtain a hard alloy, don't. First, the fumes given off from some battery scrap can lay you out – permanently. Plus, Les advises that Hi-Tek coating will not stick to any alloy that at any time has had contact with any acid.

However, it does seem that any Hi-Tek coated bullet for rifle use needs a gas check. I don't know whether gas checks are easily procurable at present. I haven't bought any for years as the last ones I did purchase were ridiculously expensive, costing as much as primers. So, when I'm about to run out I make my own. Aluminium makes good gas checks, and these are easily made using aluminium roof flashing and some simple tools in a good reloading press.

I have subsequently Hi-Tek coated some 265-grain .375 cal bullets, cast from wheel weights, for use in our .38-55. As I fit the

gas check in our Lubrasizer I add some lube as well. My powerful load is 33 grains of AR2207 giving 2100fps. These shoot into 1.5 MOA. The extreme speed of the last group I fired was only 18fps. ME is 2600ft-lb, the same as a .308, so it has some grunt.

These test .375s were recently cast and air cooled, so they're quite soft. I'm delighted they are working as well as they are at this velocity and expect with a bit of added tin, they will make good hunting bullets.

However, please note that loads anything like this are only suitable for modern rifles built to withstand high pressure loads. Our rifle is a rebarrelled Ruger No.1.

I've also cast some 75-grain .250 cal FNGC in wheel weight metal and Hi-Tek coated them for our .250 Savage. This rifle is a rebored Ruger M77 (original chambered for .22-250 Rem) and has a one in 14 twist, suited for light bullets. Loaded with 10.5 grains of some Green Dot shotgun powder I've had for decades, velocity is 1980fps. Accuracy seems to be about 3/8" at 50 yards. It's cheap to load and very quiet. So, it makes for a small game load.

Now, let's not leave out those of us who hunt with shotguns. Right now, my local sports store is nearly out of everything, including clay target ammo, something previously unheard of. Perhaps a few reloading presses may be put back into service?

I live on a farm and we produce a lot of our own food, including fruit and vegetables. So, my jobs include keeping the vermin at bay. I use a 20-gauge

and find LV (think 700fps) ½oz loads of large sized shot very effective on big critters in the orchard and inside farm sheds and full power ¾oz loads of No.10 for the blackbirds, both of which have to be handloaded. I normally find the used wads in the garden or yards which can be reused if they're clean. You may be able to collect some from a clay target range.

I've had a carton of wads on back order for over three years and may never receive them, so have been experimenting with over powder card, bran and under shot card. It is a bit messy to fill with the bran but they pattern well.

Powders? I'm using up some old Nobel 64. It doesn't burn as cleanly as more modern powders, but it works well.

My October 2021 copy of the US published *Handloader* magazine features an article about reloading equipment, saying: 'Gun buying decisions are now being made on the basis of what ammunition can be found rather than what gun best suits your purpose, and, that nice hunting rifles are sitting, homeless, because no one can find ammunition.'

It also says that the US ammunition companies are back ordered for two to three years. It appears we'll likely be coping with shortages for some time to come.

*Disclaimer – what works for John might not work for you, use your due diligence and take care to work up loads in your firearm ■



Loading block of reloaded .308 Win.



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Game time

Colonisation of Australia brought many hunting opportunities writes **Sam Garro**, but at what cost?

We are fortunate to have such a diverse range of game animals to hunt, from rabbits, foxes, feral goats, pigs and deer to large and dangerous game like the banteng and Asiatic water buffalo in a free-range environment. It all started around 200 years ago.

Before the colonisation of Australia and aside from the native fauna, there was no traditional game to hunt as we know it today. Initially and for some time until livestock was introduced and their numbers established, many struggling settlers on the mainland and Tasmania relied on native animals and birds like possums, wallabies, kangaroos, emus and swans for meat.

The 1800s were a pretty active period all around with regards to the introduction of livestock. Poultry, sheep, goats, pigs, cattle and horses were transported across in sailing ships from England and other parts to feed the growing colony, provide a means of transport and advance agriculture. Domesticated Asiatic water buffaloes and bantengs from Southeast Asia were also brought across to the Cobourg Peninsula in 1826 and 1849 respectively as a further source of meat and milk for the settlers.

While the bantengs essentially remained on the peninsular, the growing buffalo numbers saw them expand across the vast stretches of coastal floodplains of the Top End. And to open up the country, came

the hardy dromedary (one hump) camel in the 1840s from the Canary Islands and India that could better cope with the harsh inland arid conditions, and donkeys from Africa from 1866 to serve as pack animals.

Game such as rabbits, hares, foxes and a variety of deer species inadvertently followed for recreational hunting, fox and hound hunts and to act as a sentimental reminder of the homeland.

Voyaging mariners sailing to Australia on chartered routes also purposely released goats, resilient animals that could survive on meagre feed, on select offshore islands like Middle Percy Island and Moreton Island as an emergency food source in the event of a ship disaster or if supplies ran low.



Solid mature water buffalo bull in the middle of a floodplain in the NT.

Livestock gone wild

General livestock was penned in basically constructed holding pens or enclosures using available forest timber and materials, while other homesteaders let their chickens, goats and pigs roam freely in and around the homestead.

At some point the animals either escaped from the flimsy structures or simply wandered off into the wild. When settlements were abandoned due to the inhospitable living conditions, livestock including bantengs and buffaloes were let loose. Cattle that escaped from stations are today's wild cattle, or cleanskins as they are referred to, that inhabit inland remote areas and the horses are brumbies which are widely distributed across Australia from the Northern Territory to the High Country. As they all adapted to the environment in their own way they thrived and today form the nucleus of the mobs and herds.

Domesticated rabbits, first introduced on the mainland in Geelong in 1859, quickly took hold in an unprecedented way and rapidly spread over most of Australia, much to the consternation of landowners for their destructive burrowing and overgrazing.

Dilemma with introduced species

Initially livestock and wild game were innocently introduced to fulfil a purpose or meet a need with no concept or realisation of the consequences that would be created or to follow when they escaped or were released into the wild.

Since then and with the progression of time, the damage caused to ecosystems, agriculture and property infrastructure by feral animals, both from the introduced domestic kind and wild, is well known. Yet we still struggle how to best utilise the valuable resource, especially when parts of the world are experiencing food shortages and crop failures due to increasing catastrophic weather events.

Various deer species introduced in the mid-1800s from England and the subcontinent that were carefully reared and managed in collaboration with the Acclimatisation Society were eventually released into favourable habitat areas for legitimate and sustainable hunting.



A scrub bull that was feeding in the NT.



Sam with rabbits on the plains of Outback NSW.

Unintentional releases also occurred when deer escaped from poorly constructed enclosures and intentionally by property owners who grew tired of caring for the animals when their livestock took priority. Ironically, they are today regarded as invasive animals in most states to be culled for invading farmland and grazing on crops and feed meant for livestock.

The Asiatic water buffaloes occupying wetlands and floodplains of the Northern Territory and, at one point peaking around 350,000, were widely harvested for

their hides from 1880 to 1956. In the end demand dropped off due to introduced synthetic substitutes. And while they were considered possible carriers of brucellosis and tuberculosis and found to destroy flora and fauna habitat, they are now viewed beneficially for the way they unclog weed infested waterways.

Today droves of feral donkeys roam areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia in significantly worrying numbers. We also have the world's largest population of Arabian dromedary camels,

Game time

presently estimated at over a million and occupying vast areas of Australia's inland arid landscape. These animals of burden that once helped haul goods and materials, provide a means of transport and open up the country, are today regarded as pests causing millions of dollars damage to water reservoirs, fences, property infrastructure and native vegetation.

Brumbies associated with destruction of delicate ecosystems in areas like the Snowy Mountains are an ongoing subject of controversy and pose a real dilemma for conservationists and animal protectionists

for how to best manage the predicament for a win-win outcome.

Feral pigs, opportunistic animals with a voracious appetite, are considered the most destructive, ploughing up acres of land and ravaging crops and stock feed. Goats in more recent years have won favour with property owners, propping up a viable and lucrative meat export business. And don't forget the humble rabbit, a true survivor and an ongoing challenge for farmers and landowners alike. In the 1930s depression, the rabbit fed many a family, rich and poor. It was also a lucrative meat

export, in particular to England, and the fur the main component in the manufacture of the popular Akubra hat.

Managing the resource

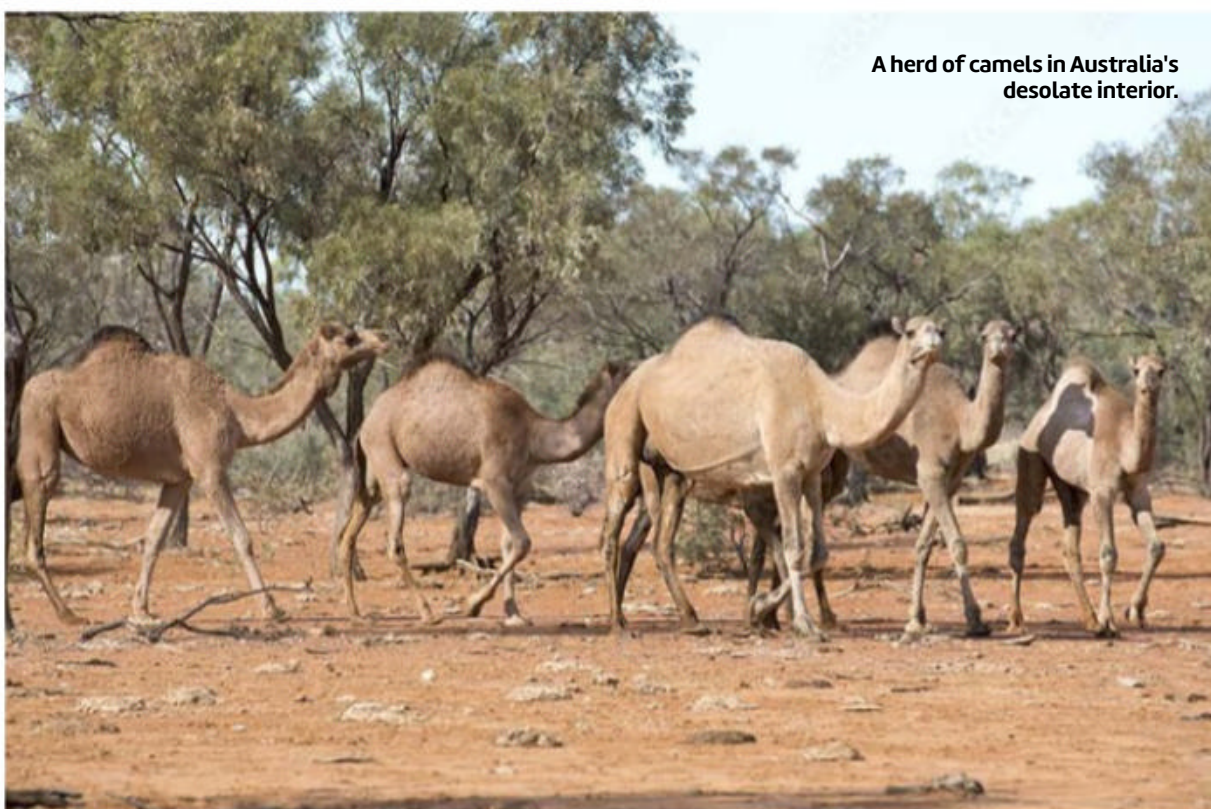
Landowners and farmers who care for their livestock are sensitive to the demise of invasive native and introduced species and don't want to see or take pleasure in their slaughter, even though they cause damage to crops, feed and infrastructure.

Rather they feel the resource should be better understood, managed and utilised in a sustainable manner as an alternative meat source, bearing in mind that these animals in other countries already form part of the peoples' customary diet. Aerial culling of donkeys, camels, bantengs and buffaloes in the NT and WA, deer and horses in the High Country, feral pigs by the thousands across the wider landscape, goats in SA's Flinders Ranges, the list goes on. While deemed necessary for reasons indicated, it's still a wasted resource.

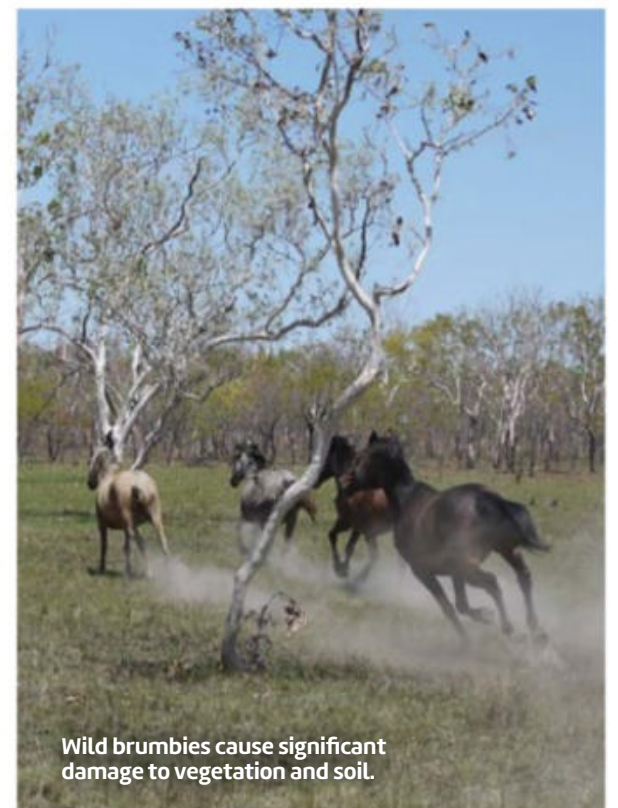
Issues associated with the establishment of a stable and viable long-term game meat and bi-product industry for feral animals like brumbies, donkeys, camels and buffaloes are numerous. However, there's much difficulty in tracking and locating the roaming herds over vast distances in often inhospitable country and challenging conditions. And then there is the associated cost, especially where aerial round-ups or culling is involved.



A drove of donkeys south of Pine Creek, NT.



A herd of camels in Australia's desolate interior.



Wild brumbies cause significant damage to vegetation and soil.

Guided hunts

In part, the availability of game or lack of it can be subject to changes in hunting regulations, over-culling and catastrophic weather events like bushfires and floods that can quickly affect numbers.

Over the years buffaloes have been sporadically harvested for their meat and for live export tied to demand. When the demand dropped off and the herds started to recover with representative trophy bulls emerging, it stimulated resurgence in Top End guided hunts.

We are fortunate reputable licensed safari hunting operators in Australia provide a means to access remote special areas to hunt wild boars and big game. There's hefty scrub bulls, bantengs and water buffaloes, all potentially dangerous animals, camels in desert or arid regions, deer in the High Country and more.

A highly recommend and genuinely excellent read is *Life and Times of a Professional Hunting Guide From Down Under* by Bob Penfold, which was available through the SSAA Online Shop before being sold out. In the book Bob provides a comprehensive coverage of the game hunted within Australia and abroad, real life experiences and culling programs to stem the out-of-control donkey and camel numbers in the interior.

The situation was so dire at one point that he needed several Toyota vehicles to transport 30,000 rounds of .308 Win ammo to deal with the culling. As an example, using Kirkimbie Station, NT as base, more than 7500 donkeys, some horses and a bunch of camels were shot over a three-year period, at a time when some 50,000 needed culling.



Sam with a trophy 4x5 red stag in Brisbane Valley, Queensland.

The culling program over several years eventually succeeded, resulting in the stations carrying thousands more cattle as intended. Enthusiastic American hunters also partook in the guided donkey culls under Penfold's wing as they made use of the meat, especially relishing the backstraps that were tastefully prepared and cooked by Mrs Penfold.

Present day harvesting

On a short to medium term, game meat exports currently exist with no real certainty to ongoing future supply until sustainable

management programs are established in cooperation with government bodies, property owners and traditional landowners.

As a general understanding of prevailing exports, buffalo meat is exported to Vietnam, donkey meat and by-products are processed in Darwin for pet foods and the hides exported to China for gelatine production. Goats that were once regarded as pests competing with livestock and destroying native vegetation have since been realised for their potential with exports going to the United States, South Korea, Taiwan and Canada.



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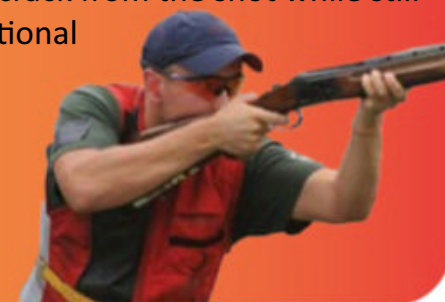


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Game time

Kangaroo meat is available in most Australian supermarkets with exports going to European countries like Germany and France, similarly with wild boar to Europe, in particular Germany where it's used in traditional dishes. There is also a strong demand for camel meat, which is consumed as a staple in countries of the Middle East and North Africa, and the milk for its nutritious value. However, as indicated, as there is no guarantee of consistent supply, potential markets like Saudi Arabia are lost or fail to occur.

Summary

We've come a long way since the 1800s with excellent openings to hunt a variety of game, directly or indirectly created by those before us and at present. Sometimes, provided circumstances allow, it's appropriate to take advantage of an opportunity when it presents itself or is made available, as changing conditions can take it away for a time or indefinitely, never to be repeated.

Over my hunting years, except for camels, scrub bulls and bantengs, I've

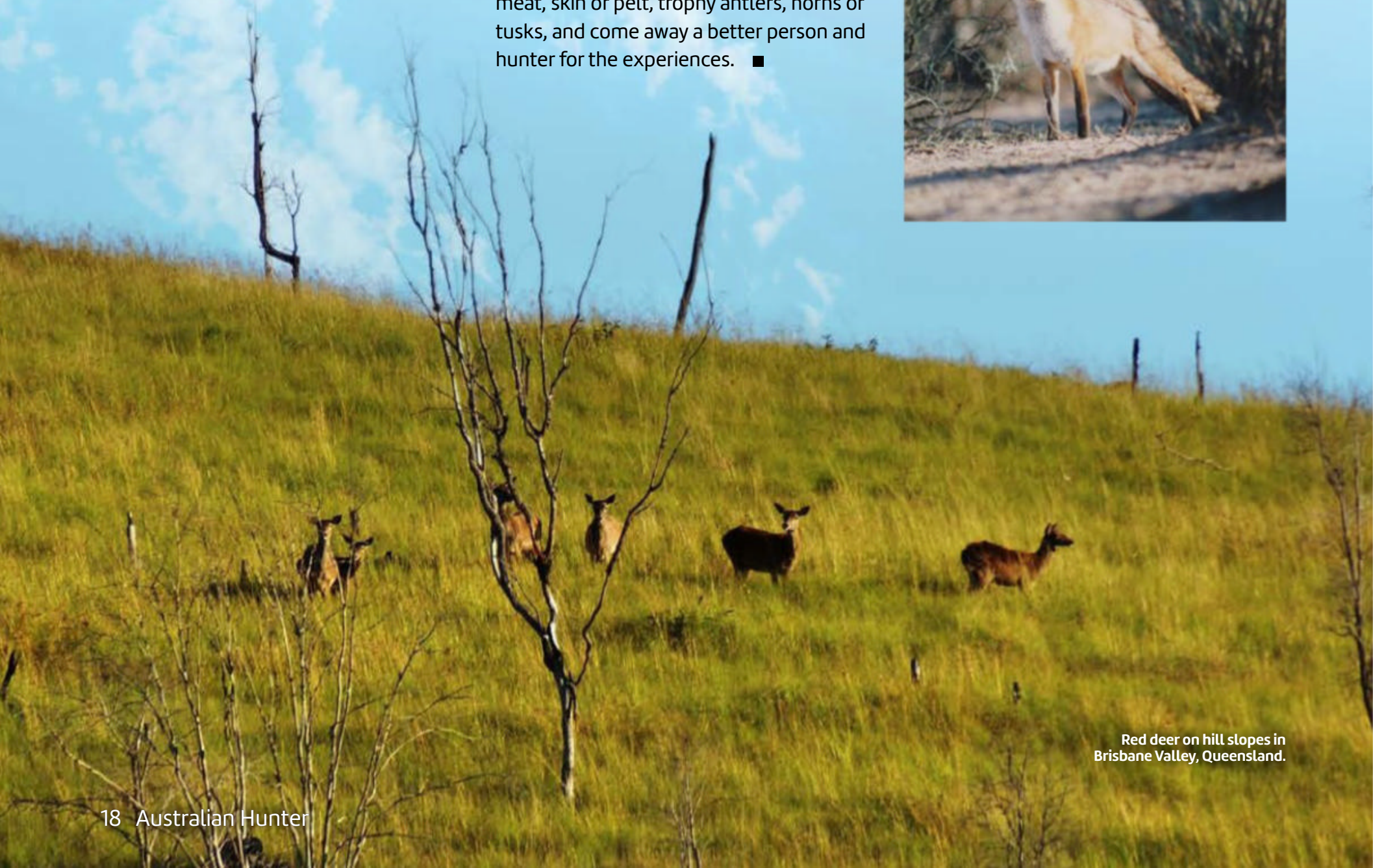
hunted most of the mentioned game in some unique and spectacular places, forming a greater understanding and appreciation of the places and game hunted. I have appropriately made use of the game harvested whether it be for its meat, skin or pelt, trophy antlers, horns or tusks, and come away a better person and hunter for the experiences. ■



Mob of feral pigs thrashing through the long floodplain grass in NT.



An introduced pest that causes extensive damage in Australia.



Red deer on hill slopes in Brisbane Valley, Queensland.

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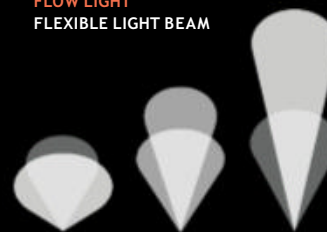
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Raptor applause

La Sportiva lightweight hikers a good fit for **John Denman**



The Ultra Raptor II boots are high enough for good ankle support.



La Sportiva Ultra Raptors also come with leather uppers.



Soft gusset over the heel ensures a good seal above the ankle.

If you are searching for a pair of lightweight boots to wear during warmer weather, the La Sportiva range is well worth a look. The design of them takes more parentage from running shoes than hiking boots, and in fact the company does make trail runners. These boots sprang from that original design.

Now, we all hate boots that let water in, especially when it's only from long, dewy grass. These boots I'm happy to say, score well here. The construction is all synthetic and leans heavily towards the use of Gore-Tex, a proven product in outdoor clothing. They will handle a water splash as well, provided of course that you don't venture over the boot tops.

Mid height boots, ankle boots, or whatever you want to call them, don't always lace up tight at the top. This is where you need a good seal, partly to help keep out water, but mainly to offer decent ankle support. The La Sportiva Ultra Raptor II Mid GTX do both. Oddly enough there is only one quick lacing open eye at the top of the boot, but the design of the laces, and the soft gusset above the heel work well to make lacing up and sealing an easy matter.

One thing about the La Sportiva lacing system is that the laces are not the usual round, or oval type. They are an almost flat profile, and you'll never feel the need to double knot them, as they just don't slip. The open lacing eye at the top may have something to do with this because it's not like the accepted hook type eye. In any case, it's a great system.

La Sportiva have their own sole design that works in places where it counts – wet, slippery rocks. The boots are extremely light and really good when the ambient

temperature is climbing. The toe features a substantial guard to prevent wear at that point and the lacing system won't allow your feet to slide forward on long hill descents. They feel great right out of the box too, which is important. The fact that they are available in a wide fitting could be the clincher, because big blokes like me have big feet to match. Many Euro boots can be too narrow to fit comfortably.

The Ultra Raptors have ticked all the right boxes. They are quick and easy to pull on in the morning and lace up fast, even in the dark of pre-dawn. They offer good day-long comfort and support which can be yours for less than \$300.

Also, in the Ultra Raptor II style are boots with leather uppers, albeit with a little extra cost. Like the Gore-Tex option they don't leak and are comfy straight out of the box. The impressive lacing system and soles are the same too. The leather option seems to be a bit warmer than the Gore-Tex, so maybe keeping them for winter could be ideal. In any case they show no sign of water leaking in ankle deep slush.

The boots have been subjected to mud, rain, rock and any other things but come out tops all the time. I even had my pair soaked in blood (mine) at one stage and back home a good hosing and a fair bit of squeezing cleared all the blood out.

These boots are great for general wear, not just when heading for the bush. Unlike some boots used for work or hunting they don't go into the clodhopper category, so you can get away with wearing them a bit more than most hiking boots.

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Bushnell's Prime and Core trail cameras come well-packaged.

Quick on the draw

Don Caswell upgrades his trail cams to Bushnell's impressive Prime and Core units

Trail cameras are a wonderful asset for wildlife enthusiasts, hunters, farmers and even urban security interests. With a batch of well-used trail cams nearing 10 years old, it was time to upgrade to some new technology.

Bushnell trail cams are proven to be excellent, so I settled on the Bushnell Core and Bushnell Prime trail cams from NIOA, the Australian distributor.

Having recently relocated to a farm in prime deer country, I was much in need of some trail cams to suss out what the local

deer were up to, as well as to monitor and manage farm pests like foxes and wild dogs. A number of elements stood out in comparison to my old trail cams and foremost among those was a greatly improved trigger time. All my old trail cams had the same trigger response time – a lengthy five seconds. On top of that was the added camera response time once the unit had been triggered. A lot can happen in six to seven seconds.

In situations like feral pigs visiting carrion, or deer at a wallow, I could be

reasonably certain that such animals would mill about and provide plenty of time to obtain photos and videos. However, wild dogs and foxes are much quicker moving and their visits often cautious and fleeting. I had many photos showing an empty landscape, and sometimes the tip of a bushy tail, to demonstrate that a lengthy trigger and camera response time was inadequate.

With these older units, you have to be particularly careful in camera placement, trying to catch fast predators coming and going directly towards the camera rather than traversing the field of view. So, the newer Bushnell Core and Prime trail cams' 0.3-second trigger time and 0.2-second photo response and one-second recovery between photos is a country mile better than my old units and gives me much more flexibility in camera placement.

I also like the larger 24-megapixel (MP) image size that both offer, along with excellent daylight colour. Another feature is more control over the images and videos selected. As you can see from the table, both the Core and Prime are nearly identical in most aspects. The major difference is in the light-emitting diodes (LEDs) used





The Core (left) and Prime units are both solid.



Simply attach to a tree or the like and let nature do the rest.

Specifications

Features:	Bushnell Prime	Bushnell Core
Model number:	I 19932C	I 19938C
PIR Sensor:	Low-med-high-auto	Low-med-high-auto
Image size:	24MP	24MP 6528x3672 (16:9)
Video:	1080p HD with audio	1080p 30fps HD with audio
Video length:	Up to 60 seconds	Up to 60 seconds
SD card slot:	Up to 32GB	Up to 32GB
Trigger time:	0.3 second	0.3 second
Response time:	0.2 second image 1.0 second video:	0.2 second image 1.0 second video:
Night detection range:	80ft (24m)	80ft (24m)
LEDs:	Low Glow	No Glow
IR flash range:	100ft (30m)	100ft (30m)
Batteries:	6xAA	6xAA
Battery life:	Up to 6 months alkaline Up to 12 months lithium	Up to 6 months alkaline Up to 12 months lithium
Solar compatible:	Yes	Yes
Time stamp:	Date, time, moon, temp	Date, time, moon, temp
Warranty:	Two-year limited	Two-year limited
Pricing (about):	\$290	\$390

in each unit. The Core possesses the more expensive No Glow LEDs whereas the Prime has the Low Glow option. Even the Low Glow showed much less glow than my old trail cams.

Over the years, I had many photos clearly showing wild dogs staring intently at the camera, presumably having detected the faint infrared glow. I have similar photos of a wedge-tailed eagle at a carcass that took an intense interest in my trail cam, leading up to an attack on it that dislodged the trail cam from the tree. And, of course, it needs to be remembered

that wild animals have a different visual spectrum to us humans, being able to detect well into the red and blue ends of the spectrum that we cannot see.

Another improvement in the newer Bushnells is a lower power consumption when monitoring in standby mode. Each unit is powered by six AA batteries. With new alkaline batteries the Bushnells last up to six months. Using new lithium batteries, you can gain up to 12 months of battery life. Naturally, if the cameras are seeing a lot of action, and busy recording pictures and video, that period will reduce

accordingly. For locations where I expect only infrequent visitation by animals of interest, a long battery life is a great asset.

Another useful asset of the Bushnells in these particular scenarios is their 2X time lapse with live trigger. That allows the camera to take photos at set intervals while still being responsive to normal motion trigger. A good example of how useful that can be is in monitoring a fence line for incoming animals where they may be too far away from the motion detection trigger.

A further plus is the GPS geotag capability which enables the user to input the longitude and latitude of the camera’s position. This comes into its own when running a string of such trail cams where it is important to differentiate and file data according to each camera’s location.

It goes without saying that every user should sync their trail cams to the correct date and time. I am constantly amazed by being shown folks’ favourite trail cam photos where the first thing they do is apologise for a wildly inaccurate date/time stamp. It is so easy to set that correctly on any trail cam.

The Bushnell Core and Prime trail cameras are simply laid out and intuitively easy to program. For anybody wanting the full manuals, these are available from the Bushnell site and can be found by googling ‘Bushnell manual PDF’ and the model number. Reasonably priced, these units offer good value for money and come well-recommended. ■

The relatively basic process of reverse searing on the Kamado Joe resulted in a beautifully cooked medium rare venison rump.

Voluptuous venison

Paul Barker fires up the Kamado Joe to try his hand at smoky reverse seared rump

Continuing our smoking adventures with the Kamado Joe, we were keen to try the reverse sear method with a whole venison rump from a young buck taken on a recent hunt.

This technique can be a challenge given that venison is prone to over-cooking so the precise temperatures possible with the KJ is certainly put to the test.

Ingredients

- One whole venison rump
- Kosher salt
- Black peppercorns
- Home prepared seasoned salt
- 1/3 cup fine salt
- 3 1/2 teaspoons superfine sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cornflour
- 1 1/2 teaspoons celery salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 1 1/2 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Method

Trim any excess tissue and small pieces of meat from the rump.

Combine two tablespoons of the seasoned salt with one tablespoon of kosher salt (pure salt with no additives) and one tablespoon of fresh ground black pepper. Increase the pepper if you like a more peppery crust on the venison. Mix all of the ingredients well in a bowl and transfer to a shaker container if available. Doing so makes applying an even coat of the dry rub much simpler.

Setting up the KJ for reverse searing is so straightforward. Add enough lump charcoal to two-thirds fill the basket. You can use your favourite smoking wood if you enjoy a smoky flavoured steak. Put the divide and conquer rack into position and place one of the half-moon grills on the bottom level. Adjoin the X-accessory rack in the middle level and one of the half-moon deflector plates on the opposite side to the bottom mounted grill. The second half-moon grill is placed on the top level over the deflector plate.

With the top and bottom vents fully open, fire up the KJ and close the dome. A target temperature of 120°C is required for the initial cooking period. As the temperature increases towards the target temperature adjust the bottom vent to about 14mm open and the control tower top vent to the second mark. Adjust the top vent to fine-tune the correct temperature and allow to stabilise.

To monitor the internal temperature of the rump, insert a thermal temperature probe into the thickest section of the meat and place the rump onto the grill. Cooking time will vary depending on how large the venison rump is. Rump from a fallow deer in this case took about an hour for the first stage of the cooking process.

When the internal temperature reaches 54°C remove the rump to rest wrapped in aluminium foil and leave the probe in position to monitor the internal temperature. The finished internal temperature needs to be 57°C for rare to medium rare. Previous experience has shown the



The venison rump trimmed of excess tissue with an even coating of the prepared rub.

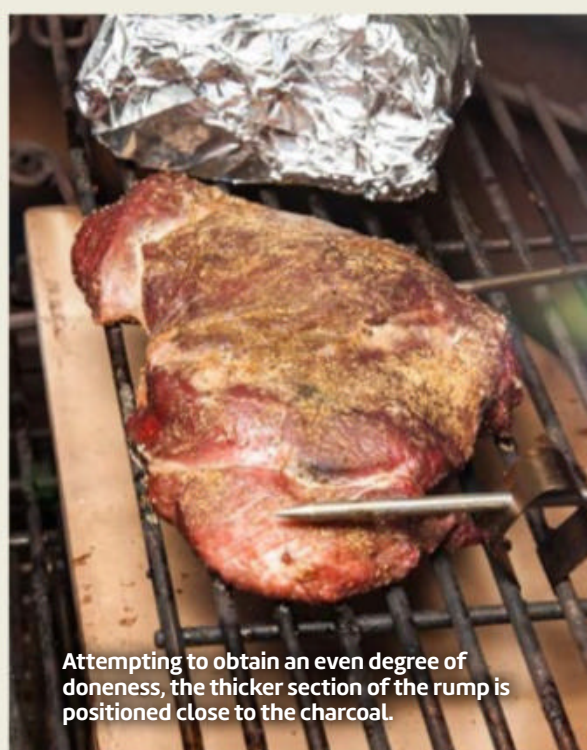
venison will on-cook a further two or three degrees before it begins to cool.

While the meat is resting fully open both vents to allow the charcoal to flame up under the bottom grill rack. It's important to have the temperature up seriously hot as searing the meat on all sides should only take about 30 seconds per side or less.

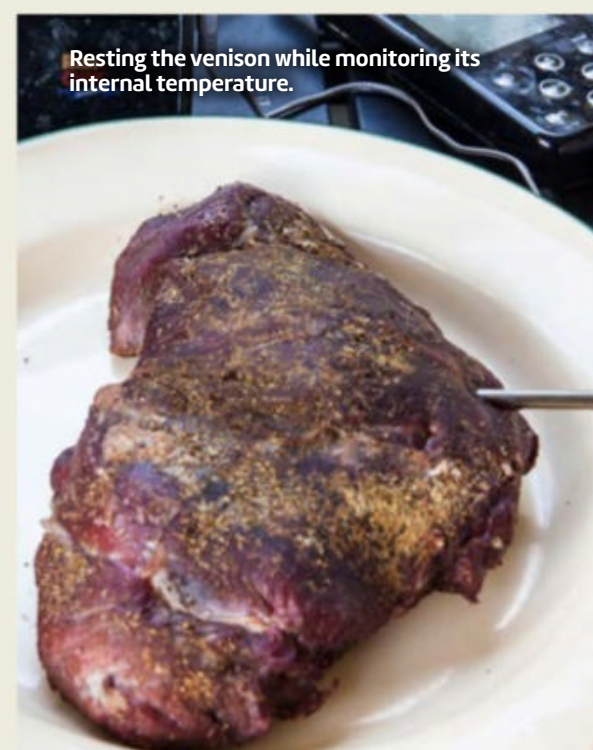
Longer searing times will increase the desired internal temperature; in this case there is only a three-degree buffer to allow for the searing process. When the internal temperature just begins to drop, remove the venison from the foil wrap. Next, place the venison on the grill rack with a pair of long-handled tongs. Keep in mind you don't want to sear your hand along with the meat.

Quickly sear all sides of the venison forming a tasty thin crust that will help keep the venison moist and tender. Slicing the venison revealed everything we had hoped for with this style of cooking – the meat was super juicy, tender and tasty, a dish that will certainly be popular in the future.

If you don't own a Kamado smoker, no worries, your personal smoker should do the trick.



Attempting to obtain an even degree of doneness, the thicker section of the rump is positioned close to the charcoal.



Resting the venison while monitoring its internal temperature.

Footnote

Due to the rump cut being wedge-shaped, issues could arise in that the thinner section may overcook by the time the centre thick section reaches the desired internal temperature.

To try and overcome this potential problem, the charcoal basket divider was installed directly under the lower searing half-moon grill rack. The thick section of the rump was placed parallel to the edge

of the top rack, this being the hottest area. The heat deflector plate worked well in that there was a fair degree of heat gradient across the grill from front to back.

Carving the thinner section of the rump revealed a slight degree of increased doneness, indicating the set-up worked pretty well. The slices that are a little more cooked are handy for those that like their venison medium rare. ■



The well-built Woodsmen

The versatility of Buck's Model 102 knife has **Damien Edwards** singing its praises

The fully functional sheath of the 102 is made from attractive leather.

I confess to having an affinity with this particular model from the vast Buck Knives range. Named the Woodsman, it's one of the first fixed blade Bucks I ever bought and I've owned an example of this model since 1990. After more than three decades of using this knife in the field I feel confident to state that it would be an awfully hard task to find a better fixed blade for general duty camping, fishing or hunting work.

Around 1994, Buck switched from 425M steel to 420HC (meaning high-carbon) as the 'basic' blade steel for most of their entry level knives. These two steels are close to each other in chemical composition, but 420HC has better machineability for mass production.

My 1990 vintage 102 was made with 425M, which is a more pleasing steel to work with compared with 420HC and it is marginally harder. I'm not dissing the use of the newer steel. With the proprietary heat treatment developed by Buck and considering the edge geometry, they are able to elevate 420HC to heights great enough that the average user won't be able to tell the difference.

Like most Buck knives in the 100 series, it features a rat-tail tang whereby the blade billet is slimmed down to go through the handle and then pinned into the pommel. It is one piece of steel. This equates to extreme strength. The handle is comprised of the usual phenolic resin with added finger grooves. This, teamed with the handguard, help to ensure a firm grip when using the knife with wet or bloody hands.

Blade length is a handy four inches. I much prefer using blades in the five-inch or less category. They are easier to control for finesse type work. Often during my fishing or hunting hikes, I'll carry two knives. One is for general chores and the other for splitting wood because I'd prefer not to backpack-carry a hatchet.

This little 102 would pair perfectly with the larger model 119 which was reviewed in Issue 69 of this publication. Like most Bucks of this style, it has been in existence long before Buck was Incorporated in 1961, but it has been produced under the designation of the 102 since that year. That's more than 60 straight years of production of the same model.

The reason for its enduring popularity? It is a tried-and-true design which has stood the test of time year after year and season after season. It has carried on the tradition of workmanship and quality which has become synonymous with the name Buck. As can be seen, the styling and dimensions of the 102 have remained virtually unchanged for decades.

Like most knife and even rifle makers, Buck offer the 102 Woodsman in premium versions with brass pommel and handguard and also upgraded steel such as S30V and S35VN. Buck's standard 420HC is heat-treated to a Rockwell hardness of 58. Edge retention is reasonable with average use and it is easy for even the novice to sharpen.

Buck double-temper their S30V steels and the resultant Rockwell hardness is between 59.5 and 61. This is on par with the strength of S35VN, but the latter offers truly supreme hardness, toughness and corrosion resistance, as well as absolute edge retention. If you're like me and spend a lot of time in the field, premium steels are well worth the extra investment.

These upgraded steel versions can be had with either red or green canvas



Red micarta 102 (middle) shown for size comparison with a red micarta Model 105 Pathfinder (top) and Buck's famous Model 110 folding hunter (bottom).

The well-built Woodsman

micarta. The handle options are attractive and functional. Their main objective is to differentiate between standard and premium models, but they also provide a better grip over the standard phenolic resin black handle version.

I've been using my red S30V since the type first became available in mid-2018. Already it has served me well on many hunts and fishing trips and I am waiting for an opportunity to take the green S35VN Pro in the near future.

How does a knife like the 102 perform in the great outdoors? Well, great! The clip point is pretty much built to be used by the hunter and is reminiscent of the older style 'bird and fish' knives of the early 20th century, except with a slightly longer blade which lends itself well to skinning work on larger game.

At a featherweight 71 grams, it is comfortable to carry around on your hip or in your hunting backpack. In fact, for a rat-tail tang designed knife with such supreme strength, it's surprising that it can be made with such a light weight. The weight certainly adds to its 'carryability' in the field.

The Woodsman comes with a leather sheath as standard. The sheath features a belt loop and a button snap for holding the knife securely. Once it is attached to your belt and closed, it is not moving anywhere. My 1990 model has dutifully accompanied me on more fishing trips than I could possibly recall and I have simply no idea how many barramundis, sweetlips and coral trout I've cleaned with it over the years. It's been by my side during countless duck, quail and magpie goose hunts and it has certainly skinned more than its fair share of rabbits, hares and foxes, as well as a few chital deer. I have even used it to process chickens and turkeys.

It is an excellent choice for canoe or kayaking trips, backpack hunting or fishing. It doubles admirably for camping food preparation. The handle requires essentially no maintenance, save for the occasional wipe down and all available blade steels hold an edge quite well, although the premium steels described do take a bit more time to sharpen correctly.

My overall impressions of this stout little Buck are that it is an excellent, utilitarian and attractive knife deserving of a place in any outdoorsman's pack. Its versatility is the key to its popularity and the available options, including alternate premium steels, results in a knife with not only

mass appeal, but mass application. I will most certainly continue to carry a 102 into the forests, deserts, rivers, beaches and swamps for the remainder of my days.

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The sweeping clip point lends itself well to a variety of tasks. Upgraded steel stampings are evident.



From top: The Pro with green canvas micarta and S35VN blade, red micarta in S30V, 1990 in 425M and a 1968 in 440C, both with black phenolic resin handles. The lines of the 102 have not changed over the decades.

At a glance	
Model:	Buck 102 Woodsman
Blade length:	4" or 10cm
Overall length:	7¾" or 19.7cm
Weight:	2½oz or 71g
Steel:	420HC, premium steels available
Sheath:	Leather with snap closure and belt loop
Approx. retail:	Starting at around \$140 for standard model



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Jabba, the heart

It doesn't get any better for **Perry Magowan** than hunting with his son

Sitting thinking back over the years of hunting experiences I have had with other people made me count just how many companions I shared the outings with. The total of 26 seemed far more than I would have thought.

My favourite occasions though, were always when hunting with my family - my brother, son, daughter and grandson. Some of those trips were not all successful, but we still had a good time anyway.

Many of the most memorable hunts were with my son, who I nicknamed Jabba when he was a toddler. The first hunt we ever went on involved chasing a feral cat feeding on an emu carcass on a property in

the Longreach area, with the remains not far away from a sheep dam.

As we pulled up in the car, the cat turned to run from the emu, but the .243 Winchester soon put a stop to that. We were after big red kangaroos at the time.

Spotlighting in the Mount Isa region a few years later, we came across a mob of black pigs, 20 or so. Jabba held the light on them. They were standing still in thick, tall spinifex grass with their heads down hiding their eyes. I shot the only boar that I could see with the .243 Win and all hell broke loose, as pigs ran in every direction. However, we only got the one.

Because of work commitments, years went by and we didn't have a chance to go out hunting together for ages. Where does time go?

Jabba grew up and became a man. In his late twenties, I took him spotlighting to one of my favourite deer hunting properties for a night hunt. In the area there were four different species of deer - red, fallow, rusa and some chital. They had been released into the wild from paid hunting properties. We were after reds that night for some meat but saw none.

On the way back, we spotted two fallow bucks feeding only 400m from the house. There was one older buck and a younger

The .308 dropped the young red stag at 220m.





Two rabbits for the pot.



Taken at 100m with the .243
Win in the spotlight.

one, a nice meat animal. Jabba claimed both of them - they were the first two deer he had ever taken. We had more meat than we needed and he snared a set of antlers as well. I mounted them on a shield to put on the wall for him. I also skinned the older buck and tanned the hide and turned it into a floor rug for him.

Later, that same year in winter we went for a weekend in the Brisbane Valley west of Toogoolawah in the dry spear grass hill country for a hunt on reds. The country was bare and dry, but some ridges had the slightest tinge of green grass 25mm high from a recent shower of rain. We came across rabbit droppings here and there on the bare ground.

"That's worth a look around tonight with the spotlight," I said. "If we're lucky, we might see a wild dog too." That night we spotted one dog but couldn't get a shot at him, though the boy took two big rabbits for the pot.

Early the next morning we walked the sandy creek bed looking for deer tracks leading up into the hills. One set of stag tracks led up into a rough narrow gully that twisted around like a snake. Two-thirds of the way up, the old double-four broke and ran away from his bushy bed. Jabba wacked him with the .308. That was a top father and son hunting weekend, I can tell you.

Seven months later found us on the same property. The owner was having some wild



Jabba and his fallow buck.

dog problems at the time. "Shoot as many dogs as you can," he said to us.

We walked a different way than we normally would have on the first morning. I spied a big orange dog lying on the ground sleeping at the base of a huge boulder, about 300m away. Jabba sat down, took a steady rifle rest on a large tree and fired. The bullet hit the boulder 50mm above the dog's back. Well, you have never seen a wild dog jump up and run flat out for so long a distance like this bloke did. He must have run 330m without breaking stride. Jabba gave him just too much elevation.

We had a later start the next day and went to the other end of the property where we usually see more deer. Jabba saw two deer about 500m away and moved out

on a solo stalk, while I brought up the rear some 150m behind him.

At 250m away, the doe and her fawn started to run down the spur and towards Jabba to reach the gully floor into thick cover. He took a tricky offhand shot; the doe tumbled headfirst three times end over end down the steep bank into the gully. It was one of the most spectacular shots I think I've ever seen. The young fawn stopped in the gully, not knowing what to do. I said: "Shoot the fawn too." Jabba replied: "I don't want it" But I said: "Shoot it. It will only starve to death." So, he took it, too. We had a hell of a lot of meat to carry back to the car that day. It was all well worth it though.

Jabba, the heart

A year later, deer were coming into the cultivation in early winter. In those days it was only a drive of one hour and 10 minutes from home to the property to go spotlighting. Boy, how times have changed, there's just too many people in the world today. The same drive takes one hour and 45 minutes now.

Arriving at the property at around 8.30pm, the owner said to us: "I will come along with you tonight and I will drive, as I want to check something out." After driving all over the whole property, we had seen nothing. An hour had passed by, so we went for one more look-see at the main cultivation. The owner said: "Fifteen reds have been coming in every night for seven days, but none tonight."

Back at the main cultivation, one lone deer had come in late and was in the middle of the paddock. At 130m Jabba took the shot with my Sako .243 WIN and the red head was down for good.

However, the best shot I ever saw him take was on a young double-four red stag on our main hunting property west of Toogoolawah, during the roar.

We had seen a big old double-five holding 22 does that slipped over the ridge behind and out of sight. So, we followed him up. We never saw that stag again.

The young double-four had been following him and was left behind in the gully we were now in. Jabba said: "I might take him for meat." With a good lean on a large rock, he let one go and the young beast

fell in his own tracks at about 220m. We looked at each other and said wow! It took us 10 minutes to walk over to him.

On another occasion in that place there were three stags roaring not far from each other. "Which one do I go for?" Jabba said. "Pick one," I replied. So, off we set. I slowed down and let him go 50m ahead of me with the stag only 100m away, just over the ridge.

You would not believe it, but a wild dog was out hunting on the same game trail as Jabba, coming from the opposite direction. The dog stopped side-on at 10m away from Jabba and stared at him. It could not work out what he was. Jabba was dressed in full camo and the stand-off lasted for some time, before the dog turned and ran



Jabba and his first red stag.

away. He wasn't ready to shoot the dog because the stag was so close.

We took quite a few red deer does on that place for meat over a space of 18 years or so. However, I badly hurt the ball joint in my right shoulder years ago. It was in December, the middle of summer, not a good time to hunt for deer in South East Queensland. Jabba wanted to hunt some venison for the freezer. That was not such a wonderful idea I thought, as I was in so much pain that it hurt to walk. But off we went. We had never hunted there at that time of the year before, but there were deer everywhere.

After leaving the car and watching deer run in all directions, we decided to walk across the gullies. As we came to the top of the third ridge and peeped over, we saw three does lying down camped in the floor close together.

As Jabba lay on the ground to make the shot, I tried for a photo of him and the deer in the same camera frame from behind him. He managed to take one of the deer for meat, so luckily for us the car



It took a good shot to bring this red doe down.

wasn't far away. I could go on and on, but how long is a piece of string! When do you say stop? Hunting stories like this are best told around a campfire at night, with a hot cuppa or a cold drink.

Anyway, fond recollections like these are always great to look back on as time goes by. ●

Note the deer bedded in the background.



Federal .45-70

Dick Eussen finds the right rifle cartridges for medium game

These days many hunters use only limited ammo and rarely employ their rifles for much else but hunting, so handloading is out for them, especially when just annual hunts and limited opportunities are available.

Still, people like myself have the reloading gear on hand and even completing a few rounds for sparse hunting opportunities is on the charts and it has little to do with saving money, but all to do with enjoying a rewarding hobby.

In line with many shooters, I generally buy 100 rounds of factory ammunition, sight-in the rifle and use them up for hunting or plinking. When they are gone, I reload the cases.

I purchased 100 rounds of Federal ammunition for a Baikal side-by-side double rifle in .45-70 Government calibre sometime back during a period when all things Russian were not on the nose.

The double liked the ammo with both barrels printing in a 60cm group at 50m, plenty for what I had in mind for the rifle. Seeing that it would be mostly used for hunting pigs, I selected the 300-grain soft-point blunt-nosed bullet. There is a little hollow in the tip, almost like a semi-hollow-point. This makes them suitable for tube magazines on rifles and carbines. The velocity is rated at 1850fps with an energy (ft-lb) of 2280.

Having owned several .45-70 Marlin rifles in the past I am familiar with the performance of the round with many styles of bullets from various makers. The .45-70 was introduced in 1873 and has gained a well-earned reputation for killing power on medium and big game. The original load is a 405-grain lead bullet, a round that performs well on medium game, including large boars.

However, the 300-grain Federal factory round beats the 405-grain lead bullet as far as killing performance goes. I have shot buffaloes and scrub bulls with 300-grain



bullets, but I prefer something heavier and with more punch for big bulls.

Handloaders have a choice of 300-, 350-, 405- and 500-grain jacketed bullets. But a 500-grain bullet is too long and must be seated and crimped on the cannelure when used in lever-action rifles fitted with tube magazines or there is a real chance of the bullet being pushed back into the case. This limits powder quantity when seating the 500-grain projectile.

So, these big bullets are best used in single-shot, magazine and double rifles where they can be seated out to take advantage of more powder, meaning that guns with tube magazines are best served by the 300-, 450- and 405-grain bullets.

The other answer is to use Hornady LEVERevolution 325-grain Spitzer Point, yes you read that correctly. These bullets have a soft plastic point that flattens against the primer of a cartridge in front of it, in a tube magazine, and won't set the round off when the rifle is fired or bumped, as can happen with sharp point ammo in lever-and some slide-action rifles. These bullets are also available for the hand-loader and I have reloaded them successfully for my .30-30 Marlin.



But back to the Federal 300-grain factory load. As mentioned, accuracy was spot-on with the Baikal and a mate's 1894 Marlin with open sight. He managed to shoot several 3-shot groups just under 60mm at 50m. They opened up to 90mm at 100m, a great performance for iron sights from a man who knows his work. A scope would tighten groups considerably.

I shot a number of pigs with the rounds - some were large boars. Nothing walked away, as can happen from lead 405 and 500-grain jacketed bullets as they are too hard and shoot right through pigs, even most big boars. A 300-grain bullet and the Hornady 325-grain round will penetrate the lungs and expand. Cost at time of writing is \$65 per box of 20.

The results indicated that light bullets in big calibres like the .45-70 are the answer to stopping medium game like boars and deer. Happy hunting... ●

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Going Ballistic



Sighting-in requires a steady rest.

Keep cool and stay on target with this practical approach from **Matthew Cameron** on projectiles

Ballistics may be defined as the science which deals with the motion of projectiles, and that of course includes bullets delivered from a firearm. At one end of the scale, we may have a round ball as an example of an early projectile and at the other end perhaps a very-low-drag projectile capable of extended range when fired out of a suitable long-range cartridge/rifle combination. In between there are a veritable host of projectiles designed to be discharged out of many different types of firearms, all with a specific purpose in mind.

The projectile designed to be used for target shooting may be totally unsuitable for live game, after all the paper is soft and yielding whereas the projectile for live game may have to penetrate much muscle and bone to arrive at its destination.

In addition, depending on the animal concerned we may have to consider the actual type of projectile if we are to be successful. As an extreme example perhaps a .224 hollow-point projectile weighing maybe 55gr that is eminently suitable for

rabbits would simply blow up on the outside of a heavier animal.

From the hunters' point of view, having decided on just which animal we are targeting we next have to consider if we have a cartridge/rifle combination available suitable for the task? After all, the requirements of a varmint shooter are vastly different to those of a hunter seeking deer or bigger game. Sometimes, mainly because of financial constraints, we attempt to use a rifle for dual purposes.

If you start to research ballistics early in the piece you will come across the term 'ballistic coefficient' (BC). So, what exactly does that mean? Man has been fascinated by all types of projectiles for many years. In 1881 in Germany, Krupp the great armaments manufacturer, developed the so-called standard G1 projectile. Suffice to say that it is the ratio of other projectiles to this 'optimum' that measures BC. Thus, a projectile with a BC of perhaps .3 is not as effective as a projectile with a BC of say .5. The higher the BC for any given velocity, the greater the energy on impact, the

flatter the trajectory and the less wind drift. All are important to any shooter.

Before considering any external ballistics, the shooter must make a choice. Will we be going to use factory cartridges or proceed through the process of load development to produce cartridges of our own making? For the shooter choosing personal load development there are many options which may produce even better ammunition, as it allows multiple options of components. Whichever path is chosen, the most important result aside from adequate velocity is accuracy.

If the cartridge is not accurate within your own personal parameters in your rifle you are simply wasting your time. When developing a load initially, it does not matter exactly where our shots land on the target, we are merely seeking accuracy. The best three or five-shot repeatable group is our initial aim.

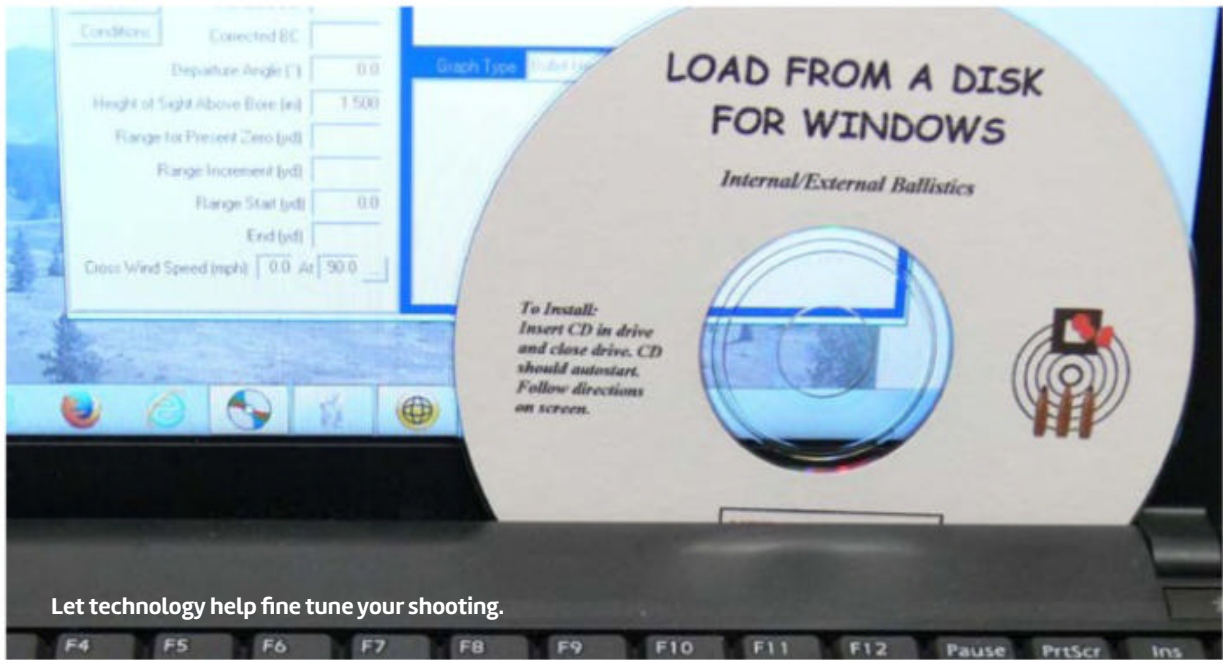
Having chosen a particular factory cartridge or developed a cartridge to your standards of accuracy, only now are we required to know the actual velocity

figures. Not those in a manual that says 50gr of ABC powder will produce a velocity of 3000fps for a particular cartridge and associated projectile.

The possible variations are such that it would be almost impossible to duplicate book figures. Remember that manuals are not much more than a guide as to what is likely to occur. But, coupled with good reloading practices the figures produced are safe. So, you need access to a chronograph. It need not have bells and whistles as it only must measure velocity accurately.

Having precisely measured the velocity we can now refer to the appropriate reloading manual and extract the BC of any projectile. Some suggest various projectile makers claim ballistic coefficients that are incorrect. It is implied that they may be overstated. I leave it to you to make up your own mind on the subject. Having extracted the BC, we can proceed in one of two ways. Some reloading manuals have ballistic tables in the rear section; you enter the table with the BC of the projectile and the actual muzzle velocity.

The other option is a computer program, in my case, 'Load From a Disk'. There are others that will provide the same answers. The initial data required by 'Load From a Disk' is simply the muzzle velocity, plus the diameter and BC of the projectile. Each case will provide a distance where the point of aim and the impact of the projectile are the same. This is often referred to as the zero range. Within computer programs



you can select this range. The program will then generate a table and usually a diagram of the projectile's performance.

Thus there is a requirement for each shooter to sight in any rifle so the projectile arrives where we want it to. While the needs of any individual shooter will vary, there are general rules. Only now when we know the actual velocity can we alter the telescopic or iron sights to ensure that our projectiles are impacting on the target exactly where we want them to.

My second son, Cameron, is an avid pig hunter, his preferred rifle a Marlin 1895 Model in .45-70 calibre. Cameron's requirement was for a short-range, hard-hitting rifle to be used in heavy scrub with perhaps a maximum range of 100 yards. This cartridge/rifle combination is exactly that. The rifle also has the ability to provide

quick back-up shots. His initial research focused on Hornady's 300gr hollow-point flat-nose projectile. The Hornady manual shows that this projectile, using several powders, has a maximum velocity somewhere in the 2000 to 2100fps bracket.

With Cameron's rifle the best accuracy was obtained at 1900fps. Note that we first ascertained this before attempting to sight in the rifle. Again, referring to the Hornady manual the BC of that projectile is 0.197, not all that high.

As this projectile is relatively short and has a flat nose, this is not surprising. In Cameron's case he selected a zero range of 100 yards, simply because under hunting conditions in the swamps with lots of dense cover it would be unusual to shoot outside of this.

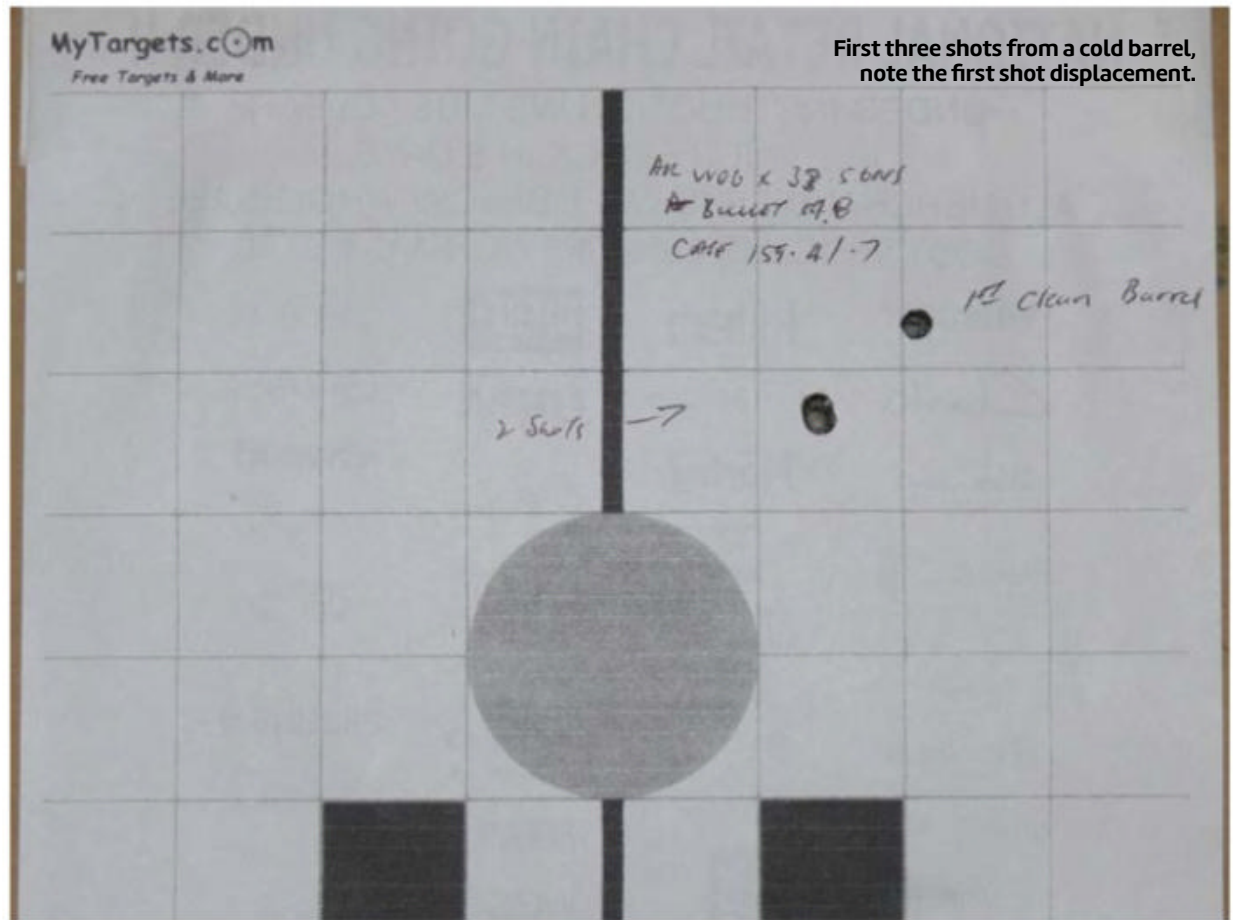
Projectiles have many shapes and sizes.



Going ballistic

The computer program also tells us that at 200 yards the same projectile would impact 13.05" below the line of sight. It is also worth noting that the maximum distance of the projectile above the line of sight is a mere 0.77" at 75 yards when sighted-in with a 100-yard zero. If Cameron had decided to have a zero range of 150 yards the figures would naturally have changed. In this case the maximum distance above the line of sight would be 2.93" at 75 yards and the projectile drop at 200 yards would only be 7.29" below the line of sight

The next step is to consider just how we might sight in a rifle that is used for varminting, because due to the extra distance involved the criteria will change. If we sighted-in a varmint rifle at 100 yards, much of the advantage of the flatter projectile would be lost. My .22-250 Remington is a reasonable example; it digests a variety of 55gr soft-point projectiles from several makers at an average velocity of 3650fps with an average BC of 0.214. Once again, this speed is the most accurate for the cartridge. Although the BC of the 55gr projectile is not much greater

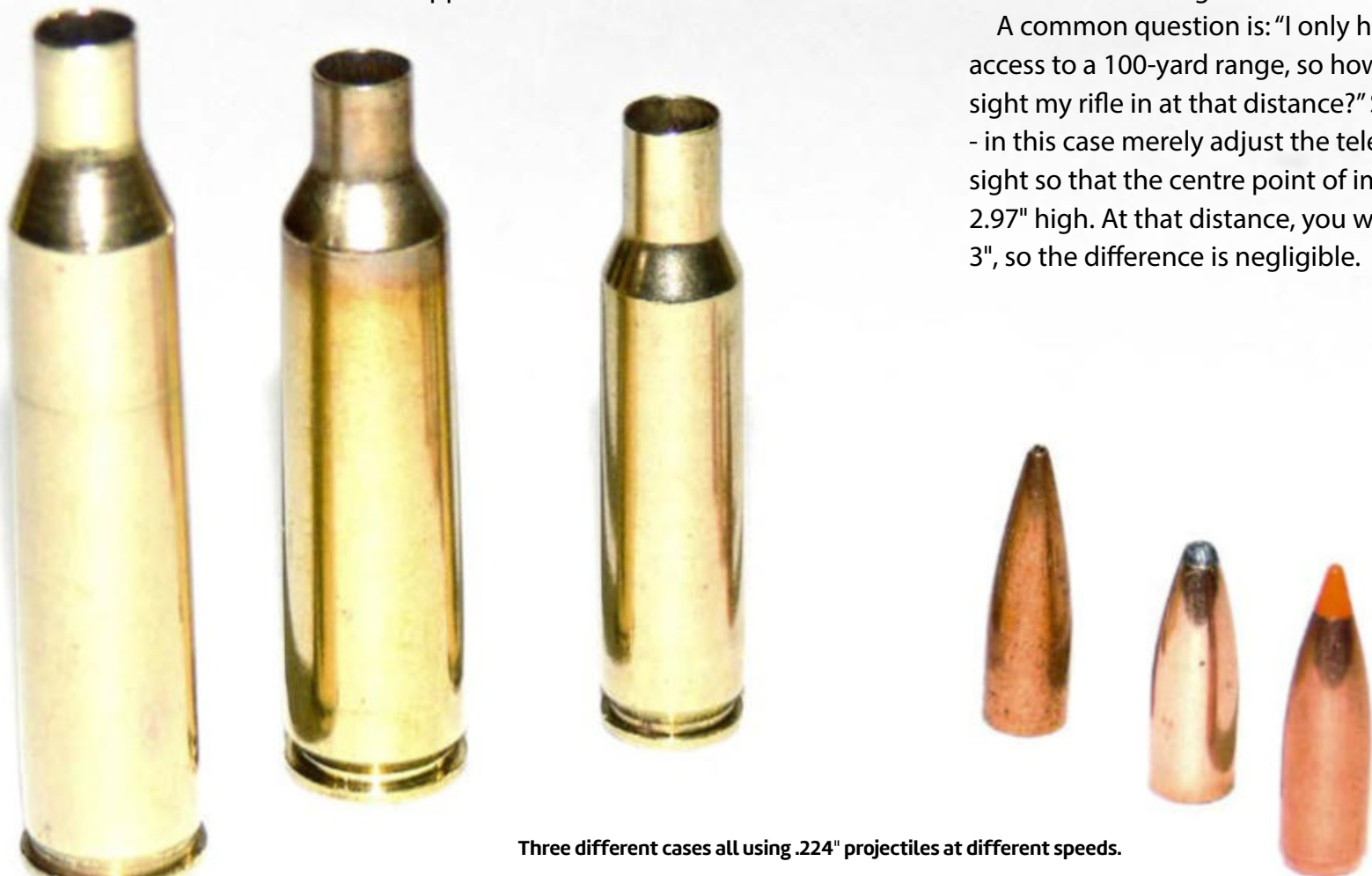


than that of the 300gr flat-point, the velocity is much greater.

There are other projectiles in this range that may have even higher BC values. Often it is possible to extend both the range and impact energy by simply using a more efficient projectile. This statement applies to all calibres.

The first decision is to select the zero range. In my case I decided to go with 55gr projectiles to use a zero range of 300 yards. The computer result shows that at 100 yards the projectile is 2.97" above the line of sight, rising to a maximum of 4.06" at 175 yards. At 400 yards the projectile is 10.68" below the line of sight.

A common question is: "I only have access to a 100-yard range, so how do I sight my rifle in at that distance?" Simple - in this case merely adjust the telescopic sight so that the centre point of impact is 2.97" high. At that distance, you would use 3", so the difference is negligible.



Three different cases all using .224" projectiles at different speeds.

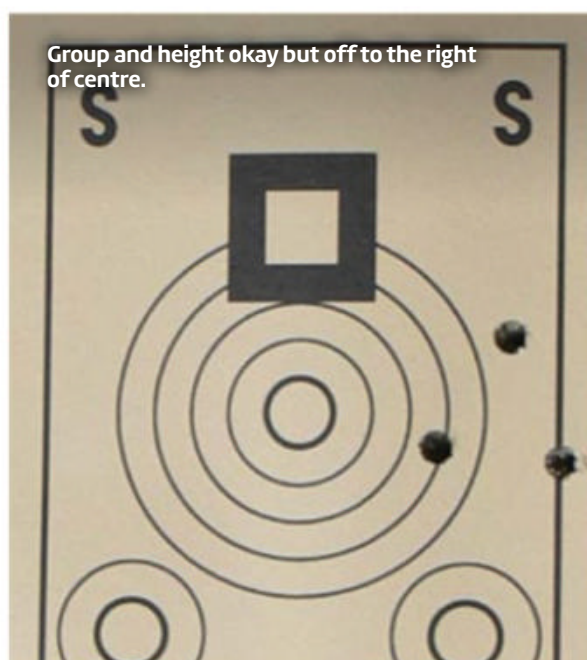
With reference to sighting-in there is one other factor that needs to be accounted for - the wind and its velocity. To overcome this, only sight in when the wind is almost negligible. It may be difficult to obtain dead calm conditions. One way out of this dilemma is to sight in early in the morning or just before sunset. In the first case the wind will probably not have started to blow but by the evening it may have diminished to practically nothing. It pays to wait for good conditions.

Which brings us to the most contentious issue of sighting-in a hunting rifle, including all calibres that shoot projectiles above .224. Compared to the varmint shooter, who may manage several shots at a static target, the hunter of bigger game will almost certainly only make one shot and thereafter is committed to either ignore the fleeing animal or persist in attempting to hit the same animal, which is rapidly exiting the area.

We may well know the zero or point-blank distance our cartridge is sighted in at, but it may be difficult to apply the known numbers to a rapidly disappearing animal.

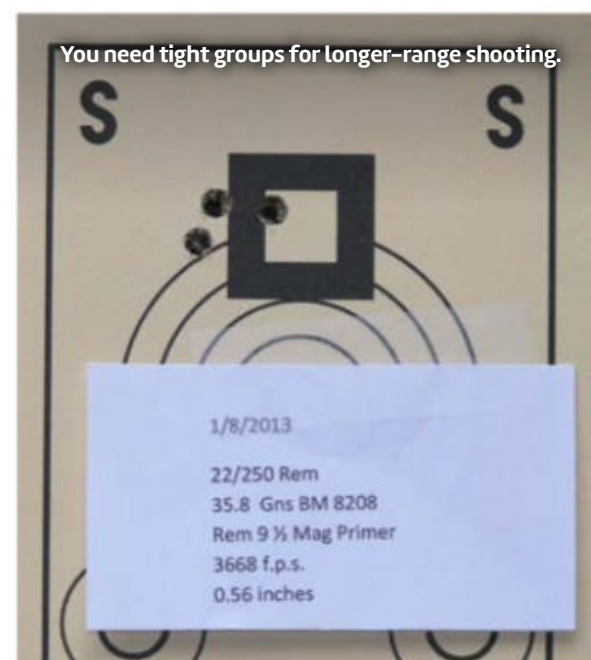
Perhaps as a representative hunting round we could consider the .30-06 cartridge loaded with a 165gr Speer flat base projectile with a BC of .444. There is a huge array of projectiles in .308 calibre, some with impressive BC numbers. If we consider the Speer Reloading Manual No. 14 it should be possible to attain a velocity of 2600fps in a mythical average rifle with any number of suitable propellant powders. You might do better than this figure with a new barrel.

Three different projectiles that will have varying ballistics depending on which cartridge they are fired in.



The results show a zero range of 225 yards with the projectile 7.22" low at 300 yards with a retained energy of 1508ft-lb. Compare that with the .45-70 at 100 yards where the energy is 1612ft-lb.

An interesting comparison is to use the same velocity with Speer's 165gr boat-tail spitzer, a projectile with a BC of .520. If both projectiles were sighted in to be 3" high at 100 yards the zero range with this projectile is 229 yards, projectile drop of 6.54" at 300 yards and a retained energy of 1625ft-lb. So, it is apparent that a small increase in BC can have quite an effect on the actual trajectory and the retained energy. In addition, similar results will be found if the muzzle velocity can be increased. A bigger capacity cartridge case may be one way of achieving this.



In the days before ballistic computer programs, it was suggested that most hunting rifles should be sighted-in to be 3" high at 100 yards. This is not a bad suggestion and for most hunting rifles will provide a zero range somewhere in the region of 250 yards depending on velocity and the BC of the projectile. It really depends on what each hunter is capable of and the particular type of hunting that may occur.

A computer program can offer multiple possible solutions to many 'what if' questions in relation to projectiles. Many hunters are invariably seeking more efficient projectiles to cover a multitude of situations. With different projectiles arriving in our local gunshops each year, it is a vast expanding field that requires constant research. ●



The .243 Winchester is versatile from 55gr Ballistic tip to 100gr boat-tail spitzer.



A boar wandering in the field.

Pigs, pigs and more pigs

David Duffy finds heaven on Earth hunting a plethora of porkers

I must have died and gone to heaven. That was the conclusion I had reached. It could not have just been a dream, as I had all these empty 6.8 SPC cases and the photos on my camera. There were pigs, pigs and more pigs. This is how it all came about.

The wet summer caused by La Niña coupled with the decreased hunting activity due to restrictions and lockdowns because of COVID-19 has seen an explosion in pig numbers in parts of New South Wales and Queensland. Several weeks earlier I noticed a significant increase in pig sign on one of the properties in northern NSW that I hunt on. So, I headed back there for a few days of pig hunting.

I decided to take my Sako S491 with me as I had recently replaced the wood stock with a McMillan graphite stock using Edge Technology in Sako Hunter style. I'd also attached a Kahles 2-7 scope, replacing the Swarovski 3-9 that I had previously been using. I was also soon to have the barrel trimmed of some excess weight and wanted to be sure I was doing the right thing.

The afternoon of the first day had me thinking about how I was going to see any pigs in the thick thigh-high grass, and if I did see them, how was I going to manage

a clear shot? I decided to head for an area that used to hold good numbers of rabbits, but all the warrens had been abandoned, either because of myxo or calicivirus.

A fox appeared near some blackberry bushes about 150 paces away and though I was looking for pigs, it was a bit hard to resist the temptation of taking a fox. He was watching me. I sat down to take the shot, being a bit far to shoot offhand. As I did so, he vanished before I could squeeze the trigger.

I kept walking, but there was nothing else around, except a few kangaroos. A snakeskin I spotted reminded me that the snakes are still about. Snakes, spiky thistles such as saffrons and scotch thistles, plus wet grass in the early mornings (in the cooler months) are why I wear canvas knee-high gaiters.

I spent three-and-a-half hours looking for pigs that afternoon. There appeared to be a blackened tree stump behind some dead scotch thistles which I at first dismissed as... just a blackened tree stump. I wondered, could that be a pig? I was about 40 paces from it. Yes, it's a boar! I loaded a round into the chamber as quickly but also as quietly as I could and stalked closer by another 10 paces but at a different angle so I could have a clearer shot.

The pig stopped foraging and looked in my direction. The saffrons were in the way, but if I didn't take the shot, he would be gone any second now. The scope was on 2, which is really 2.3 magnification. I aimed the duplex cross-hairs of the Kahles scope into the scotch thistles at where his upper body would be and touched off the 2¼lb trigger on the Sako. To my satisfaction he dropped where I shot him, kicking his hind legs for a few seconds before being still. A medium-size black boar. That was a satisfying way to end the day.

The next day had me out before sunrise to a more heavily treed gully where the grass was long and thick. There was lots of pig sign there... rooting, tunnels through the grass and their droppings. But there weren't any pigs. It wasn't that they were running off through the thick grass before I reached them, for I would have heard them scatter and seen the grass moving.

I covered a lot of ground and headed back to the cottage I was staying in around mid-morning. In the afternoon I searched a different area along a creek. A total of six hours walking that day revealed not a single pig.

That evening I planned where I would go on day three. I would head to a distant



David aiming at the first pig behind the saffron.



The first shot was a medium-size boar.

Pigs, pigs and more pigs



A large brindle-coloured pig shot on the third day.



Another brindle pig just over the summit of the gully.

part of the property and be out in the field before daybreak. It occurred to me that if there was lots of pig sign everywhere, but I was seeing hardly any pigs, then they were probably just coming out at night and returning to their hideouts as the first rays of the sun announced the new day.

In the gloomy half-light of the morning there were no pigs in the paddocks as far as I could tell, using my Swarovski 8x30 binoculars. There was something sinister in the air though. I happened to look up into a wooded gully that had a small watercourse running down its centre. Walking away from me up the gully was a large black boar, at about 75 paces. I again quickly and as quietly as possible chambered a 6.8 round. He was about to disappear around a bend in the gully so I took the shot as he angled away from me. He then simply disappeared.

I started searching the left side of the gully, following animal trails and then coming back to check a different trail. Along one of those I saw another boar rooting up the ground. He was medium-size and I took the shot and heard the 'whack' of the 110-grain Sierra Pro-Hunter strike home. These have always been a great all-round projectile in the 6.8 SPC, but for the large boars in Cape York or Arnhem Land, I use the superb but expensive 110-grain Barnes TSX. These retain virtually all their weight and mushroom with their four petals peeling back nicely.

The Sierra 110-grain Pro-Hunter was designed as a varmint projectile, but if they are slowed down to 2820fps, which is what I have them leaving the muzzle at using AR2219 in the Spec II chamber, then they destroy the internal organs of medium-size game without exiting usually.

As I shot the second boar, the gully erupted with pigs. I saw about 15 head up the gully and disappear behind some thicker bush. I decided to do a large semi-circle and hopefully come out level with the pigs but on the opposite side where they wouldn't expect me if they were still where I estimated they should be.

When I arrived there, I walked a little and soon found a small mob about to rest under a low branch. The biggest pig was brindle-coloured. I shot it behind the



David used a Sako S491 chambered in 6.8 SPC II on his pig hunt.

shoulder and found it stone dead among thick tea tree bushes. After I took some photos, I decided to see what was further up the gully.

Some pigs were running in the distance up the side of the gully. I kept climbing to the summit and started to descend down the other side, curious to learn what was beyond this gully. It wasn't long before I came across another small mob of pigs and once again shot the biggest one, another brindle-coloured porker.

I didn't go any further, deciding that the gully that I had just left was probably the best I was going to do, in terms of pigs. On the descent back into the 'gully of the pigs', a lone boar crossed in front of me at about

100 paces on its way to rest up in some tea tree bushes. I shot him just as he was about to disappear into the tea tree. At the shot, a mob of pigs way over to my right squealed and started running for cover into the distance.

I finally reached where I had shot the second boar, but in the long grass and not remembering exactly which path he had taken, I wasn't able to find him. Another 100 steps on, I started to search for the big, black boar that I first shot at that morning. Not finding him on one side of the gully where I thought he may be, I went to the place I last saw him before he disappeared after the shot. I crossed over the small watercourse and started to search the other side. Within about 10

steps of where I shot him, I found the big one - as dead as dead can be. Now that made me happy!

I didn't go back to that gully, hoping the pigs would eventually return and settle. In a few months I will revisit that place and maybe bring the Sako 6.8 SPC again. It certainly did a fine job with the 110-grain Sierras, even on the bigger pigs.

Driving home and seeing a healthy amount of water in the Gwydir and the lush green fields, there was a large black blob in some farmer's paddock. Another hefty boar. Ten more minutes down the road, two grey and black-spotted pigs came out of the wiregrass about to cross the road before seeing my 4WD and deciding to head back in the direction they just came. More pigs! ●

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S SHOOTER

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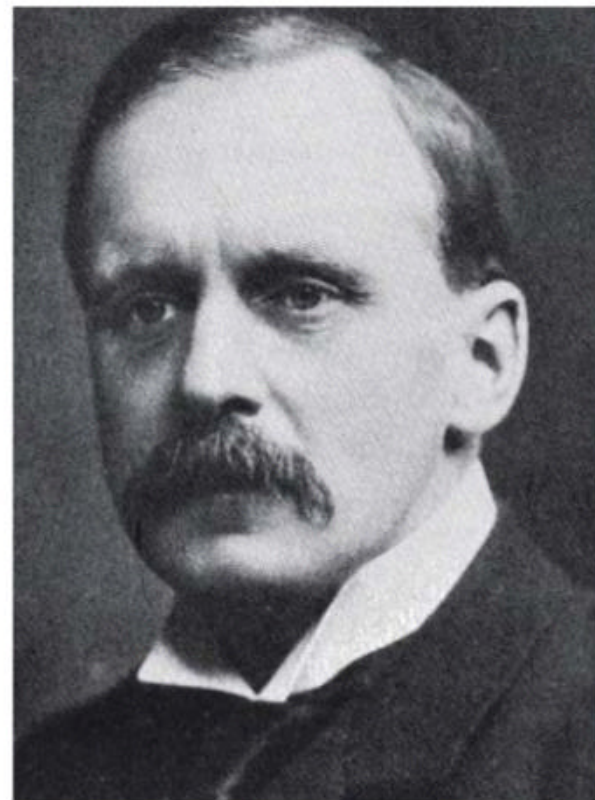
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Sum and substance

Johan van Wyk covers why sectional density is so important for quick and effecient kills on game



Above: George Grey, killed by a lion in 1911 on the Athi Plains in Kenya when his .280 Ross, firing a fragile, high-velocity 145-grain bullet, failed to stop a charge.

Left: The 140-grain 7mm bullet (left) is similar to the one George Grey unsuccessfully used to stop a wounded lion.

In the Kenya colony of the early 1900s, a favourite pastime was shooting lions by 'galloping' them from horseback. Lions were considered vermin in those days and, as abhorrent as it may seem today, shot on sight.

One man who participated in this dangerous pastime was George Grey, an Englishman of aristocratic birth who happened to be the brother of Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary of the time. On the morning of January 29, 1911, George wounded a big lion with his .280 Ross. The .280 Ross was then a red-hot cartridge, firing a 145-grain bullet at almost 2900fps, roughly the equivalent of a .270 Winchester in today's context.

Grey wounded the lion from long range and, as the cat charged him, dismounted to face the approach. A first shot at 25 yards as well as a second one at five yards failed to stop the enraged cat as it grabbed Grey and mauled him severely.

Grey's companions eventually shot the lion but he succumbed from his wounds in hospital a few days later and was buried in a Nairobi cemetery.

Grey's death and the circumstances leading up to it has been a topic of discussion for

many years. The .280 Ross is by no means a suitable lion cartridge, but it will kill a lion cleanly with a single shot under ideal circumstances. So, what went wrong?

Firstly, the bullets of the time for cartridges like the .280 Ross tended to be light-for-calibre, ill-constructed bullets intended to boost velocity and energy figures (and therefore propaganda potential) rather than penetration. A post-mortem of the lion that killed Grey showed that bullet placement wasn't at fault as one bullet went into the lion's chest, while the other hit the head. But rather than both bullets broke up almost on impact and failed to penetrate.

At the time of Grey's death, a fashion existed among hunters to shoot large, dangerous game with small-calibre rifles. Chief among these was a Scot by the name of Walter Dalrymple Maitland Bell. He was probably the most famous of the old-time elephant hunters and is best remembered for using rifles chambered for the 6.5x54, 7x57, .303 and .318 to shoot large numbers of elephants. He even went so far as to ridicule large-bore rifles in some of his writings.

What set Bell's choice of small-bores apart from Grey's .280 was that he preferred

to use heavy-for-calibre, full metal jacket 'solid' bullets for his hunting. If we take the .318, for instance, it fired a 250-grain solid at an advertised 2400fps. It was by all accounts one of the best penetrating loads available at the time and could pierce an elephant's skull from virtually any angle.

One of the things that the 250-grain .318 load had that Grey's 145-grain .280 load lacked was sectional density. In layman's terms, sectional density (SD) is the numerical result of a calculation that compares a bullet's mass to its cross-sectional area. SD is calculated by dividing a bullet's mass in grains by its cross-sectional area in inches, squared, divided by 7000. Therefore, the higher a bullet's SD, the heavier it is in proportion to its cross-sectional area. Please also note that bullet shape does not affect SD, as it stays the same for bullets of the same mass and calibre.

Why is SD so important? Well, if we assume that other factors such as impact velocity, weight, design and rate of expansion are equal, a bullet with good SD will out-penetrate a bullet with poor SD as the force is concentrated into a smaller area. Still confused? Let's consider two bullets, one in .375" and the other in .458", both



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Sum and substance

weighing 300 grains. When compared, the .375" bullet is longer than the .458" bullet of similar weight, and clearly offers a smaller frontal area.

If we assume that both bullets have the same construction and design, are launched at similar muzzle velocity and fired into a similar medium, it's a safe bet that the .375" bullet will out-penetrate the .458". The .375" bullet has an SD of .305 but the .458" bullet's SD is a poor .205. This, in a simplistic nutshell, is SD.

With SD out of the way, the other factor that killed George Grey was bullet construction, or rather the lack thereof. As mentioned, the small-calibre, high-velocity bullets of the early 1900s had thin nickel or copper jackets designed for rapid expansion. When fired from a cartridge like the .280 Ross they tended to be almost explosive, expanding immediately upon impact. They would no doubt have dropped a small, soft-skinned animal like a springbuck in its tracks on a broadside shot with massive internal damage but when we substitute the springbuck for an angry male lion, things change for the worse.

The original hunting 'bullet' was a stone-tipped arrow or spear shot or flung by Stone Age man. Eventually, with the advent of firearms, things progressed to the round lead ball and when modern firearms came on the scene, jacketed, lead-core bullets became the order of the day.

The first smokeless cartridges were the .303, 8x57 and 7x57. With the boost in muzzle velocity provided by 'smokeless' propellant such as Cordite, which became available in the 1890s, cast-lead bullets were no longer up to the task of penetrating deep into an animal, hence the development of the jacketed bullet in various forms.



Although not the same shape or construction, this photograph serves to illustrate the difference in SD between a 300-grain .458 (left) and a 300-grain .375 bullet.

For military use, full metal jacketed 'solid' bullets were developed in order not to transgress the stipulations of the 1899 Hague Convention, and these soon found their way into the hands of the likes of Bell who found out that they handily killed big game such as elephants. The bullets were heavy-for-calibre (with good SD) and at the muzzle velocities of the day (typically 2000-2400fps), they held together and penetrated deeply.

However, solid bullets, even those that were well placed, simply didn't do enough damage to kill expeditiously every time. While solids were fine for the big stuff, many hunters, especially those in Europe and the US, had no need for them and demanded expanding bullets for thin-skinned animals such as elk and deer. The various US, British and German manufacturers responded by developing expanding bullets, but unlike the solid bullets of the day (which were simply the military-issue bullets of the time, in some instances), these were sometimes not quite up to task.

To keep up with developments as well as to gain the upper hand in marketing, the British and the Germans vied fiercely to introduce new cartridges during the early days of smokeless powder. The .280 Ross is a prime example of this. As mentioned, the Ross, as used by George Grey, was loaded with a fragile 145-grain bullet that couldn't achieve meaningful penetration on an angry lion. To worsen matters, many of the expanding bullets were deliberately designed to be fragile and break up after impact. On a tiny deer this may have worked, but on tough African antelopes it was disastrous.

The Germans, especially, developed bullets designed for rapid expansion and then proceeded to compound matters by loading them in cartridges meant for dangerous game like the 9.3x62. The British, not to be outdone, did the same, notably with the .318 Westley Richards and .404 Jeffery.

We've already discussed the .318's legendary penetration, but after the cartridge's introduction a load with a copper-capped 180-grain bullet at 2700fps was brought in to cater for those who shot their game at longer distances. Anyone who tried it discarded it almost immediately and

Although the 160-grain 6.5 bullet (left) would at first glance appear to have superior SD compared to the 500-grain .458 bullet, the .458's SD is actually better at .341. The 6.5 bullet's SD is still an impressive .328.



went back to the tried-and-trusted 250-grain load.

Even when loaded with expanding bullets, the .318's 250-grain bullet with an SD of .328 penetrated deep and straight and retained its weight. Had George Grey tackled his lion with a .318 loaded with standard Kynoch 250-grain softs, he would probably have survived the encounter.

The British experiment with lightweight loads in the .404 was generally similar: a 300-grain bullet at 2600fps. It was described as a poor penetrator and condemned as a wounder of game. As with the .318, people went back to the proven 400-grain load and the 300-grain load was quietly dropped.

SD notwithstanding, there are some instances where it is a lesser factor. One example is in culling operations where the norm is head and upper neck shots in order to kill the animal quickly and cleanly. Because of shot placement, penetration is less of a factor here and the massive damage caused by a high-velocity bullet striking bone at 3000fps or more can be almost explosive in effect. I'm pretty sure that many culled animals never even knew they were being shot at so the massive and instantaneous brain or spine damage switches off the lights immediately.

I must also own up to the fact that I've shot numerous impala, blesbuck and springbuck with lightweight, high-velocity bullets using behind-the-shoulder lung shots. I've done this with a .243 Winchester (85-grain Sierra GameKing at 3200fps) as well as a .25-06 Remington (100-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip at 3300fps).

JEFFERY'S

A vintage W.J. Jeffery & Co advertisement
for their .404 rifle.**•404 MAGAZINE RIFLE****MAGAZINE HOLDING 5 CARTRIDGES.****RIMLESS CARTRIDGE.**

Charge 60 grains of cordite, velocity 2,125 feet per second, bullet 400 grains, muzzle energy 4,000 foot pounds. Flush magazine, holding five cartridges and admitting of the bolt being closed on one cartridge in the barrel, thus enabling six cartridges being fired without recharging.



Weight of Rifle about 9 lbs.

No. 1 Model.—404 Jeffery Mauser Action Rifle, 24in. or as desired nickel steel barrel, standard and leaf backsight to 300 yards, bead foresight, pistol grip stock, chequered forepart, eyes for sling, roughened iron heel plate with trap for pull through. Accurately sighted Price **£35**

No. 2 Model.—404 Best Quality Mauser Action Rifle, 24in. or as desired nickel steel barrel, standard and leaf backsight to 300 yards, bead foresight, specially selected walnut stock, pistol grip, chequered forepart, eyes for sling, roughened iron heel plate with trap for pull through, deadened socket and flat of action, highly scroll engraved, safety gold inlaid Price **£40**

The .404-bore Jeffery Magazine Rifle as shown above is probably the most popular large bore magazine rifle ever made. The action is specially made and designed for this cartridge, and not a Military Action adapted for the cartridge. Whatever price is paid no more soundly constructed or better shooting rifle can be obtained.

The .404-bore cartridge was designed by us several years ago, and it still remains in universal demand. Proof of this can be found in the Catalogues of practically every British and Continental Gunmaker. The energy is obtained by using a heavy bullet with a medium velocity. This is much more certain for use against big game than a light high velocity bullet giving the same or even higher theoretical muzzle energy. The load is a well balanced one and there is plenty of air space in the case, consequently pressures are not unduly high considering the energy developed.

I was always careful to place the bullets behind the shoulders of the animal as it stood broadside, about one-third of the way up, and in mostly every instance the animal dropped to the shot almost immediately. Again, the fast, lightweight bullets caused massive internal haemorrhaging and the lungs were invariably shredded.

I've also never been able to recover a bullet from one of these shots so although

it worked, it's probably not something to do regularly, especially not on larger animals such as wildebeest and the like. With bigger antelopes it is damage to vital organs coupled with penetration that will prove fatal - in other words good SD coupled with good bullet construction.

So, after boiling down the facts presented here, what is necessary to kill efficiently and quickly? With body shots on

big and tough animals where penetration is key, use a cartridge firing a well-constructed bullet with good SD. These heavy bullets expand well yet retain weight and deliver good penetration.

Good SD coupled with sound bullet construction is a winning recipe. It works, and works well, on just about any huntable big-game animal, anywhere. ●



A sight for sore eyes

Jan Kaptein weighs up the slick Kahles Helia 2-10x50i riflescope

When hunters discuss optics, there are two general categories. The first includes the various European premium scopes and the second is basically a catch-all for others. As little as a few decades ago, this was arguably accurate as many aspiring manufacturers produced what were essentially clones of the offerings by the market leaders.

However, prior to the advent of the internet, there were always manufacturers of premium optics that, even though known in certain circles, never received the acclaim they arguably deserved. Having used various Kahles optics over the years and looking into the company history, I would argue that Kahles has been underestimated by many hunters. Or perhaps they were simply not aware of Kahles as an alternative to some of the other premium brands.

I have put the Kahles Helia 2-10x50i (Helia 2-10) through its paces extensively in the field under various conditions, ranging from hot and dry weather to nocturnal outings in the pouring rain. I use the scope on a bolt-action driven hunt rifle as well as on two single-shot stalking rigs. As such, my findings are based on real world use for hunting purposes.

The Kahles 2-10x50i on one of Jan's stalking rigs.



Kahles 2-10x50i on a Haenel J9 single-shot rifle.

Kahles has a long history as a manufacturer of premium optics, including rifle scopes. They started operations in 1898, which arguably makes them the world's oldest manufacturer of riflescopes. They sport an impressive list of innovations that includes the use of adjustable ballistic drop compensation (1904), O-rings to waterproof scopes (1960) and the use of multi-coated optics in riflescopes in serial production. Kahles was family owned and run for decades until it was sold to Swarovski in 1974. Between 1977 and 1989 Kahles operated as a branch of Swarovski Optik. Subsequently, it was incorporated as a stand-alone company, Kahles Limited, in May of 1989. To ensure they maintain optical excellence and premium quality, Kahles continues to manufacture all critical components of their products in-house. From personal experience, I can say that their customer service is great too.

The 2-10 sits in the middle of the Helia line-up in terms of magnification. Other options include the 1-5x24i driven hunt model, 2.4-12x56i high magnification option and light 1.6-8x42i. The Helia 2-10 has a generous eye relief of 95mm and offers a field of view of 21.0 to 4.1m at 100m. It has diopter compensation from +2 to -3.5. The lenses are coated (Oleophobic). The twilight factor of the scope is listed at 6,2-22,4.

The scope comes with a second focal plane 4-dot reticle with a fine illuminated

red dot in the centre. This dot is powered by a single CR2032 battery that is easily available. To ensure longevity, the scope is equipped with an 'automatic light' function, which switches off the illuminated reticle when the scope is not in a shooting position.

Impact adjustments are done with marked turrets that click firmly into place. Each click corrects impact by 10mm at 100m. Maximum reticle adjustments are specified at 1.6m at 100m and ballistic drop compensation turrets are optional. All this comes in a fairly sleek aluminium housing with a 30mm main tube. The scope is fully waterproof, dry nitrogen purged and with O-ring seals in the turrets and battery compartment. The Helia 2-10 has an overall length of 341mm and the external diameter is 56 at the objective and 46 at the eyepiece. The total weight, excluding scope rings is 585 grams. No flip-up caps

are provided, but it comes with a neoprene cover in the box.

Now those were a lot of numbers! Shooters may argue that there are 'better' scopes around. And on paper, may even seem right. There are scopes with higher magnification ranges, wider fields of view or perhaps more eye relief. However, the true test is how a scope performs in the field.

The sleek profile of the scope means it mounts on low rings, close to the barrels of my rifles, just the way I like it. The zoom ring is made out of aluminium and adequately knurled to easily grab hold of it. Zooming through the range is smooth, both in hot and cold weather. The illuminated dot in the reticle is sufficiently small and acute and the fact that it is easily adjusted adds to the utility of the scope.

I have used the scope in the near dark with a low intensity setting and



Shipped with a fine neoprene cover.

A sight for sore eyes

experienced no glare or internal reflections. When sighting-in the scope at the range on a bright and sunny day, I switched on the illumination on a static target in bright light, just to see what would happen. To be fair, I had to crank the illumination to near maximum intensity, but the result of this test was that even in bright sunlight, the dot is clearly visible, even on the light-coloured parts of the target.

Neither warm muggy weather, nor freezing cold lead to any fogging or other issues, which speaks in favour of the Oleophobic coating used on the lenses. While I try to avoid getting soaked, I have been caught in a few rainstorms while out and about. On one occasion this left my gear well and truly dripping, but the Helia 2-10 was none the worse for it. After a wipe down when I was back to camp, it was as if it had never been wet.

The Helia 2-10 is marketed as an all-rounder, which, based on experience, it almost is. Let me explain. With a minimum magnification of 2, the scope is theoretically just about suitable for driven hunts. I have mounted the scope on my CZ 557 in .308 and used it on a few pig hunts. I had anticipated that the additional weight of a full scope would bother me as I almost always use red dots or low magnification scopes on driven hunts.

However, due to its sleek profile and relatively low weight, it has worked better for me than expected. That said, I am used



The scope has a bright and compact illuminated red dot.

to optics without any magnification for driven hunts. While 2x may not seem like much, there is a real difference when compared to unmagnified optics. What works really well for me on driven hunts is the illuminated dot. Set to a fairly bright setting and combined with the quality glass, it makes for easy target acquisition.

I have put the Helia 2-10 on my Bergara BA13 TD and Haenel J9 stalking rifles in .308 and .243 respectively. Both of these rifles are single-shot firearms. I use the Bergara in bad weather or when I expect to possibly run into something that needs the additional punch of .308. The gun itself is fairly heavy for its size and the Helia 2-10

works well on it because it does not add a lot of weight and maintains a compact overall set-up. The Haenel is a different beast altogether. It is my go-to rifle for long hikes over difficult terrain and when every additional ounce counts going after meat for the freezer. Well, that and when I feel like hunting with a neatly made rifle.

Anyway, the Haenel is a sleek little gun and I also use it with iron sights. That means I have to mount the scope slightly higher, but the overall package works really well and is a joy to use. I have hunted pigs, deer, foxes and various other pest animals with the Helia 2-10 on both rifles and can heartily recommend it for a similar set-up.

The zoom range means that you can shoot at low magnifications when you have the opportunity to stalk in close, while you always have the higher magnifications at your disposal in case you need to take a longer shot. No matter whether this is required due to an animal being particularly skittish or the terrain limiting your ability to move closer.

Kahles does not list light transmission percentages in the specifications of the Helia 2-10, but I find that the scope is a lot brighter than many others I have used and I would venture to say close to some of the much more expensive 'alpha' alternatives. For all intents and purposes, it is bright enough to keep hunting until the light grows so dim that you ought to stop shooting. This is because it becomes impossible



A plump doe for the freezer, stalked with the Kahles 2-10x50i.



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Screen: 0.4 LCOS 1280x960

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M60 Thermal: 640x512

Lens: 18mm / 25mm

Screen: 0.4 LCOS 1280x960

From \$2,749

A sight for sore eyes

to track whatever animal you just shot if needed or even locate it if the shot was at a longer distance and it went a few paces before dropping in tall grass.

On a few occasions, out in the mountains on bright days, the harsh light caused some internal reflections on one of my binoculars but I noticed none with the Helia 2-10 when glassing the slopes and taking aim at targets. Please note that I would not recommend using a riflescope to scan terrain. On these occasions, I did so purely to test the scope for internal reflections, after I had made sure the rifle was not loaded.

During all my use, aim has remained true, regardless of the number of shots fired. It is a well-made scope and it works in almost any situation. It is one of those products that benefits from being used to make up your mind, rather than reading a spec sheet. On paper, there are alternatives that seem 'better', albeit often at a steep price. However, in the field, I have used few scopes that I liked better overall. The Helia 2-10 just works and in the unlikely event of troubles, the scope comes with a 10-year warranty (two years on the illuminated reticle and optional BDC). It is bright and built at least as well as scopes twice its price. I particularly like the knurled aluminium zoom ring and have never understood why some premium scopes opt for rubber rings or coatings. The reticle is pleasing and the illuminated dot easily visible in all conditions. I do recommend setting it once you go close to the light conditions you will be shooting in as it does not automatically



A single CR2032 button cell powers the illuminated dot.



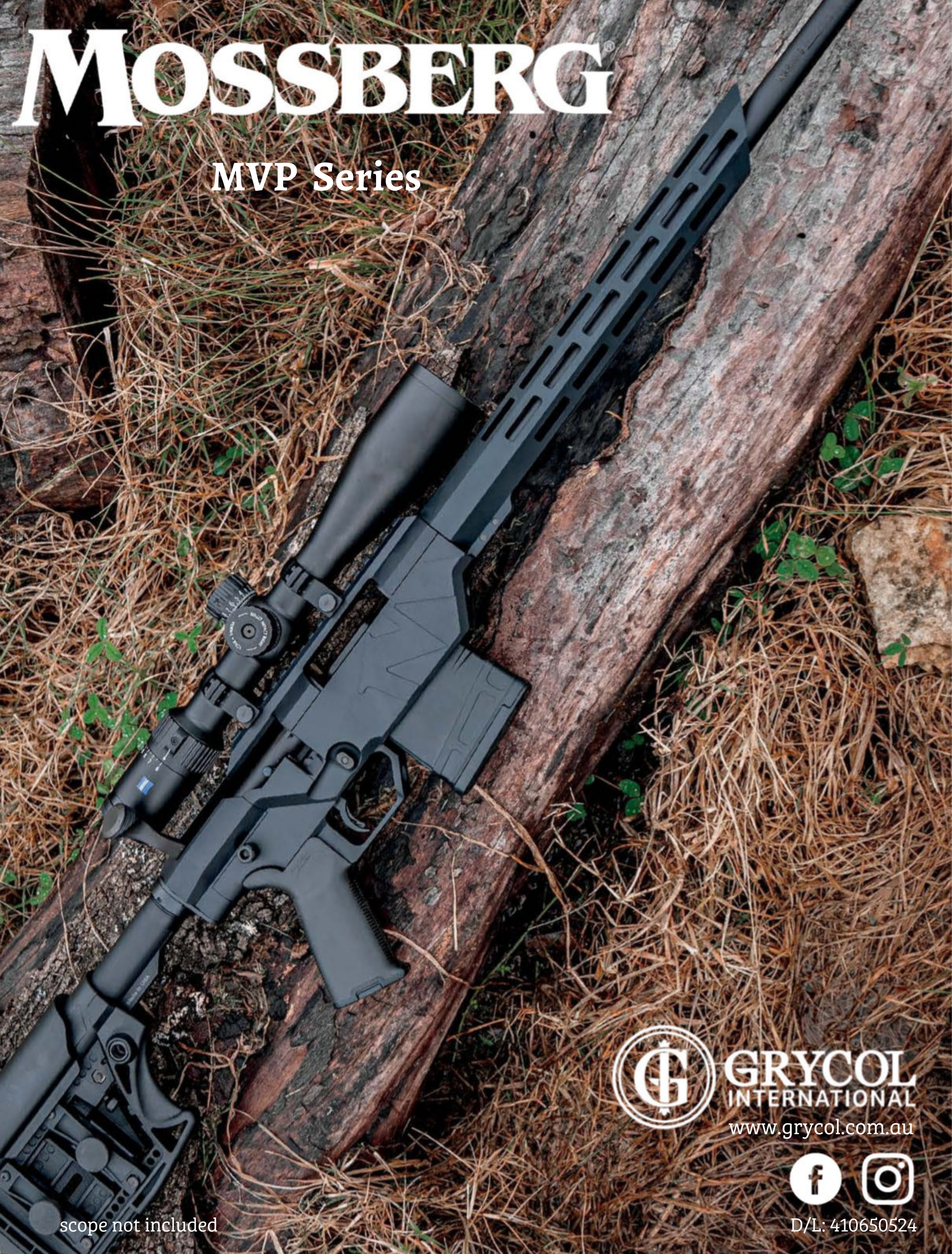
adjust intensity. That said, it switches off automatically when you carry your gun or put it in the safe, which is handy.

If there is one thing I wish for, it would be a rail-mounted version like the SR-rail that comes with other Kahles options, which would make switching rifles easier. That said, if you mount it once and use it, this may not matter to you. The neoprene cover that ships with the scope works well for transport and storage. Still, I would recommend fitting flip-up caps for field use. They are quicker to open and close and do not keep in humidity and dirt like a full cover does.

To conclude, the Helia 2-10 is a reliable go-to optic, even in harsh climates or in remote areas. Depending on your magnification preferences, it functions well for driven hunts and it makes a fantastic stalking scope because of its sleek profile, relatively low weight and ample magnification range. ●

Specifications

Style:	All-round hunting scope
Dimensions L x W (Objective-eyepiece):	341mm x 56mm x 46mm, 30mm main tube
Weight:	585 grams
Eye relief/Objective/Zoom/Diopter:	95mm/50mm/2-10x/+2 to -3.5 diopter
Field of view/Twilight factor:	21.0-4.1 at 100m/6,2-22,4
Reticle:	4-dot, second focal plane, illuminated
Reticle adjustment:	1.6m, 10mm/click
Power:	1 CR2032 battery
Power saving/Enhancement:	Auto-off when not in shooting position
Weatherproof:	Yes, Oleophobic coated lenses, dry nitrogen purged
Warranty:	10 years (two years on the illuminated reticle and optional BDC)
Price:	\$2290
Optional:	Ballistic drop compensation, throw lever, flip-up covers for eyepiece and objective, sunshield and killflash
Distributor:	Swarovski Australia



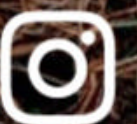
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Purdey and Mick with her trophy deer.

Honour the hunt

Mick Chapman is reminded of what matters the most in this world

Training a puppy to be a hunting dog can be a demanding task. Some 17 years ago an attempt to instruct a German shorthaired pointer named Ruger was a hopeless failure.

I had more luck after I fortuitously met Danny and Cathy Hayes, of Adligjager Kennels in Burpengary, Queensland.

Danny and Cathy discussed many things about choosing the right breeder and dog and we settled on taking Purdey. Not everything was straightforward as Purdey

had to survive a life and death struggle after a paralysis tick bite. But about seven months from her birth, Purdey finally found her way to our home, where she slotted in as though she had been with us all her life, immediately bonding with me.

During her time with Danny and Cathy, Purdey had been instructed in and learnt many of the basic commands I would need her to know when hunting. Cattle and sheep never seemed to be an issue, though pigs were a different story.

My first hunt with Purdey was an eye-opener. I had never hunted deer with a dog, so kept her on a leash. We soon crossed paths with a small mob of fallow deer, instantly going to ground, hoping to remain unseen. I spun to Purdey, turning the palm of my hand towards the floor and whispered firmly “drop”, while putting weight on the collar. She immediately dropped, but she made a few anxious murmurs.

We allowed the mob to pass, stood up and recommenced hunting. Eventually we



Mick's pup was well-chosen. Even early on she showed the attributes for hunting, leading her brothers and sisters into exploring new territory.

came across another mob, with a shooter deer in its midst. Again, we went to ground and as soon as I turned my palm flat, Purdey dropped to the ground. Being a quick learner is a great asset.

Over the years hunting with Purdey, I have to admit, more deer were lost than shot. Which I used to blame on a lack of hunting by Purdey. At times she would surprise me by taking the initiative in the bush, but I never sensed that real connection between hunter and dog.

At times while we hunted, we would rest during these jaunts, when occasionally Purdey would begin to whine. Not having the nous to understand why, I would attempt to quieten her. Purdey would then become more excited as I struggled to do my best to calm her down, a continuous pattern for years.

Having bought Purdey for her excellent blood trailing, she often pointed animals, but our success rate could only be called ordinary. Frustrated with our lack of success, I talked to Danny and his answer was: "Watch your dog." The next hunt I would watch her every move until old habits would creep back, so nothing changed.

I then talked to another experienced hunter, Tony Cudmore. His message was exactly the same as Danny's though he did add: "Honour the hunt," explaining when the dog begins to follow a trail, honour the dog by following that trail.

I began honouring the hunt, which of course, led me to all sorts of wildlife, including echidnas, goannas and the odd

snake. When this occurred, I would give Purdey a firm "No" then carry on our hunt. Over time we started to understand each other better, but every now and then when we stopped for a rest, she would start this awful whining. Trying to calm her only seemed to make things worse.

I become excited around late January, when mature stags' antlers harden and the rub and pre-roar scouting begins.

My mate Tobias was up, always ready to spend two weeks hunting the roar. Recently I purchased a Wolverine side-by-side buggy which would be used mainly to excise dead deer from the bush, eliminating meat wastage. As with the plans of mice and men ours went slightly awry. We were cutting a track through some steep country when I stepped on a rock and twisted my ankle, ending our track making.

The following day Tobias and I set off to hunt, climbing the mountain, but I began

having trouble keeping up due to my ankle. Informing him of my difficulty, we decided to split up. Tobias headed north-east, with me and Purdey going west. Skies had been threatening but now rain began falling, not heavily but enough to get wet.

My progress was slow and painful. Purdey would cast out then come back with a quizzical look, as if to say: "Hurry up, the deer are roaring." Finally, I reached the saddle I had aimed for and I could hear five different stags. The roaring was replaced by an overwhelming silence, fragmented only by the sound of birds or water dripping from the leaves. Unexpectedly, a stag continued its overture, inviting others to join in the chorus. Purdey and I waited for an hour, as the roaring intensified. A decision was made so I stood up to prepare for a hunt.

Purdey had disappeared into the scrub, so I whistled three times for her signal to come. She arrived and dutifully stood by my side while I determined the closest roar. I began my slow and arduous stalk, my ankle throbbing, with Purdey at the heel.

As we stalked in Purdey would break to my right. I would give the command to "heel" and she would obediently heel. All the time she was looking at me then glancing over my right shoulder, emitting a quiet whimper. I suddenly realised she was telling me there was a deer close by.

Looking down at her and the urgency in her eyes, I accorded her the lead. Unexpectedly, a roar emanated from behind the knoll to my right. The roar's resonance told of its proximity. Purdey was at the point. Frozen, we watched as the deer appeared and proceeded to head towards Purdey.



Crossing paths with a small mob of fallow deer, instantly going to ground, hoping to remain unseen.

Honour the hunt

The stag was 2m from Purdey when he realised his predicament. By this time my rifle had been raised with cross-hairs firmly fixed on his front shoulder. Abruptly, the deer spun around, his head beside his shoulder. It was too late, as regrettably my bullet passed through his skull shattering it, killing him instantly.

I was over the moon. Purdey and I were in sync 100 per cent of the time for this kill. Having held point till the shot, she now did what she loved, chewing on deer. We sat in the bush with the deer, Purdey on my lap. We were two satisfied hunters. I then began the caping while Purdey stood around chewing tit-bits of venison, perceptively aware, this was her deer.

In hindsight it makes me wonder how many deer I have missed over the years because I wasn't watching my dog. Purdey taught me so much and I am only sorry that I didn't pay enough attention to her earlier.

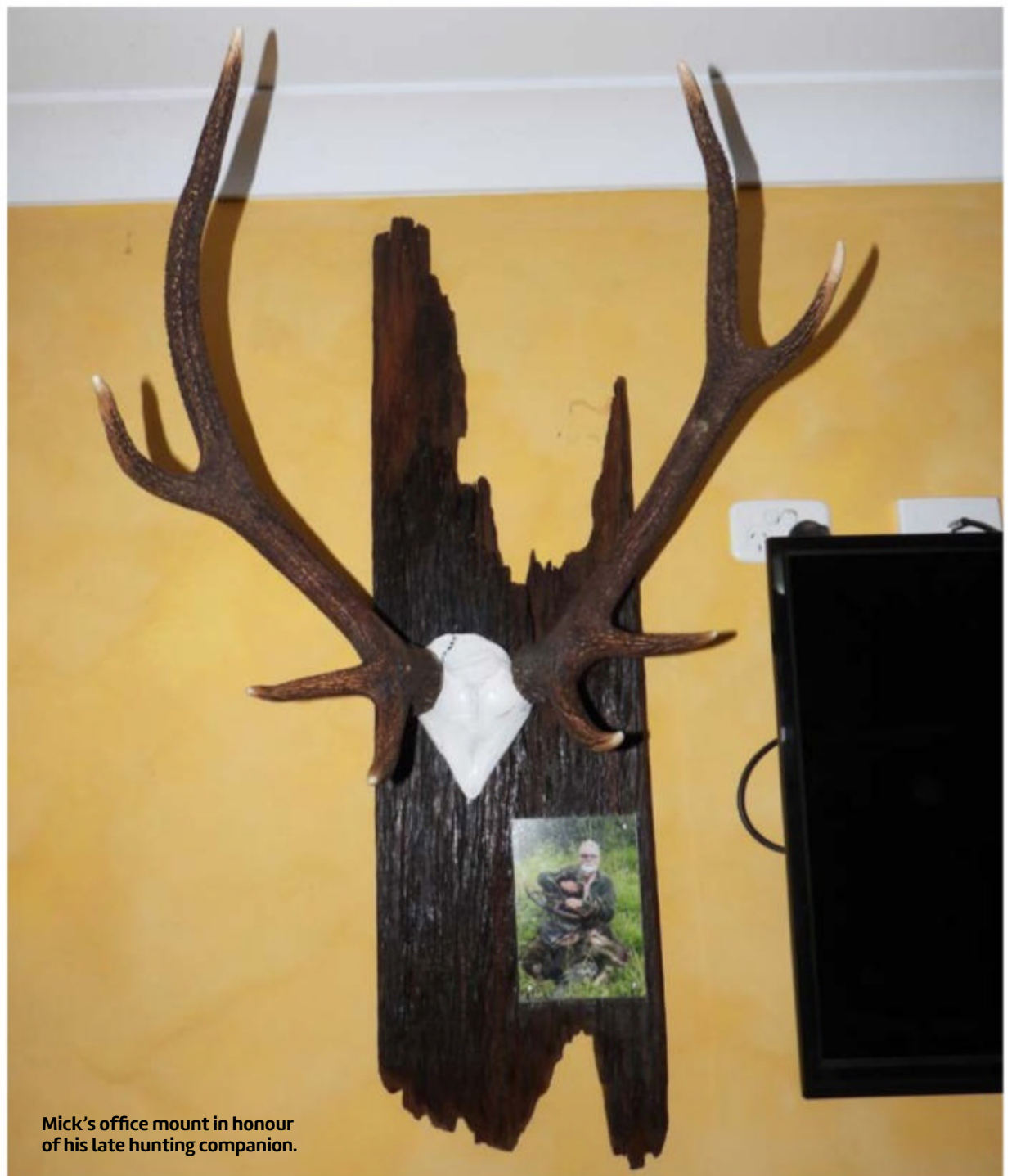
I caped the deer and loaded my backpack with all the meat I could carry and began my trek back to camp. If my ankle was sore when climbing the mountain, it was now almost unbearable descending, with the head and cape and as much meat would fit into my pack. The ground, wet and slippery, ensured I spent times skidding and crashing to earth. Even so, my satisfaction levels were at an all-time high, as nothing detracted from this amazing hunt.

Breaking out of the bush a couple of kilometres from camp, I dumped my pack, the head and cape and began hiking back to camp. On my arrival Tobias had returned, so we climbed into the buggy and proceeded to retrieve Purdey's deer. We took some photos then went back to camp.

Once home, I boiled the meat off the skull to assess the damage to the skull bone. It was horrendous, though we did manage to redeem it with some help from taxidermist mate Markus. Even more horrendous, Purdey died from a snakebite not long after this outing. To honour the hunt, and more importantly honour my great friend and hunting companion, I have mounted the skull with a photo of me and Purdey that takes pride of place in my office. ●



Originally trained as a blood trailing dog, Purdey helped retrieve a number of deer that otherwise might have been lost to Mick.



Mick's office mount in honour of his late hunting companion.



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Rub a duck duck

Ben Unten smokes flavoursome juicy thigh meat

Those who enjoy smoked meat will always be on the lookout for new things to try. Wild duck can be a little bit tricky for first-timers to tackle, but this recipe is virtually foolproof.

If you don't have a smoker, you can use most lidded barbecues by buying stainless-steel smoker boxes. These are available from hardware stores and barbecue shops, or alternatively you can make one out of foil. The instructions are included.

Another little tip is to make up extra quantities of the rub and then store it in a Tupperware container so it's always available.

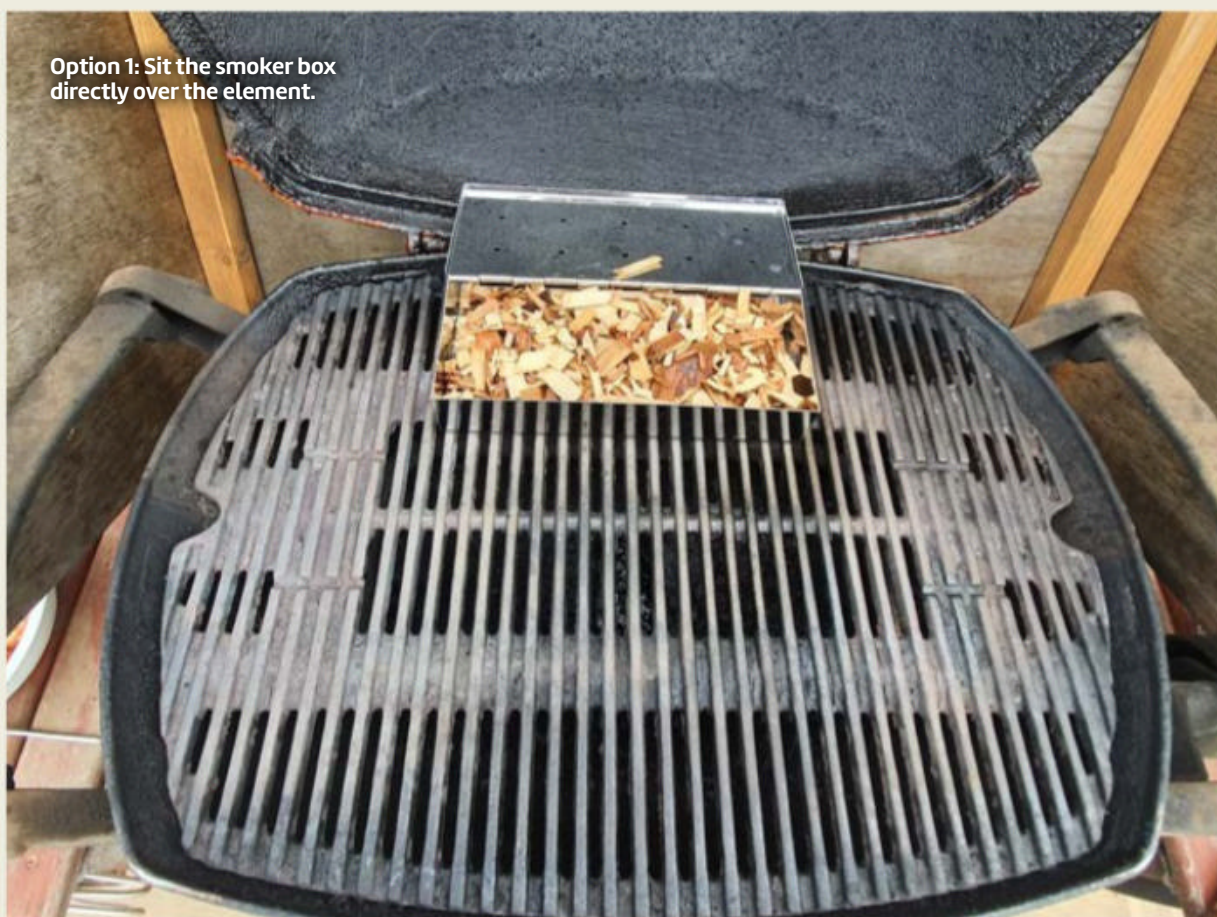
Ingredients

- Cleaned and deboned wild duck thighs
- Woodchips (pre-soaked minimum 25 minutes) or pellets for your smoker

Smoked duck rub

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons paprika
- 1 tablespoon smoked paprika
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper - optional

Option 1: Sit the smoker box directly over the element.



Fold up a foil pouch and fill with woodchips.



Improvising a smoke box or pouch

You can either sit your bought smoke box on top of the grill or you can hang it underneath with wire. In either case, make sure it's directly over an element.

Alternatively, you can fold a large piece of foil in half, fill with pre-soaked woodchips and fold in half again, wrapping and sealing the woodchips inside. Then poke a small hole in the pouch and place on the grill.

Method

Position the soaked woodchips in your smoke box or pouch and place in barbecue.

Preheat your lidded barbecue to 125°C. Depending on the model, you may need to use a small, temperature resistant rock to prop the lid open to keep the heat down.

Coat the duck thighs with a generous amount of the rub.

Roll the thighs up and skewer with a toothpick to secure.

Place the thighs on a trivet and cook until an internal thermometer registers 80°C in the thickest part of the thighs - approximately 40-60 minutes. ●



Option 2: Wire the box under the hotplate.



A small heat-resistant rock can help keep the temperature down.

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A sabbath year

‘For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord.’ Leviticus 25:3,4

Trophies and medals, an unexpected consequence from COVID for **Mike Arnold** in Mozambique

Bushbuck with leathery, bald ears and forehead.



sat in a semi-daze, not so much from the bourbon in my hand as from the day's happenings. My befuddlement was due to having taken one of my dream animals. In the Zambeze Delta Safaris' skinning shed across the airstrip from Mungari Camp, and the firepit at which I was sitting, skilled staff were preparing my trophy sable antelope.

Male and female sable antelopes carry scimitar-shaped horns, but the horns of a mature male sweep back in an arc that seems to just keep going. Old males are also as black as a classic tuxedo, wonderfully offset with snow-white markings on face, rump and belly.

I know of no one who denies the sable antelope a standing as one of the glamour species for trophy hunters. Sadly, sable antelopes are decreasing in numbers across Africa, not from trophy hunting, but because of encroachment of humans and the associated habitat loss, with an estimated 51 per cent of the species' former range gone.

Thanks to great management based on hunting funds, this is not true in the historic camp of Coutada 11. Incredibly, numbers of this wonderful animal have swollen to carrying capacity and beyond since Mark Haldane and colleagues took over the stewardship. But this antelope is still highly coveted by hunters, making it one of the costliest game species to seek. I never

expected to be able to pursue a beautiful, mature, coal-black, bull sable. Fortunately, I was wrong, and have now fulfilled a long-time dream. I had something else as well. I had a marvellous example of one benefit of the catastrophic COVID pandemic.

Sable antelopes taken regularly by Mark's clients are lovely, but relatively modest in horn length, with 38" being a good size for this area. I really didn't care about the length of horn carried by my trophy sable bull. Thirty-six, 38, whatever, he was a wonderful animal that would help me relive a magical pursuit. I turned to my companion Mark at the firepit and asked: "How can he be so large? Do you guys take 42" sable bulls regularly?" The outfitter grinned. "The year off really helped the sable antelopes and everything else," he said. He was referring to the COVID-related shutdown of 2020. As a scientist, his statement made me wonder if we might be witnessing the effects from a Biblical-esque, 'sabbath year' for the game animals?

A super-abundance of great trophies

"I've never seen this many shootable trophies, let's hold off and see if we can find something even better." My Coutada 11 professional hunters, Julian Moller and Dylan Holmes, uttered multiple times during my two safaris. At some level I found it frustrating, with all the passed-up rams, bulls and boars looking very

shootable to my eyes. But 'Listen to your PH!' is a mantra worth adhering to. Because I did, we ended up with amazing trophies, and like my sable, many of which exceeded the expected size-standard.

Ironically, the hunt for a so-called 'Community' Cape buffalo destined not as a trophy for my wall, but to feed 60 Sena families, gave one of the best examples of the super-abundance of trophy animals. Over the tenure of Mark Haldane and his partners, the Cape buffalo bulls taken by clients in the forests, woodlands and marshes of his concession have been good trophies, but not exceptional in terms of 'spread'. Forty inches is the oft-quoted goal in width for a Cape buffalo bull.

The Coutada 11 bulls have normally fallen a bit short of that mark, so when we went out looking for a 'meat' bull, I expected to hear from Julian that we were seeing trophy-class bulls in the 38" category, while we went for something older, but narrower. Instead, time and again, my PH lowered his binoculars from his eyes and shook his head. He would turn slowly towards me and whisper: "Those bulls are all over 40-inches!"

The fact that we had to track three herds before we could find a sub-par bull speaks volumes to what happens when a hunting concession has a sabbath year. Especially in a sub-tropical area so rich in food resources, the game animals will grow quickly, and without the removal of trophies, the over-abundance of larger than normal horns and tusks occur in the subsequent years. We did finally find a bull that met the general criteria of being substandard, but his spread would have been good as a trophy in years past. Viva la sabbath...

The old, the blind and the lame

The initial trophy animal taken on the first of my two safaris was a beautiful, ancient, Suni antelope ram. In fact, he was so old that he had very little hair on his muzzle, had a large chunk missing from the base of one horn and was blind in one eye. A perfect trophy to take in all respects.

In the same ancient age-class as the Suni ram, were two other trophies - a warthog and a bushbuck. As a matter of interest, warthogs were what alerted me to



A Cape buffalo destined to be used to feed an entire village.

A sabbath year

the fact that the 2020 sabbatical year for safaris left behind a trail of decrepit animals that would likely die before the end of 2021. Everywhere we encountered warthogs, my PH Dylan would point out emaciated boars with a staggering gait.

"That hog will die of old age before next season," was his mantra. When I asked if this was normal, the answer was: "I've never seen this many ancient hogs in Coutada 11. This is all due to not hunting them last year."

When we walked up on my trophy warthog, he too was geriatric. With a bald forehead, very little mane left, teeth worn down to the gums and not a scrap of fat anywhere on his body, he was destined for the scavengers in the next few months.

If anything, my bushbuck ram looked even more affected by the years than either my Suni or warthog. The ram was at the same time one of the most amazing animals I've ever seen and one of the oldest of my trophies. His spine jutted several inches above his back, with no fat and little muscle running along the ridge. His

neck was bald, his forehead rubbed clean of hair, his ears torn, hairless and smooth as tanned leather.

Though not as close to near-death as my warthog, Suni or bushbuck, two other animals taken showed their advanced ages as well. These included a red duiker and the sable. The indication of many accumulated years for each of these trophies came from what scientists refer to as posting or in common terminology 'secondary growth'. This refers to the growth pattern at the base of a horned animal. When such an animal reaches advanced age, the base of each horn begins to be smooth rather than ridged. The red duiker and sable (plus Suni and bushbuck) had tall posting on the bases of both horns.

Medals, medals and more medals?

Okay, so remember that I am trying to test a hypothesis. That being, the sabbatical year forced on outfitters and professional hunters not only in Africa but in places like Canada, Europe and Australia resulted in larger than average trophies within

those regions when they reopened. If this hypothesis reflects accurately the outcome of subsequent years, then it might be worthwhile to re-examine management strategies in hunting concessions like Coutada 11.

Truly, I love big trophies. However, my greatest trophy to date is a doe whitetail deer taken when I was young, hunting with my dad. It was my first big game animal and it represented my entering into the fellowship of hunting. So, trust me when I say that where my trophies place in the record books, though of interest to me, have never come close to the thrill of the hunt itself.

Yet, one of the best metrics for testing the hypothesis that a 'time-out' produced larger than average trophy animals in Coutada 11, and by extension around the globe, is to ask how my animals taken on two 2021 safaris fared in the premier record book, that of Safari Club International?

From the record book standpoint, there are two metrics to judge trophies - whether they have the measurements to earn an SCI medal and where they place relative to all other individuals recorded for that species. SCI medals come in three classes - gold, silver and bronze with the colour reflecting whether a trophy reached a minimum score based on length and thickness of horn, skull size or whatever other measurements are appropriate for a particular species.

A second way to tell how large a trophy might be is to look at the overall ranking relative to every other individual of that species listed in the SCI record book. Was the trophy in the top 100 all-time scores, earning a gold medal? Or was the animal too small to earn a medal of any colour and fell in the lower ranges of all the scores for that game animal? One other factor to consider is the total number of record book entries. Back when I ran in races, placing meant quite a bit more if I was competing against 20, rather than two, other runners.

Where did my nine trophies from 2021 place? The answer is impressive. All nine earned medals - four gold, three silver and two bronze. Seven of the nine animals placed in the top 100, four of nine in the top 50, two in the top 25 and one in the top



This hefty warthog was a worthy prize.

20 scores recorded by SCI. However, maybe the most impressive statistic is when we consider the actual placements compared to how many other animals my trophies are running against.

We have: Blue duiker = number 32 of 653, red duiker = 16 of 550, oribi = 54 of 245, bushbuck = 22 of 1230, Suni = 26 of 381, waterbuck = 58 of 2575, nyala = 88 of 2602, sable = 140 of 1806 and warthog = 170 of 2955 entries. My trophies taken in Coutada 11 after a forced sabbath year were very large indeed.

To quote my PH, Dylan, after he measured my bushbuck ram: "I have taken three bushbucks of this size in 25 years of guiding clients." The same was true of several of the trophy animals my PHs led

me to. They are once-in-a-lifetime finds, or maybe better expressed, once-after-a-sabbatical-break finds.

Sabbatical years as a conservation and management tool?

Is it possible to allow a hunting concession to 'lay fallow' for a year? The simple answer is 'no'. Outfitters and professional hunters can no more afford to go a year without pay than can anyone else. That is what happened in 2020 for many in the hunting business, and hunting concessions suffered from limited anti-poaching efforts, losing wildlife as snares and gin traps returned.

If Coutada 11 and the other hunting concessions throughout Africa are to resist the poachers' decimating work, funds must

come in from international hunters. Period. Yet, seeing the quality of trophies taken by other hunters and myself in Coutada 11 during the 2021 season, I began to wonder if partial sabbatical breaks might be possible?

Could sable antelopes, for example, remain unhunted one year out of 10, with the amount of revenue lost from licence fees collected from donors who appreciated the dividends in conservation and trophy management? Maybe the next year waterbucks have the year off? And so forth, on a rotating schedule. Perhaps this is an unsustainable model. But I wonder if it doesn't merit some thought. ●



Trophy sable a fine result.

Not just a snake gun

It has a cult following, but **Scott Heiman** believes the Marlin Model .410 lever-action deserves much more

The .410 shotgun cartridge is commonly available, and the lever-action has a cult following with Marlin a popular and trusted brand. Combined, you would think they would make a good match. They do, so why haven't you heard of it?

John Marlin founded Marlin Firearms in the 1870s. From the late 1880s onwards, the company produced lever-action rifles and pump-action shotguns in competition with Winchester and Browning. During both World War One and World War Two, Marlin delivered machine guns and sub-machine guns for the war effort, but always returned to make sporting arms.

In the 1990s Marlin finally overtook Winchester as the most prominent lever-action rifle producer, a position the company has held ever since. Changing hands a few times over its history, Marlin was acquired by Remington Arms in 2007 and then, when Remington filed for bankruptcy in 2020, by Sturm, Ruger & Co. Inc. That's one hell of a history, spanning over 150 years, and it is testament to Marlin's brand, quality and reliability.

Whether you realise it or not, the shotgun was perhaps the most used – if not most deadly – firearm of the Old West in the US, in the pioneering colonies of Australia and during both countries' Gold Rushes. This was due to the versatility of shotguns, the relative ease of acquiring ammunition and the ability to reload shotshells – with almost anything. The first successful repeating shotgun was the 12-gauge Winchester Model 1887, designed by John M Browning. However, the first lever-action .410 was made by Marlin.

Designed in 1929, the .410 was based on Marlin's Model 1883 lever-action rifle, reworked to include a 26" smoothbore cylinder choked shotgun. This was the same year as the Wall Street Crash, which quickly turned into the Great Depression. To help keep the company afloat, Marlin gave most of its .410 shotguns away to those who bought shares in the company. After producing 5000 of the firearms, operations stopped in 1932.

The flow-on effect of this unusual arrangement with shareholders meant that the Marlin .410 was acquired by a

disproportionate number of bankers and lawyers, rather than 'sportsmen'. This resulted in many of them being retained in particularly good condition which, together with their rarity, accounts for the high prices these original model Marlins can attract today. It's not unusual to see an original model Marlin .410 reach prices around \$US2000 on the second-hand market and one quite recently sold at auction for \$US5750 (Rock Island Auctions May 15, 2021).

The Model .410 lever-action reviewed here was reintroduced to the market by Marlin over the period 2004–2007. While it represented a modern version of the original firearm, this variant of the .410 was built on the 1895 frame. Advances in the design included an Improved Cylinder choke in a 22" barrel with a hi-viz green fibre optic front and folding open rear sight.

The shotgun has a stylishly chequered American black walnut stock and forearm, as well as a deeply blued steel barrel and receiver. Retailing for \$US500 new, it was comparatively much cheaper than the original. Back in 1930, they were selling for

\$30 which is more like \$US1400 in current money. These days, if you want to buy one of these older modern variants on the second-hand market, examples in excellent condition can fetch around \$AU1500-1600 and normally sell within minutes of listing.

Due to positive customer feedback and high demand, Marlin released the Model .410 XLR between 2008-2009, with laminate stock, forearm, and a 24" stainless barrel. This shotgun was built on the 336 frame and, as an indicator of either rapid inflation or buyer demand (or both), was priced at \$US650, which is \$150 more than its predecessor model sold just a few years earlier.

In 2020, Marlin released the most recent configuration of its classic shotgun. This version sees Marlin return to the 1895 frame and the more traditional American walnut and deeply blued steel. A change from 15 years earlier is that in this model there is a hood over the hi-viz front sight. An even bigger change is that it's available in the users' choice of fixed open choke or flush choke tubes including Improved, Light, Modified and Full – so it offers plenty of versatility. This latest evolution will set you back \$US800 in its country of origin. Meanwhile here in Oz, you're looking at about \$AU1700 with price increases expected.

Snake gun

In my view, the .410 shotgun has received a 'bad rap', being broadly dismissed as simply a snake gun, mum's gun, an orchard gun or a boy's gun. Its light weight and low shot volume seem to have diminished its true worth in the eyes of some. Most likely, these same eyes are uninformed.



For a start, there ain't no such things as 'snake guns' anymore in Australia. That's because it's an offence to kill or injure a snake. They are native and protected, even (and I can hear the outrage) when they are near your family, near your house or near your chickens. However, it is true that before we started to protect our endemic species, fear of slitherers ran rampant among our European forebears as they tried to tame the country.

So, many people would keep a .410 near the door for emergencies around the house; namely a snake making refuge in the wood pile, chasing mice or stealing eggs from the chicken coop. And that's how the term 'snake gun' originated.

But the lack of scaly targets by no means diminishes the value of the .410 lever-action. In reality, this shotgun offers a highly versatile, capable and cost-effective firearm type and cartridge combo. The low load of the cartridge, its low shot count and the firearm's reluctance to ricochet

make it perfect for use in an urban environment in rural Australia, or in an orchard, where all you really need is a noise maker to scare off the birds.

Add to this the .410's light weight, and you have a firearm that doesn't require its user to have arms like Arnold Schwarzenegger to pick it up. So, anyone within the family (suitably licensed) can use it to scare off or remove introduced birds from the farm or go hunting rabbits for dinner or shoot the fox raiding the hen house.

Except for the recent release the Model .410 was only available in open choke (or rather Improved Cylinder), meaning the world's your oyster for shot load choice. This characteristic allows you to fire more modern ammo like Winchester Defender series incorporating three wad style disc projectiles and 12 BB pellets in the 2½" shell. Perfect for pigs!

A .410 slug will drop deer reliably if you hunt with it like you would a bow. So, expect short-range and broadside shots



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Not just a snake gun

out to 40m. Beyond this, the slugs are, well, sluggish. The reason is that as .410 slugs exit the muzzle, they achieve a higher velocity than most 12 or 20-gauge slugs. However, they lose that velocity at a faster rate than the larger mass projectiles do. And some ballisticians recommend that a minimum 1000ft-lb of energy is required to ethically kill a deer.

While the .410 slug can be measured around 1800fps exiting the muzzle, by the time you reach 50 yards (45m) it has dropped to around 1100fps. By contrast, most 12-gauge slugs out there will maintain over 1000fps out to 100 yards (90m). But that doesn't need to be an issue. The majority of bowhunting I've done has seen me taking game at no more than 25m. And in the bulk of scrub country on the eastern seaboard, you can't see much further than that. Indeed, even in close combat (such as in the Vietnam War), the distance between engagements was 10-30m and was almost never more than 100m.

The in-laws

When I married my wife Kath, I knew I was entering a family raised on the idea that foxes are sleek, cute and best observed bounding through the heather. The same goes for rabbits and hares. But that viewpoint reflects her British heritage.

Once her family arrived to live in Australia and took up a small landholding, the recognition dawned that ferals were ferals and need to be controlled – it's just that some ferals are 'cuter' than others. So, I was allowed to roam the family's 80-acre bush block occasionally with a bow or rifle in hand, enjoying some quiet time while Kath had tea with her folks. Indeed, as an Army veteran and former AFP firearms instructor, I was the first 'outsider' that my father-in-law had ever allowed to hunt on the property.

Then a decade ago, the dad-in-law admitted to having troubles with pigs. He couldn't seem to drop any and could I help? Figuring that I'd just stumbled upon a good

opportunity to do a bit of family bonding, I was happy to answer the call. First-up I asked him what he was currently using. When he replied 'Bruno the Bear' I nearly fainted. You see Bruno was a .22LR Brno.

Now a marksman can drop a pig with a .22LR at relatively close range by shooting down the ear canal. But that's not the case when shooting from distance, aiming at the heart. The issues include the sheer body mass, including the shoulder, not to mention any mud caked on the pig's skin for sun protection. It was self-evident that a larger calibre would be needed to save this bloke's bush block from being torn to shreds by feral pigs, and to achieve an ethical and humane despatch for any animals he targeted.

Besides, I didn't want to be the one having to explain to our young daughter why grandad had been flattened in the back paddock after annoying a big boar with his .22LR.



Winchester Defender rounds work a treat out of the cylinder bore.



The hi-viz fore sight is easy to obtain in lowlight conditions.



Scott on the hunt.

Enter the Marlin

While there were many options available, I wasn't about to recommend a big bore rifle to a 70-year-old. There would be simply too much recoil and, besides, the property was relatively small and surrounded by neighbours' sheep and cattle.

The issue of recoil also deleted the trusty 12-gauge from the list of candidates. We even eliminated a .22-250 Remington on the basis that he found mine too heavy to lug around. And then a lightbulb flashed in my so-called brain. What about a lever-action .410? It would be perfect.

After a little research of his own, he went out and bought a brand-new Marlin Model .410. And after a couple of bonding afternoons of coaching, he had soon fallen in love with this lever-action's smooth workings and its ability to acquire moving targets (like a milk bottle on a string) at 20m. For target practice we were utilising No. 4 shot. But for hunting, I had him lined up with rifled slugs.



As it turned out, the Marlin .410 lever-action was a perfect choice for my father-in-law. Indeed, within a week of taking possession of the firearm, I was receiving calls from him, singing the praises of his Marlin Model .410 and the choice of rounds. He was dropping pigs like flies.

I won't forget the day he rang me up, practically giggling with pride, to tell me he'd taken six pigs in one morning stroll.

And it will always give me pride to know that I contributed to the acquisition of a classic firearm that will ultimately come into possession of my own daughter – just like I inherited my first 12-gauge under-and-over from my own father.

Is the Marlin Model .410 'enough gun'? You bet ya. Just like the lyrics of that 1980s Eric Clapton song, "It's in the way that you use it". ■

Marlin .410 specifications

Maker:	Marlin Firearms Company
Country of origin/make:	US
Model:	Model .410
Year:	2004-2007
Cal:	.410x2½"
Choke:	Cylinder
Stock:	Chequered American black walnut stock with fluted comb, pistol grip
Overall length:	40.50" = approximately 103cm
Barrell length:	22"
Barrell twist:	Smoothbore
Weight:	7.25lb or approximately 3.3kg
Length of pull:	13½" = approximately 34.3cm
Safety:	Hammer and CBS
Magazine:	5-round tubular
Scope ability:	Drilled and tapped
Barrel type:	Round blued steel
Scope mount type:	Weaver
Rear sight:	Semi-buckhorn
Front sight:	Hi-viz green fibre optic

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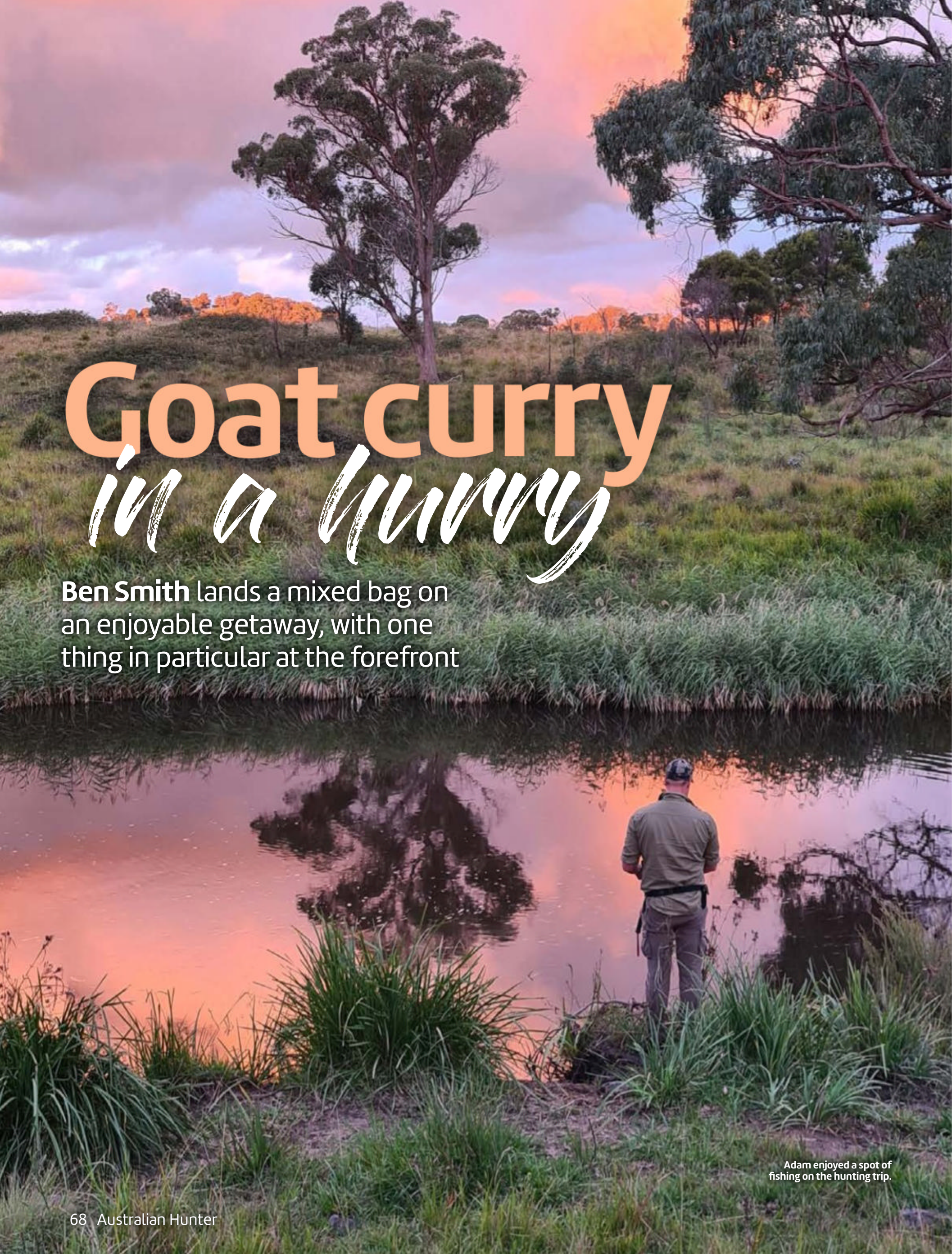
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A full-page background image showing a person in outdoor gear standing in a river, fishing. The scene is captured at sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange and pink sky reflected in the water. The riverbank is covered in green grass and reeds. In the background, there are trees and a line of hills under a cloudy sky.

Goat curry *in a hurry*

Ben Smith lands a mixed bag on an enjoyable getaway, with one thing in particular at the forefront

Adam enjoyed a spot of fishing on the hunting trip.

Adam arrived a day earlier than me and decided to go fishing and glass a few hills on the NSW property we were to hunt. On the first afternoon he sent me some videos of a mob of pigs. It appeared a couple of sows were on heat and this had brought the local lads out. There were around 20 pigs in total but luckily for them, they were on a neighbouring property.

I finished work that night and loaded the car and trailer up, including my Polaris buggy to save the legs. I met Adam on the farm the next day before we headed off to the accommodation and unloaded all our gear in the shearing shed.

I had brought along my chainsaw as the nights would be cool, so perfect for a big campfire. Adam brought his fishing rod to see if he could catch a cod or two. There had been a lot of rain over the previous few

weeks and the ground was still wet underfoot and the river was flowing fast in some sections.

We went for a look in the hills and found minimal fresh sign. The neighbours had been driving up and down their driveway, which perhaps stopped the pigs coming through the fence and instead into the bush.

Turning around, we drove down to the river. I had my new .410 shotgun in the buggy in case any rabbits were about. Adam had literally cast for the second time when he hooked a decent-sized cod. I was still at the buggy looking for shotgun shells, when he yelled out "I've got one!"

Running down to the riverbank, I could see it was a beauty of a fish. We took some photos, and I drove the buggy to find some dry timber and hopefully a rabbit or two.

It was almost evening and the light was starting to fade. Checking my phone,

the rain radar showed some bad weather coming so we quickly chopped up some wood and loaded it in.

There was a sandy patch nearby that usually had a rabbit warren. Walking through the long, wet grass, the floodwater had risen. It had covered all the rabbit holes, probably drowning them at the same time.

Just then as I broke the shotgun and rested it on my shoulder, a small rabbit shot out from the long grass under my feet. Murphy's law, as I only managed one shot at the moving grass as it disappeared into the bracken ferns.

I drove back to Adam, who had made his way along the river about 1km further down than where he had first caught the cod. He seemed to have run out of luck with the first fish.

We were back at the shearing shed just on dark and offloaded the timber. I did my trick of half an aluminum can with a small amount of petrol in the bottom. It creates a candle, without the fuel explosion, which cannot be blown out by the wind. It's perfect for wet timber and putting heat into it quickly.

Before we knew it, the fire was radiating some awesome heat. We made a plan to head out into the night with the spotlight. It was short-lived as the weather turned bad, but we ended up nabbing a couple of rabbits and hares around the shearing shed paddocks. One sneaky fox managed to evade us in the long grass.

The next morning, we woke up before daybreak, jumping in the buggy for a drive into the hills to glass a few locations for any goats or pigs about. The weather was overcast and windy, which is less than ideal, so we looked for spots out of the wind. No luck.

After driving further, we parked the buggy and went to check a trail camera and look for goats – my main target for the trip. Walking for about for 30 minutes, we started to hear goats bleating in the distance.

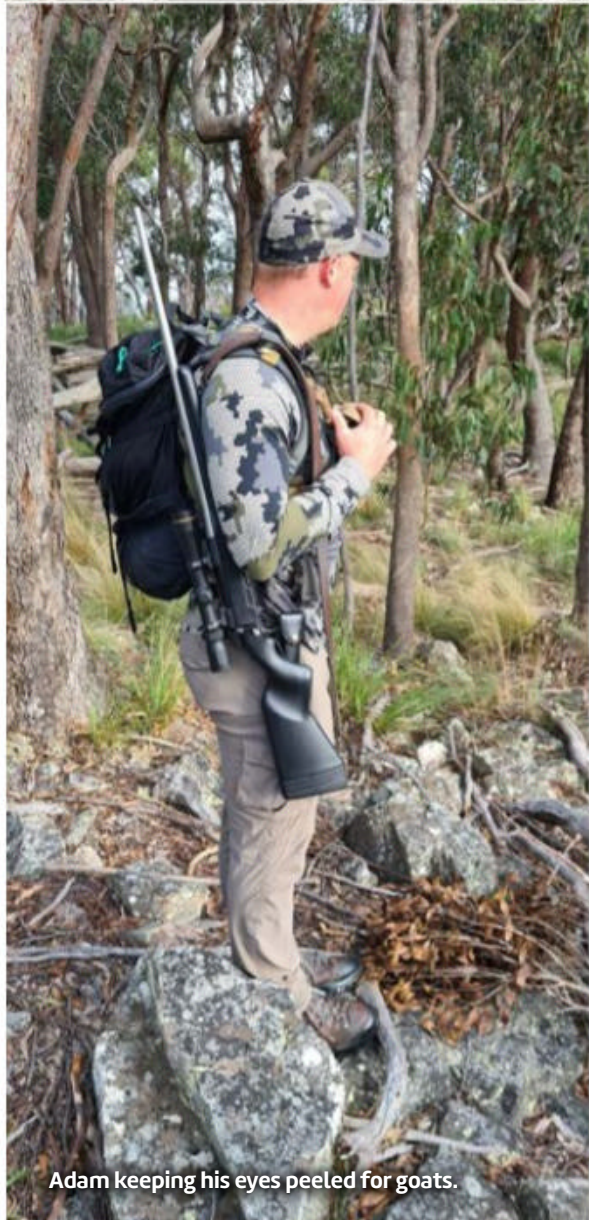
After sitting down on a huge boulder in the sunshine, we glassed across the valley. Seconds later we both started spotting the white goats bedded up in the sun. After a few minutes we counted 50-odd goats of a variety of colour on the opposite face and potentially more on the



Adam with his magnificent second-cast cod.



A glorious property to hunt on.



Adam keeping his eyes peeled for goats.

hilltop just out of full view.

This was good news but the wind direction was less than ideal, so we decided to ambush the goats the next morning, with the hope the gusts would be better. With all the fresh game trails it wouldn't be hard to work out roughly where they would be during the day.

We began to walk back to the buggy. Along the way we noticed pig poo on the track that wasn't too old. This kept our hopes up as everybody loves to shoot a pig or three, right?

The rest of the walk ended up being uneventful, and we decided to collect some firewood, head back down to the shed to have a feed and see what small game was about.

The next morning rolled around, and we were up into the hills to find these goats. The weather had improved, and the wind wasn't as bad as the previous days.

Progressing straight to where we had seen the goats the previous day, it was only a matter of minutes until we heard them

and then saw them. Adam and I came up with a plan and we split 20m apart to find our own targets.

As this was a meat hunt, we looked for young nannies without any kids. After a minute we both found suitable options and commenced the countdown. Consecutive 'booms' from my Sauer in .243 and Adam's Steyr in .30-06 had three goats on the ground. A final shot from my rifle secured one more nanny that had lagged for too long.

Adam had managed to fatally drop two goats with one shot, which wasn't planned but had worked out well. The main mob didn't move far so we glassed them all to see if there were any big billies among them. No such luck, just stocky animals with shorter than 30" horns.

We dragged all the goats into one spot and started butchering. We wanted the front and back legs to slow cook and turn into curries. Plus, the farmer would use any shoulders that had been shot for his own



Three of the four goats before butchering.

dogs at home.

Splitting the 16 legs between us, we loaded up and started the slow heavy walk back to the buggy. While picking our way through the rocky hills, we stopped a few times and cursed at carrying eight legs each.

After a short trip down the hill, we went back down to the shed. We pulled out the Cryovac machine and started butchering the freshly killed meat, which took a few hours.

That afternoon Adam tried a repeat fishing session while I went for a walk with the .410 shotgun. The weather went from good to bad within minutes and I ended up running about 2km back to the buggy just before a torrential downpour.

Just as the thunder and lightning started, we were back to the shed, absolutely soaked from the ride. While fitting into dry clothes, I had loaded the .22LR with rat shot. As we sat around talking and cooking dinner, a lone rat ran moved along the rafters. A couple of shots later and the rat was down for the count.

The next day was home time, so we slowly packed up and evenly split all the delicious goat meat between our eskies. We said our goodbyes and headed in opposite directions.



Fruits of labour – Ben enjoyed a spicy goat curry upon his return home.

Back at home, my wife Emily immediately whipped up an amazing spicy goat curry with ginger, garlic, lemon, tomato and spinach, and along with the coriander on top of the tasty curry, it rounded off a

memorable experience. If you ever need inspiration for a good goat curry, check out *Field to Fork – Second Helpings* at onlineshop.ssaa.org.au ■



Clean as a whistle

Protect what you love.

Scott Heiman runs through some essential gear for your gun

We have all heard the phrase ‘cleanliness is next to godliness.’ It reminds us that it’s important to keep ourselves, and our personal space, clean. It’s often used to admonish, or to give friendly encouragement, to someone to tidy up after themselves.

When it comes to personal hygiene, we’ve been told from a young age to maintain high standards; to stop us becoming sick, from infecting others, and to help mitigate all the nasty flow-on effects.

But the importance of cleanliness isn’t all about epidemiology. We practise cleanliness and care at all sorts of levels. For example, to keep our vehicles on the road, we routinely replace our oil filters, fuel filters and oil to ensure we have an efficient burn. And around the house, we clear our gutters for storm events and bushfires. There are plenty of other examples. Because, let’s face it, measures like these don’t just keep things running effectively, they also save us money. Sometimes lots of it.

Keeping it clean

It’s the same with firearm care and maintenance. There are lots of reasons why you should take the time to clean them regularly, and heaps of benefits from them being clean. And there are many different ways to approach the task.

Some firearm owners choose to clean their firearms after every use. Others regard firearms maintenance as a chore, or ritual – periodically removing every firearm out of the gun cabinet, before taking over the lounge room floor to methodically clean them all at one time. Whichever approach you take, one fact is clear. Eventually, your firearms must be cleaned.

There are two main reasons to clean your firearms regularly:

1. Familiarity

You don’t have to aspire to be an amateur armorer, but the more you handle your firearm correctly the more confident, efficient and effective you’ll be with it. And the easiest way to become familiar with your firearm is by cleaning it.

Disassembling, re-assembling and proceeding with its function tests will keep you in tune with the firearm, and it will also ensure that you notice when something’s wrong. That way you can have it fixed before it becomes a real issue. And while it’s true to say that ‘familiarity can breed contempt’, provided you engage in good practices every time you handle your firearm, familiarity also generates the muscle memory that will help make you a safer firer in the long run.

2. Malfunction

While firearms are built to last, an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. If a firearm is dirty, rusted, or corroded, it could fail to load and extract the cartridge. Too much residue in the barrel can trap a projectile in the barrel after firing.

Mechanisms can foul, jam, fracture, snap or bend; just because you didn’t love your firearm enough. Besides, keeping your firearms in their best possible condition can help guarantee their place as family heirlooms. After all, wouldn’t you like your

grandchildren to be hunting with your favourite rifle when they grow up, all the while thinking of you long after you're gone?

Ship-shape shooter

Firearm maintenance varies from person to person, and there are differing views about how to do it – and with what to do it with. Just as there are technological advances and innovations in computer systems, so too there are developments in the products we utilise to clean and maintain our bang sticks. So, I thought I'd share a few favourites to help fuel the discussion.

Seal-Lock TMT lubricant

As they say 'Oils ain't oils.' Just as some oils will be better for your 4x4's engine than others, so too some oils are better for your firearms. The subject of firearm oils could fill an article by itself – or perhaps even a whole magazine. But, in the interests of brevity,



let's take a look at Seal-Lock's TMT lubricant. And why it's so good.

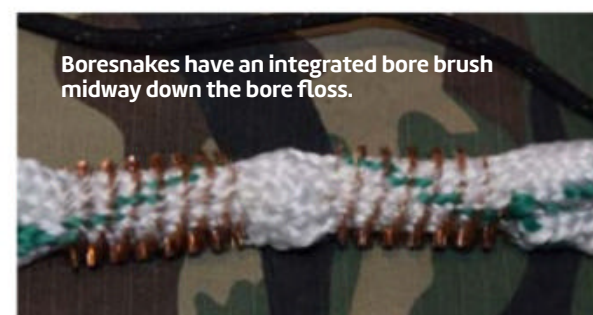
How many oils do you know of that were invented for NASA and used on the Space Shuttle program? Well, this stuff was. It's 100 per cent synthetic, doesn't have a flash point, won't freeze until -73°C , and resists temps up to 260°C , displaces moisture and doesn't attract dust or lint.

TMT isn't just a lubricant, it's also a penetrant. So, when you apply it to metal, it will go through, break down and free-up rust and carbon build-ups which helps reduce the need for harsh chemicals. While oil floats on water, TMT waterproofs, polishes and protects all metal surfaces – and it won't wash off. It also works a treat to keep wooden (including laminate) stocks clean, polished and protected. As an extra bonus, it's biodegradable and odourless, something the world needs more of!

Boresnakes

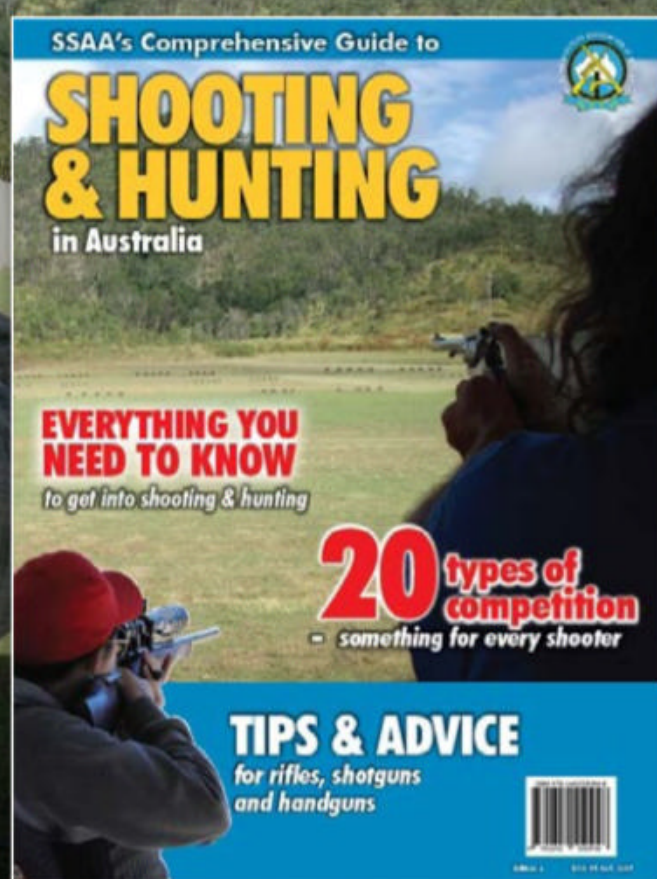
Boresnakes are somewhat like the old pull-through rope for the L1A1 Self-Loading Rifle (SLR). Back in the day, you'd connect your pull-through to a rope, feed the rope down the barrel, and then use it to pull the bore brush/mop or 4by (4x2" cloth) needle through. This method was adopted primarily to save weight and space for the foot soldier. But some clever person has taken this old idea and made it much better.

Boresnakes are a unique tool that can clean a barrel in under 10 seconds. Just like the old version, they have a weighted rope. But that's where the similarities end. Following this is a snake of woven cotton floss tubing with a width that's specific to your calibre.



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.
- Specific tips and advice for rifle shooting, shotgunning and handgunning.
- We go through the 20 types of shooting disciplines within the SSAA in detail and outline how you can get involved. There is something for every shooter and taste.



Clean as a whistle

Midway along, interwoven into the snake, is a brass bore brush followed by more cotton floss that picks up all the debris you dislodged. So, in reality, it's a bore brush, mop and cloth all rolled into one with 150–200 times the cleaning area of a conventional pull-through. Hoppe's make a good version.

Bolt wallets

You know you need to store your rifle bolts separately from the firearms. But how do you store them? If you store them naked, sitting in a locked steel container, you're just inviting them to rust. They need protecting, even if it's simply rolled up in an oiled old tea towel.

I know a bloke who stores his .22LR bolt in a small lockable tool case, about 1ft long. Inside, the entire container is filled with a foam insert with a single cut-out for his beloved bolt. To me, this approach looks like overkill and it certainly wastes space in a gun cabinet. But to each their own.

A bolt wallet is a good option. Companies like Aussie Outback Supplies make them with padded, heavy duty 14oz waterproof rip-stop canvas with a zipper, making it ideal for either storage or transport of your rifle bolts.

Inside, it has cotton foam lining that will protect your bolts from rattles and shakes. And being 240mm x 120mm when closed, it will take most factory-made bolts. Alternatively, you could store other valuables in the wallet like an external hard drive or SD cards for your trail cameras.



Bolt wallets are nifty little creatures.

Moisture absorbers

There's more in the air we breathe than the life-giving oxygen we all need. Bad for us is the airborne pollution, the microscopic particles that float in the air and poison our lungs. Meanwhile, wreaking havoc with our firearms, is the water held within the air, that we call humidity. Water vapour (the gaseous state of water) hangs like a ghostly fog in your house, penetrating your gun safe.

It's worse in summer, worse the closer you are to a body of water (like the ocean, lake or river), worse the closer you are to the Equator and worse after a rain event. One way to fight this invisible foe is with a stock standard moisture absorber from the hardware shop. Place one inside your gun cabinet and it will last 3–6 weeks, removing up to 600ml of moisture from the air, reducing the damp and helping to prevent bacteria, mould and rust.



These are used in basements, bathrooms and kitchens to fight mould and mildew.

Rifle socks

They say that the best form of defence is attack. But if you're not going on the offence, you need to take a layered approach to defeating your enemies; or what the military call 'defence in depth'. And this is an approach that's well suited to protecting firearms. To that end, a rifle sock is a good idea. It can cosy-up to your clean and oiled firearm, working alongside the moisture absorber that you've placed in the gun safe to provide added protection against the elements.

Some time ago, when black powder was king, you'd slip your musket into a leather gun sleeve to keep the moisture off it, and your powder dry so it would burn

effectively. When my dad was a younger man, firearms were either stored uncovered, or sometimes draped or wrapped in a spare old bed sheet. These days we have rifle socks, an effective evolution from the gun sleeve.

Modern gun socks are made of a knit fabric that incorporates elastane to stretch over the firearm and fit around, and over, accessories like scopes. Even better, in some cases the knit is treated with silicone which means the fabric will not hold moisture.

Gun socks come in various sizes to fit pistols and longarms, and even oversized variants. You can even colour code your sock to match your bolt wallet so that, from a distance, you can see that 'this goes with that'.



For \$20, gun socks are cheap insurance.

Gun bags and carry cases

When travelling to and from the SSAA range or the back paddock, you need to protect what you love. If you know what's good for you, you'll ensure that everyone in the vehicle is wearing their seatbelt, that you drive responsibly, and that your firearms are safely stowed away in their carry case.

In addition to protecting your firearm from moisture, dirt and dust, a carry case also prevents it from theft and damage caused by jolts and bumps. While you may think your firearm is sturdy enough to

take the rough with the smooth, modern laminate stocks can fracture from lateral shocks more easily than you might imagine. And it doesn't take much to knock your scope out of alignment, which will negate all the hard work you did to zero it in.

The type of case you use will depend on your jurisdiction and budget. There are hard-shelled cases, conventional soft-shelled rifle bags, some with backpack straps, spare pockets for tools and cleaning equipment, while others can be used as range mats (see onlineshop.ssaa.org.au).

But some features are universal. A quality, secure case with thick foam padding is an investment almost as important as the firearm itself. So, resist the temptation to use the vinyl second-hand carry case that your dad used in the 70s.



Carry cases come in different shapes and sizes.

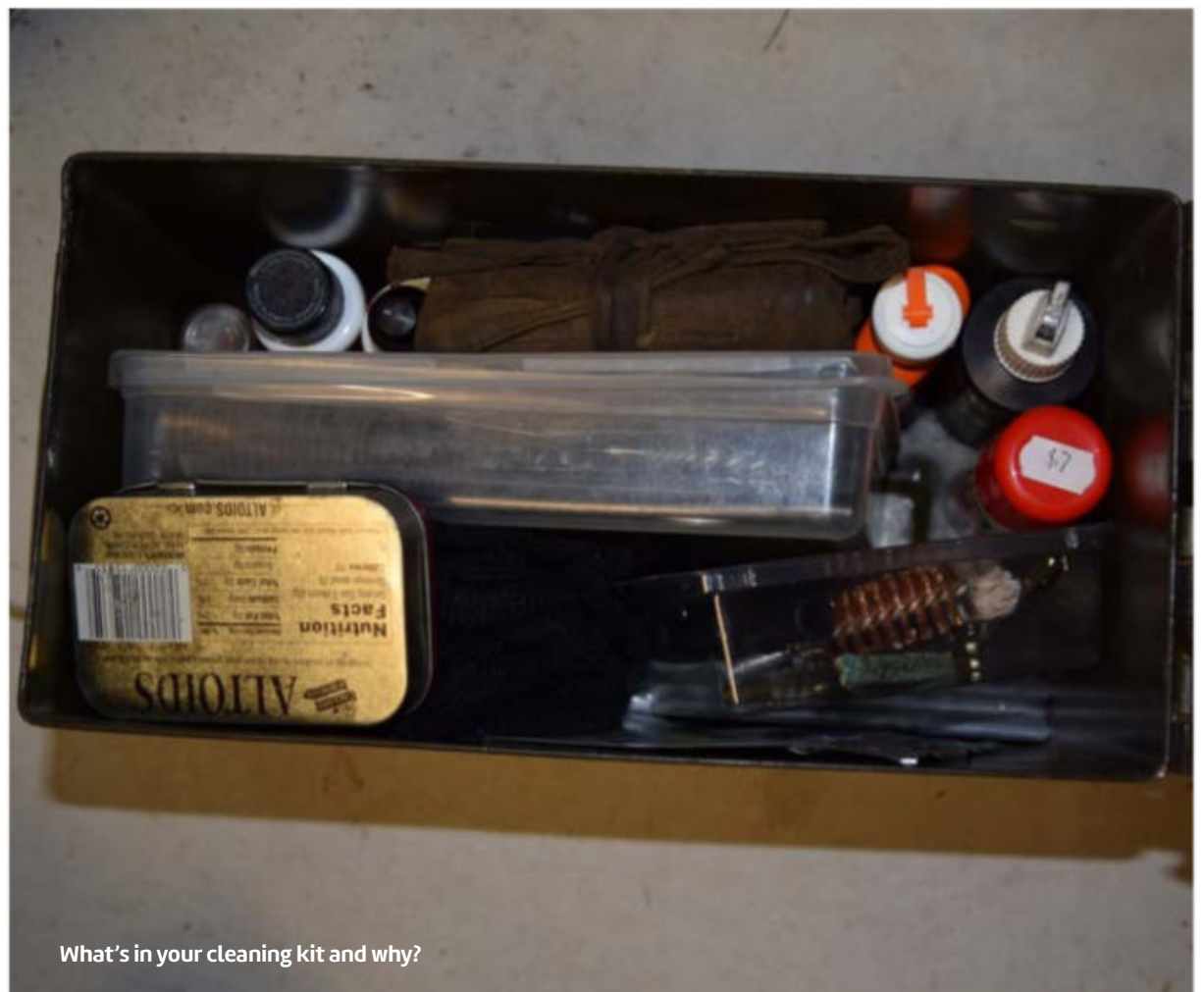
Solvent

When a firearm is discharged, particles of burnt powder and primer residue are left in the bore and barrel, along with copper or lead-fouling (depending on what projectiles are being used). If the firearm is neglected and many shots fired, a sand-wiching effect of fouling can occur, especially just in front of the chamber.

This can adversely affect accuracy and, in extreme cases, stop a projectile from leaving the barrel. At the Infantry Museum in Singleton, they display a cross-section of a Thompson sub-machine gun from World War Two with 17 projectiles stuck midway down the barrel.

But this phenomenon isn't reserved for the history books. A similar thing happens quite often with air rifles when people neglect their old slug guns.

So, if you shoot a lot, you might wish to consider cleaning your firearm's bore and barrel with a solvent from time to time. Or every day if you're a bench shooter. The bottom line is that firearms work better, shoot straighter and last longer if they're properly maintained and treated with respect. A significant component of maintenance involves the proper cleaning and care of the working mechanisms, and the all-important barrel and bore. ■



What's in your cleaning kit and why?



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Anthony with his first chital. The rifle is a Browning A-Bolt in .25-08 Ackley.

Try and try (and try) again!

When it's all said and done, **Anthony Puddicombe** realises hunting chital deer is not as easy as he first thought

I had a rather 'different' introduction to deer hunting. My first experience with them was in the upper NSW region and I was there purely to cull deer. They were like kangaroos in nearly plague proportions and farmers in the area needed them thinned out.

They were dangerous on the bitumen roads at night and we shot them purely to reduce the numbers. Their stocks were apparently bolstered by deer farms in the area that had been abandoned and the animals had escaped. There was no challenge involved as they didn't seem particularly smart and I came away from

the dealings thinking that deer were just 'kangaroos with antlers'. That was a joke that I use to wind my deer hunting friends up with on a regular basis.

I am really into hunting wild dogs and to me they are the most cunning of animals and deer were pretty low down my list. Fast forward a few years and I now have a whole different perspective on deer hunting – in particular, chital deer.

My mate Stuart invited me on a hunt, where I wanted to shoot a chital deer for its attractive pelt. He had access to a farm in Central Queensland and a weekend was picked. This would be too easy, I reckoned. I

took my skinning knives, my new Browning in .25-08 Ackley and a bag of salt, heading up on Saturday morning. I thought I'd be home in no time to start the tanning process. Stuart, who was taking me, had hunted this area for years. He knew all the deer spots and had some impressive antlers at his house to show for it, so I was feeling super confident. How wrong could I be?

We hunted hard on foot through Saturday afternoon and were up extremely early on Sunday morning. We spotted some deer, but very fleetingly and they were gone in a flash. I returned home with a whole

different respect for this animal. Another trip was planned, so this time we arrived late on Friday afternoon so I could fit in two mornings and maybe two afternoons.

Again, we hunted hard and again we had sightings. We flushed a nice stag that was holed up in its camp, but no shot was on offer. I returned home empty-handed, again. All I wanted was a pleasing hide for my floor and some delicious venison for the table. How hard could it be?

Months later, trip number three was planned, when I was on holidays and could spare three days, hopefully giving me enough opportunities to outsmart these elusive chital. Day one was an early start, lots of walking and glassing, with no result.

Day two saw us quietly stalking through the bush, keeping the wind in our faces and moving from one deer camp to the next. We were spotting plenty of rub trees that had recently been thrashed by at least one stag or maybe more. These shredded trees have a strange way of lifting your spirits, when you have been walking all morning.

We were starting to walk down a hill, when all of a sudden, a small mob of two stags and three does bolted out of the gully below us and stopped on the opposite hill about 120m away. I had two trees to choose from to lean against, to take the shot. I went for the closest, chambering a round in the Browning A-Bolt. I tried to get a sight picture, but other trees were blocking the deer. I moved to the other



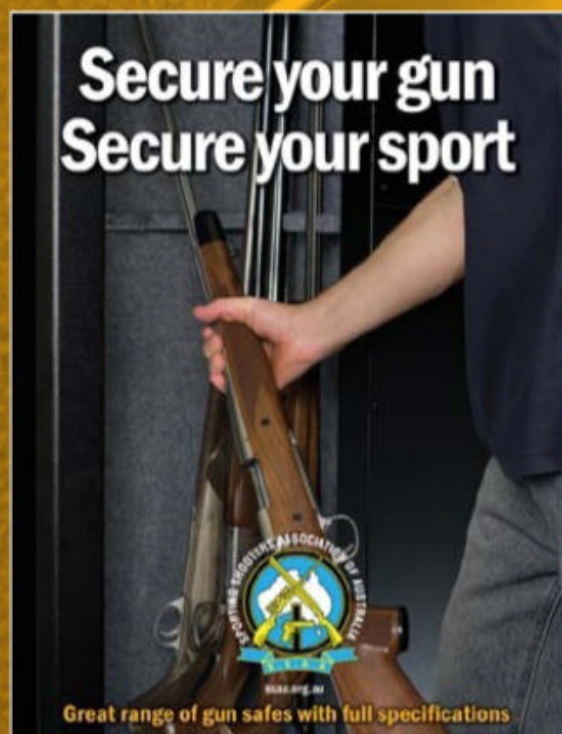
The wildcat cartridge, with Nosler Ballistic Tips.

tree, but they bolted and we never saw them again. It was a long walk back to camp, dragging my bottom lip most of the way and replaying the events in my head and Stuart's words still ringing in my ears: "You were too slow!"

Day three meant another early start, another morning of walking countless kilometres and learning more about deer from

my experienced friend, but no opportunities presented. We returned to camp, had a good breakfast and tried to work out a plan for the rest of my last day. It was decided to jump in the 4WD and cover some of the dirt roads at the other end of the property to see if there was any sign about.

We had gone about 15 minutes down the dirt road, looking closely at the hills around



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Try and try (and try) again!

us, which were incredibly steep, when I spotted a shade of brown in the bush to my right that looked out of place. We checked it with our binoculars and Stuart said: "That's a deer." I hopped out with my rifle and headed in that direction. I crept in quietly, put myself about 100m away, took a standing rest against a tree (SSAA Field Rifle) and picked it up in the scope. It was a young spiker with little button antlers. I settled on a spot and sent a 115-grain Nosler Ballistic Tip from the Ackley on its way. The deer dropped on the spot. Yes, finally I had my first chital.

At the shot, about six chital materialised from seemingly nowhere and took off, but a doe stopped to look back. I sat down behind a rock and lined her up at about 120m. I took a clean neck shot, which would not spoil any meat. She dropped as well and I now had two chital on the ground. After all those trips and all those kilometres of walking, persistence had finally paid off. What a satisfying feeling. We were able to drive the 4WD pretty close to the deer. We took the four legs and backstraps off the doe and the whole spiker back to camp, so I could skin it and butcher it.

The following weeks at home were spent preparing the skin for the tanning bath, then soaking it for the required time, followed by washing, oiling and breaking the skin, so it was soft. The skin came up nicely and now has pride of place next to my bed, so it's the first thing my feet touch when I hop out in the morning.

Meanwhile, the meat was left in the car fridge for four days so it could 'set' then it was trimmed up and cryovaced, as that keeps the meat fresher for longer. The best cuts were turned into roasts and the rest minced and mixed with pork fat and spices to make sausages.

We have had a few meals with the roasts slow cooked on our 'heat bead' kettle barbecue and the venison sausages replacing the 'store bought' variety. They have been delicious every time and I mean absolutely delicious. Chital meat is apparently one of the best eating deer and I agree.

I now find deer hunting very challenging, but very rewarding. It has lots of benefits, even after the hunt.



The tanning tools and the end product.



The skin tanned by Anthony brings out an amazing pattern in the chital.



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Try and try (and try) again!

Anthony's six tasty venison sausage recipes

1.

- 1400g minced venison
- 600g minced pork fat
- 100g minced bacon
- 300g beef mince
- 2 tablespoons BBQ Lovers spice
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 1 tablespoon onion flakes

2.

- 1700g minced venison
- 500g lamb mince
- 600g minced pork fat
- 100g minced bacon
- 2 tablespoons fennel
- 2 tablespoons salt
- 2 tablespoons garlic flakes

3.

- 2000g minced venison
- 500g lamb mince
- 700g minced lamb fat
- 4 tablespoons Tuscan spice
- 1 tablespoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons garlic flakes

4.

- 2000g minced venison
- 420g beef mince
- 300g minced pork fat
- 300g minced lamb fat
- 5 tablespoons Italian herbs
- 2 tablespoons garlic salt
- ½ tablespoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons onion flakes



5.

- 2000g minced venison
- 500g minced lamb fat
- 400g minced pork fat
- 1 tablespoon chilli flakes
- 1 tablespoon garlic granules
- 1 tablespoon salt

6.

- 2000g minced venison
- 700g minced pork fat
- 420g beef mince
- 1½ tablespoons Masala spice
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 tablespoon cumin
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon pepper ■





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A little back-up

Jan Kaptein duly calls on the convenient Morakniv Eldris knife



The Eldris is hardly bigger than a choko.

For years, I have put knives in my checked luggage when flying on overseas shooting trips. Never once has a single blade been lost. However, as regulations have become stricter, security is ever tighter and in order to avoid trouble, larger blades and knives that have practical or sentimental value to me have been left at home.

One of the long-time knives is my favourite Skinner. It is a custom job with a stag handle. While probably a handle in G10 or Micarta would be favoured if it was made now, I love my skinning knife and would hate to lose it in transit or to an overzealous Border official. This had me on the look-out for a skinning knife for overseas hunts.

My requirements were simple. The ideal knife would be small enough to never cause a fuss with any officials, light and simple to carry, easy to clean and it should have a stainless-steel blade and enough belly to skin. It had to be affordable so that losing it would not be too painful. Straightforward as these requirements sound, the practical product that meets them all was somewhat elusive. Until up popped a promising candidate, the Morakniv Eldris.

The Eldris is marketed and sold as 'neck knife' by most shops and distributors. This is something reflected by the fact that the standard sheath does not have the regular Mora belt clip or any way to attach it. Carrying a knife around your neck is certainly not for everyone, but the knife is so small it easily slips into a pocket. The knife has now found its way into my regular rotation. That said, it is a bit of a niche product.

Morakniv is a brand that has been providing inexpensive dispensable field knives for more than two decades. There was a review of some of their other products in *Australian Hunter* 75, so the company

background can be kept to a minimum. The knives are produced in Mora, where they have been made for more than 400 years. The current company has traded under the name 'Morakniv AB' since 2016 and was formed as the result of various mergers and takeovers of individual knife producers that can be traced back to 1891. Morakniv is currently the main producer of edgeware in the region.

The Eldris is available in a variety of colours including black, red, yellow and blue. The model won a Scandinavian Outdoor Award for 'best outdoor knife' in 2016. Whether you employ it as a 'neck knife' or a pocketable fixed blade seems to be left up to the user. Morakniv sells the knife with a plastic sheath as the basic kit. Neck kits, belt loop attachments and a firesteel are options.

The knife is very compact, with an overall length of 143mm. The blade measures 58mm and is 2mm wide. The metal used is listed by Morakniv as recycled Swedish stainless-steel. Retailers list Sandvik 12C27 with a hardness of 58 HRC. The blade slopes down slightly at the tip, but is basically straight. The edge is straight with a Scandi grind. The spine is dubbed as



Eldris blade with odd angles and the tip slightly rounded off.

firesteel compatible. The handle is made from a grippy TPE (rubber). The overall weight of the knife with sheath is noted at 80 grams, mine is 61 grams without sheath. In all configurations and sets available, the knife ships with a polymer sheath.

Bear in mind that I had a specific list of requirements for the knife and needed it for one main use, to skin animals. While it has been used for a wide range of other tasks, I will typically switch to a more general-purpose blade for anything but skinning.

With the pandemic wreaking havoc on my regular lifestyle, overseas travel has been limited. I have on occasion flown, but most of these flights were out of necessity and left little or no room for hunting. I did, just because I could, chuck the Eldris in my checked suitcase a few times and it reached its destination and cleared Border checks everywhere without trouble, which is great.

At first, it was easy to be a little annoyed with the lack of a clip on the sheath. Sure, it is a knife designed to be carried around



Next to a regular sized Morakniv.

A little back-up

your neck according to the specs, but still. Either way, in practice, the Eldris is small and light enough to just put in a pocket and forget about until you need it. An accessory attachment is available to add a belt loop to the sheath. The sheath continues to grip the knife well, even after months of use.

The blade looks a little funky with the various angles at which it is ground, with the reasoning behind this unclear. There is a marginal weight saving with the removal of a little bit of material or a slightly improved 'deep' cutting performance due to the blade being slightly narrower, but in practice, neither is likely to be noticeable in the field. Fortunately, there are no quirks on the business part of the blade. The edge is a straight and clean Scandi grind. It keeps sharp well and is easy to touch up.

One of my requirements was stainless-steel, which the Sandvik 12C27 is. Despite using it in harsh conditions and the knife often being covered in animal fat, blood and grime, it has not shown any signs of oxidation. I do wipe my knife down after use and give it a wash when I reach camp or water though.

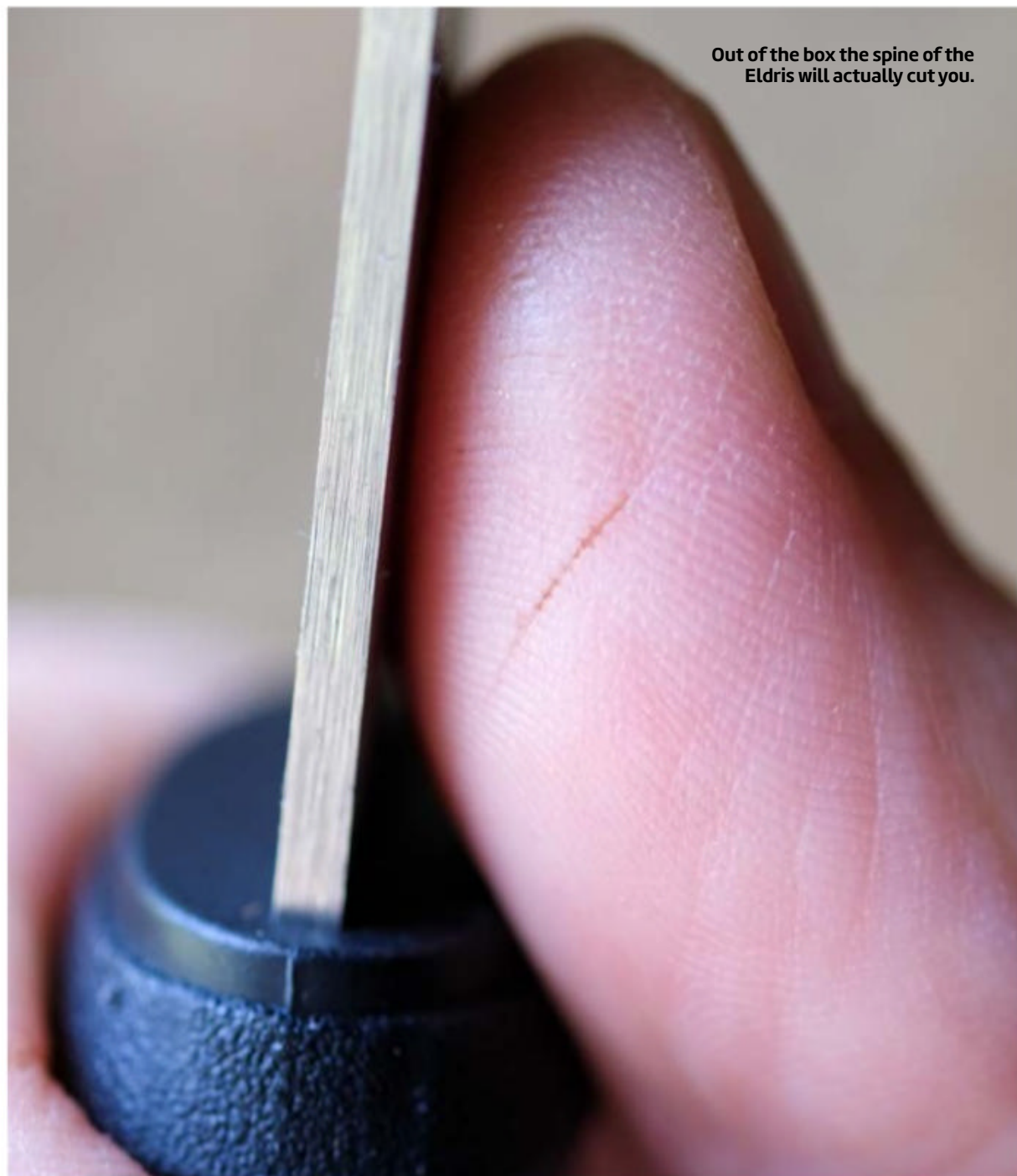
The Eldris is marketed as the ideal outdoor knife. However, I do not agree with that. Yes, it is a knife that is solidly built and is easy to carry. That said, the blade is too short for it to be a versatile tool. Particularly given the relatively large height of it. Let me clarify. A short blade will only cut so deep and with a short grip to match the compact design, you are further limited in how you use the Eldris.

For a compact blade like this to be versatile, a much narrower blade would improve dexterity. The height of the blade is not an issue if you want to peel an apple, but, turn to peeling a few spuds for dinner and the blade drags on the peel that covers it. Similarly, when cutting a few tent pegs out of sticks, the blade shape simply did not prove conducive to the task. The upside is that due to its depth, the blade has plenty of belly for its size, which is great when skinning in the field.

The grip is also on the short side. I do not have large hands (glove size 9), but it only just about suffices. This would not have been a problem as there are generally some



The Eldris in its sheath.



Out of the box the spine of the Eldris will actually cut you.



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A little back-up

The Morakniv Eldris is a compact unit.



solutions. The simplest would have been to place a thumb or index finger on the spine of the blade, something many of us routinely do anyway. However, this is where a critical design flaw becomes apparent.

In order for a firesteel to strike decent sparks, you want the spine to have a sufficiently sharp edge. It seems that in the case of the Eldris, sparks trump safety. Yes, the spine is good to throw a spark, but it is so sharp on either side that it will also cut you if you are not careful. In comes plan B for a ‘longer’ grip. Push the knife, back first, into the sheath and you have a long handle. Do NOT do this for heavy use, but for light skinning and easy cuts. That is no trouble whatsoever.

Now for the good news. I have skinned a fair few animals, varying from deer and pigs to foxes and the odd hare. This was done in sunny summer conditions as well as during fairly heavy rains. The Eldris has worked like a charm. The rubber grip remains grippy, even when covered in blood or wet. The knife maintains an edge well enough to have the job done and afterwards it is easy to clean.

Would you carry the Eldris as your only knife on a hunting or camping trip? No, opting for a more versatile knife instead. Does it meet requirements for a skinning knife? Yes, it does. The Eldris is affordable, compact enough to avoid any trouble at airports and Border checks and is easy to clean. The blade has sufficient belly and with some basic maintenance the Sandvik 12C27 steel is fine. I have passed either side of the spine across a fine grit stone a few times, which means the edges no longer cut into my thumb when placed there.

The Eldris still throws a decent spark for those who want to use a firesteel. On my specific knife the tip was extremely sharp, so it was gently retouched to avoid it nicking any skins. For long and easy cuts, use the sheath as an extension to the grip.

From a hunter’s perspective, the Eldris is not a versatile do-it-all blade, but first and foremost a skinning knife, or perhaps as a compact and reliable back-up knife in your pack or pocket.

Visit knifeshopaustralia.com.au or other reputable Aussie outlets. ■



Even the sheath is ‘tiny’.

Specifications

Style:	Fixed blade knife
Overall length:	143mm
Blade dimensions:	58x2mm
Blade shape:	Straight (slight drop-point)
Type of blade steel:	Recycled Swedish stainless-steel (Sandvik 12C27)
Hardness:	58 HRC
Edge:	Straight with Scandi grind
Material handle:	Thermoplastic elastomer (rubber)
Weight with/without sheath:	80/61 grams
Price:	From about \$55 and upwards with sheath only

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From paddock to plate

Don Caswell rides with a professional hunter living the dream near Noosa

Most recreational hunters daydream occasionally about becoming a professional full-time hunter. Very few ever make that move. Adam Neilson is one who has. He established himself as a professional venison hunter in South East Queensland, trading as Australian Wild Game Harvesters.

Adam is a qualified butcher and ran his own shop for some years, before moving onto other things. A keen recreational bow and rifle hunter, he saw an opportunity to take advantage of the area's burgeoning deer population and develop a sustainable resource in what would otherwise be wasted in culling activities.

Coming from a butchering background, Adam had a good starting knowledge of the red tape and rules to be encountered. Nevertheless, it was a slow grind to satisfy the various regulations, objections and

more then set up his processing facility. That included obtaining all the safe food accreditations and a meat inspector qualification as well. The final cost of the full set-up was well into six figures.

Adam often takes friends out on his hunting trips. The main purpose, apart from company, is keeping track of downed animals and finding them in the long grass. Processing wise, he does all that himself. Adam has a large, stabilised spotlight mounted on the vehicle roof for night shooting. He has attached an aligned laser



Chital carcasses on the transport racks.

pointer to the spotlight which is a great aid in locating carcasses at night. Adam specialises in venison only, which is mostly chital. His hunting area hosts chital, red, rusa and a few pioneering fallow.

Yield is important, so Adam targets both male and female deer in the two- to four-year age bracket. He needs to achieve a dressed weight of at least 25kg to be economically viable. He leaves mature stags in the herd and likewise is careful to eschew females with dependent young. He avoids shooting anything out of a stag's grouped breeding females and from the smaller family groups with needy offspring.

Lone females often have unseen fawns nearby. The larger herds of deer normally have independent young and present minimal risk of orphaning at-heel youngsters. His activities are firmly centred on controlling deer numbers but maintaining a strong herd structure.

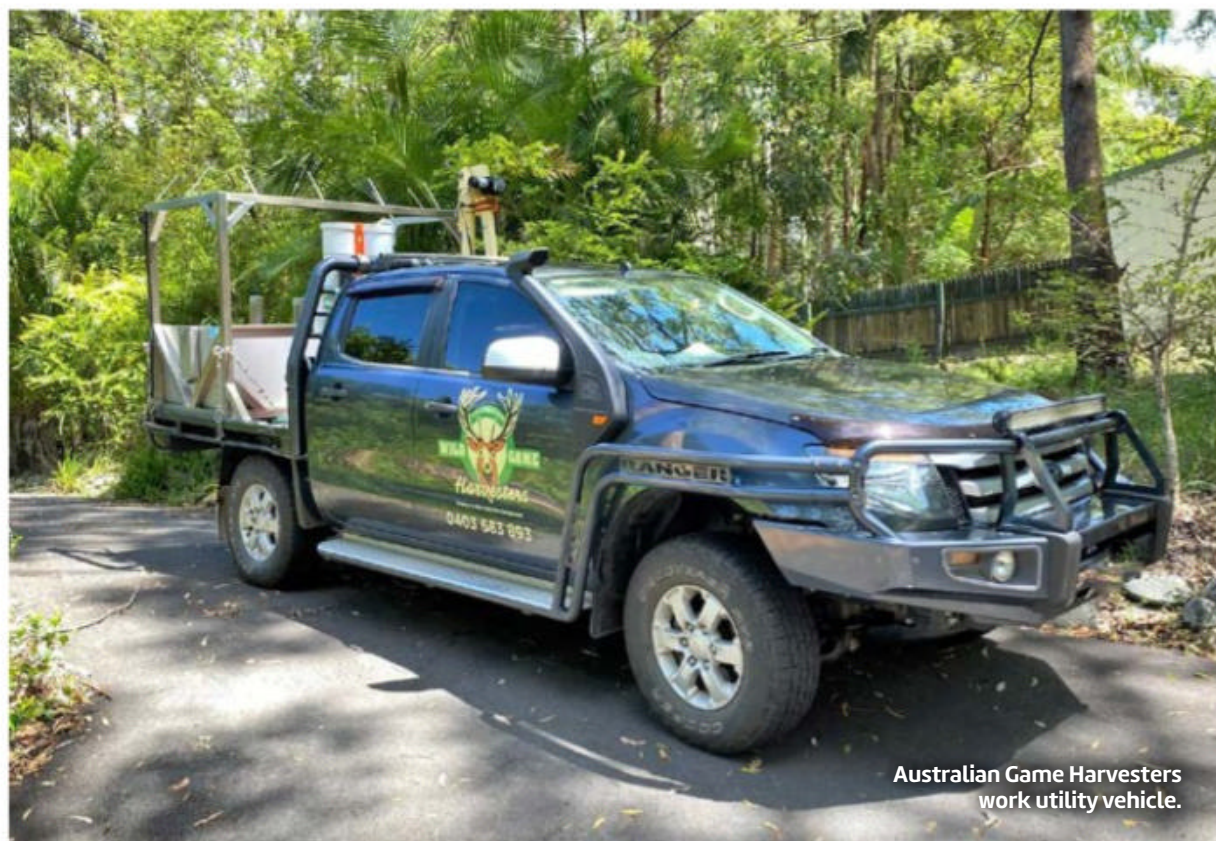
"Lone does and small groups of does tend to have dependent young. Once the young are beginning to eat grass and are no longer dependent on milk, they return to the larger mobs," said Adam.

His main hunting grounds are about 1½ hours travel to his home base. A lot of landowners have animal problems but are wary of giving access to recreational hunters.

The professional nature of his operation is a selling point for landowners, and he finds neighbouring properties offering him access as well. Adam shares detailed records of his activities with the landowners. He only leaves the head and intestinal tract of his kills in the paddock and always well away from access roads.

Being soft tissue and filled with bacteria, the guts are rapidly re-integrated into the environment. Adam speeds up the process by spiking the stomach. A few weeks later only a patch of lush green new grass marks the spot. Shooters who leave kills, from which they may have only removed a little meat, decomposing on the edge of farm access roads are a sore point with landowners.

Adam uses night culling with both optical and thermal optics. His choice of optics depends on the moon phase, which greatly influences deer behaviour. He has learnt a lot about that and is still refining his



Australian Game Harvesters work utility vehicle.



Above: The fold-down gutting rack in use.

approach there. Traditional spotlighting works best around the dark of the moon whereas thermal is better for the brighter moon phases when deer are more wary and skittish. Typically, he hunts once per week, usually just the one night. He also tries to vary hunting locations and times because deer will quickly adapt their behaviour to repetitive hunting trends.

His deer are bled and gutted within 20 minutes of harvesting. Adam designed the processing set-up on his 4WD. His vehicle is fitted out with a stainless-steel

hanging box. A 500kg crane is used for lifting carcasses up onto the pelvic racks for transport. The rear of the tray has a fold-down cradle that allows efficient and easy evisceration of the animal before it is lifted onto the tray area.

This ensures that any contamination of the transport area by stomach contents is avoided while the animal is positioned clear of grass and dirt. There are no prescribed requirements for strict record keeping, but Adam has adapted another agricultural program to fit his needs. It is

From paddock to plate

comprehensive and allows him to share his activities and results with the property owner as part of their overall game and pest management.

He uses a barcode scanning device as he processes his animals and can track his product from field to fork. Five deer at a time is his limit. Some nights that quota is easily achieved. Other nights he struggles to bring two. Generally, that is determined by the moon phase and is predictable in advance. He has a couple of refrigerated trailers for carcasses if he is not planning on being home before sunrise or is hunting over two days.

"Between being shot and sold, I record 16 separate stages of processing for each carcass. That gives me full traceability of my product. It's all done with scanning and barcodes," said Adam.

Adam makes full use of the deer he harvests. The hocks, hooves, tongue, ears, bones, heart, lung, liver and kidneys are sold to pet food processors. The return on those is minimal but it defrays the hunting costs and neatly disposes of all those parts of the carcass that are not for human consumption.

Adam skins and salts the hide of each carcass. When he tallies 100 skins, he has them tanned and sells those. Currently, he is investigating further value adding by using the skins in the manufacture of other craft related items.

"The whole idea of the business is to be as sustainable as possible. We aim to utilise 98 per cent of the animal. The only thing we leave in the paddock is the digestive tract and the salvaged skull," said Adam.

The processing plant is state-of-the-art with five separate areas – starting with receipt of the carcasses. These are held in the receipt room until ready for processing. A rail system moves the carcasses from one stage of processing to the next. The first room after the receiving area is for skinning. Compressed air makes the task much easier.

That is followed by meat inspection. Adam does a thorough inspection of the carcass and its heart, lungs and liver. These organs are removed and separated to an area for pet food. Adam changes his clothes and boots in a transition area

before entering the processing zone. There is one set of boots and clothes for receipt and skinning then a clean set for the meat treating. The bagged, processed meat is transferred into the despatch room prior to distribution.

"If you can hang venison for three to five days before you butcher the carcass it takes the meat quality to the next level," he said.

Adams's workhorse rifle is a Browning X-bolt in .223 Rem, which he uses for deer within 150m. For deer further out he uses a Tikka T3X in .308 Win. Both are fitted with big variable Meopta scopes. After trying an array of factory ammo Adam has settled on 150-grain Winchester Power-Points in the

.308 and Australian Outback .223 Rem in the 55gr Sierra BlitzKing loading. Both shoot sub-MOA and have the explosive expansion required for head shots. He takes head shots only when the animal is side-on.

Adam's venison is professionally processed to the highest standards, from paddock to plate. Prime cuts are beautifully presented, as are mince and sausages. With an established clientele who value lean, grass-fed, totally organic meat with a great sustainability backstory, you can see how he has a ready distribution through local farmers' markets. For more information call Australian Wild Game Harvesters on 0403 683 893. ■



One of two enclosed refrigerated trailers for transporting harvested venison.



Looking through the meat processing room into the inspection and skinning areas.

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The calling

Paul Labry on the hunt with some of his caller innovations.

Don Caswell finds a worthy cohort in H2K Hunting Calls

Paul Labry had done a lot of target shooting, but no hunting, when he moved to country NSW about 10 years ago. There, he and his wife set up a poultry breeding program. They soon had a fox problem, losing a lot of chickens and turkeys to these predators.

Paul decided that the best option was to try and call in the foxes and shoot them. He made a Tenterfield fox whistle from a piece of scrap sheet metal and, armed with a 12-gauge shotgun and .22LR, began to deal with the foxes. By trial and error, he discovered which variation of calls delivered the better results and became intrigued by the concept of predator calling.

Soon, he was experimenting with callers of his own design. Spending a lot of time as a bush fencing contractor gave him the

opportunity to constantly test his designs out in likely looking fox habitat. Along the way, Paul also became a dedicated bow-hunter and that further drove the development of callers that would consistently pull predators into bow range.

Initially, cutting up latex gloves, sheet metal, plus pieces of PVC he made his callers entirely by hand. With access to local farms suffering from fox, dog and cat predation Paul continued to refine his callers and shoot a lot of pests along the way. He provided callers to fellow hunters and began to build a following through word of mouth alone.

Working in the corner of his lounge room at night and weekends, it became obvious that he needed to simplify and outsource some of the component manufacture. He also needed a jig that would allow him

better control of the diaphragms he made. In that he was frustrated for some time as the supplier of the jig would not post outside the US. But perseverance and phone calls eventually paid off and he was able to obtain the diaphragm jig he needed. In fact, all the materials and components Paul requires now come out of the US as they are not available in Australia.

The tubes of Paul's callers are 3D printed acrylic polymer to the exact dimensions specified. That saves Paul a lot of time and he only has to fit the O-rings and reeds to complete the working caller. Similarly, the soft plastic bellows tube is made to the required exact specifications. The reeds are made from Mylar sheeting of varying thicknesses.

The thickness of the Mylar and its shape is tailored by Paul to give the tone he wants

for the particular animal. This is initially done by ear until he is happy, then duplicated in numbers for production. H2K callers are available for deer, crow and duck as well as predator squealers.

For those interested you can follow **h2khuntingcalls** on Instagram and should definitely check out 'H2K hunting calls' on YouTube to see Paul's effective video demonstrations.

The H2K product line is all designed and made in Australia, specific to the hunting needs. Pricing with imported callers is competitive as well. Included are a recent price list and Paul's contact details, which is the absolute best way for more information or to place an order.

H2K callers have progressed from homemade prototypes to small-scale production, making a great product tailored for Aussie and New Zealand hunting. ■



Checking out some H2K diaphragm callers.

H2K callers pricing:

Tube calls

Crow call: \$15 each

Cottontail distress call: \$25 each

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Duck call: \$20 each

Howler mouth calls

Wild dog howlers: \$20 each

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Postage not included in price

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Contact details:

H2K Hunting Calls

Paul Labry

Gloucester, NSW

0438058917

ashlee_andpaul@hotmail.com



H2K callers, tube and diaphragm types.

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

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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



- Supporting conservation activities
- Supporting research activities
- Supporting sustainability and wise use

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SSAA Razor Polo

The new SSAA Razor Polo Shirt is a stylish and comfortable grey polo shirt with contrast panels and lime-green fluoro piping. Made from 100% BIZ COOL Polyester Sports Interlock material, the polo shirt has grid mesh underarm and side panels for breathability and a knitted collar with contrast placket.

The polo comes in sizes ranging from S to 5XL

\$42



SSAA Cooler Bag - Crib & Tote

Help keep your drinks and snacks cool with the SSAA Cooler Bag. Made from waterproof black canvas with a fully insulated lining, it is perfect for taking a snack to the range, drinks out in the field and, of course, getting groceries! Helping to reduce clutter, you can collapse it when it's not in use.

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SSAA turns 75 this year!

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

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Around the campfire with John Denman

The senior doe stood alert, her sensitive nostrils questing the air. The rest of the does and one stag continued to eat the fresh clover that had sprung up after recent rain. But for the sentinel doe there was to be little rest.

A faint scent was on the gentle breeze that barely ruffled the leaves of the ironbark she stood under. It wasn't much, but for an animal classed as prey for most carnivores, it took very little to grab her attention.

The deer were just on the outside edge of the timber that grew in wild confusion behind them. If startled, they could melt back into that scrub, vanishing as if they were never there. To hunt deer like this requires time, patience and experience. Some of us have been spoiled with the profusion of deer in recent times, but drought and helicopter shooting has made inroads into the populations.

The hunter, which was me, was about 700m away just inside a fence. I'd spotted the herd on the horizon and all the 700m was open country. I gave myself pretty slim odds to move within shooting range, but I had to give it a go. I'd seen that doe with her head up and knew she'd be onto me. I didn't go far before she spun around and melted into that scrub along with the other 15 or so animals.

So, we need to re-educate ourselves. Deer in great numbers won't be the case for all time. The fact remains they are viewed by some as a feral species and with the pressures of poisoning (when approved), heli-shooting and spotlighting, the numbers will diminish. This means

that only the dedicated hunters will continue the pursuit. Those of us who take the time and trouble to learn the habits of the animal try to outsmart them at the game they have played long before firearms were used to hunt them.

The photographs seen in magazines like this one don't always indicate the many hours of careful planning that goes into the hunt. The knowledge of animal behaviour often accrued over the years, the patience to often go out for days and come back empty-handed, but the determination to go out and do it all again. For every successful hunt, and a nice glossy photo, there are often hours, days even spent searching, frequently only to be outwitted once more.

It's matters little how experienced you are, you can still be outsmarted, and must be in hunting mode the minute you leave camp. I've had deer come running past my camp on a couple of occasions, once when answering a call of nature. It's generally not done to take your rifle to go bush potty and safety demands firearms to be unloaded in camp anyway. But the deer don't read the rule books.

Some property owners don't mind having deer on their land, while some want them completely eradicated. Deer will pull back into cover during the day, any decent hunter knows that, but there's always the exception. The spotlight shooters and heli-shooters mainly target what they can see in open country.

Sooner or later deer learn to associate the distinctive sound of cavitating rotor blades with danger. That's when they go

for cover under the trees and thick scrub, where only foot hunters will venture. Deer don't breed as prolifically as pigs do, or even foxes for that matter, but they do breed and will continue to do so.

The spotlight shooter will only go after deer when they venture out into open country to feed at night. This obviously limits them to the sort of country they can drive a vehicle through. These blokes are generally after meat on a commercial basis, so they won't be walking around in the bush. They can take enough deer off any farmer's cultivation paddocks to make a good dollar, but once again the deer are fast learners. They'll realise soon enough that a light means trouble.

So, we can probably count on there being plenty of deer to be a hunted for some time to come. Whether you hunt for meat, or trophies or both, it doesn't matter. It looks like they are here to stay. From a personal point of view, I don't begrudge the spotlight shooter. Deer are sometimes seen as a feral animal and for the most part these shooters generally make use of the meat.

The helicopter shooters just shoot them and let the meat go to waste. There's also the good chance they don't always manage clean kills. I wonder where the RSPCA stands on this? After all, they do tend to pick on us hunters a bit.

That sentinel doe will always be on her guard though, no matter what. ■

What does the SSAA do for the environment?

The Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA), along with its states and members, has introduced many beneficial and long-lasting conservation and wildlife projects in Australia, including:



- a **KOALA** habitat in Queensland
- the reintroduction of the **WESTERN QUOLL**, the protection of the **YELLOW-FOOTED ROCK-WALLABY** and undertaking **STUBBLE QUAIL** population surveys in South Australia
- assisting with a **TASMANIAN DEVIL** breeding program in New South Wales
- **DEER** research in multiple states
- raising community awareness about **PEST ANIMALS** in Western Australia
- ongoing removal of **CAMELS** and **WILD PIGS** in the NT

We have worked alone and in collaboration with government and environmental organisations for decades - all in the name of conserving Australia's rich and varied wildlife.

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