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VOL. 44 OCTOBER 2025



TRUSTED EXPERT REVIEWS SIN

PRODUCTS REVIEWED

Airguns, rifles, shotguns, and accessories

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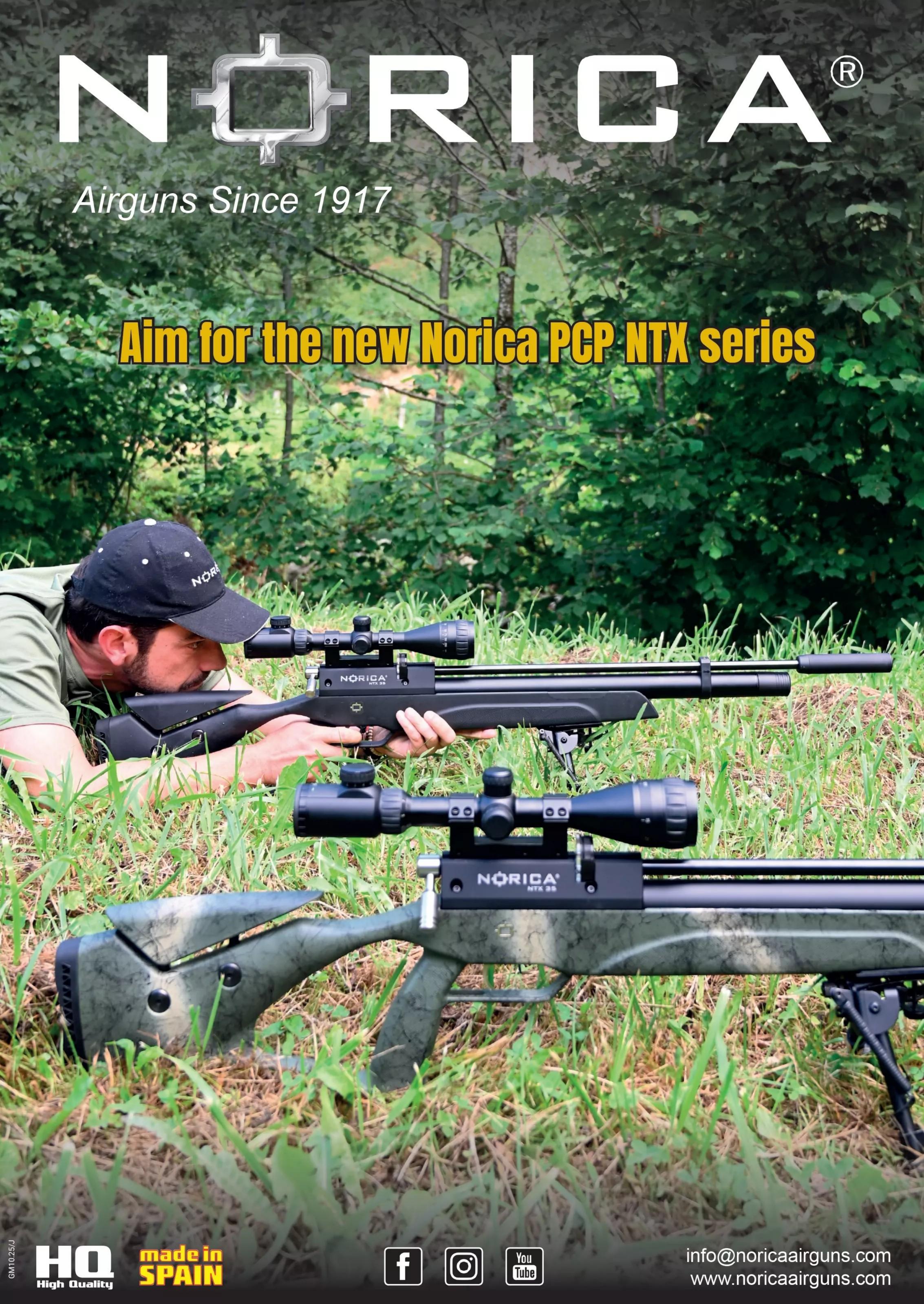




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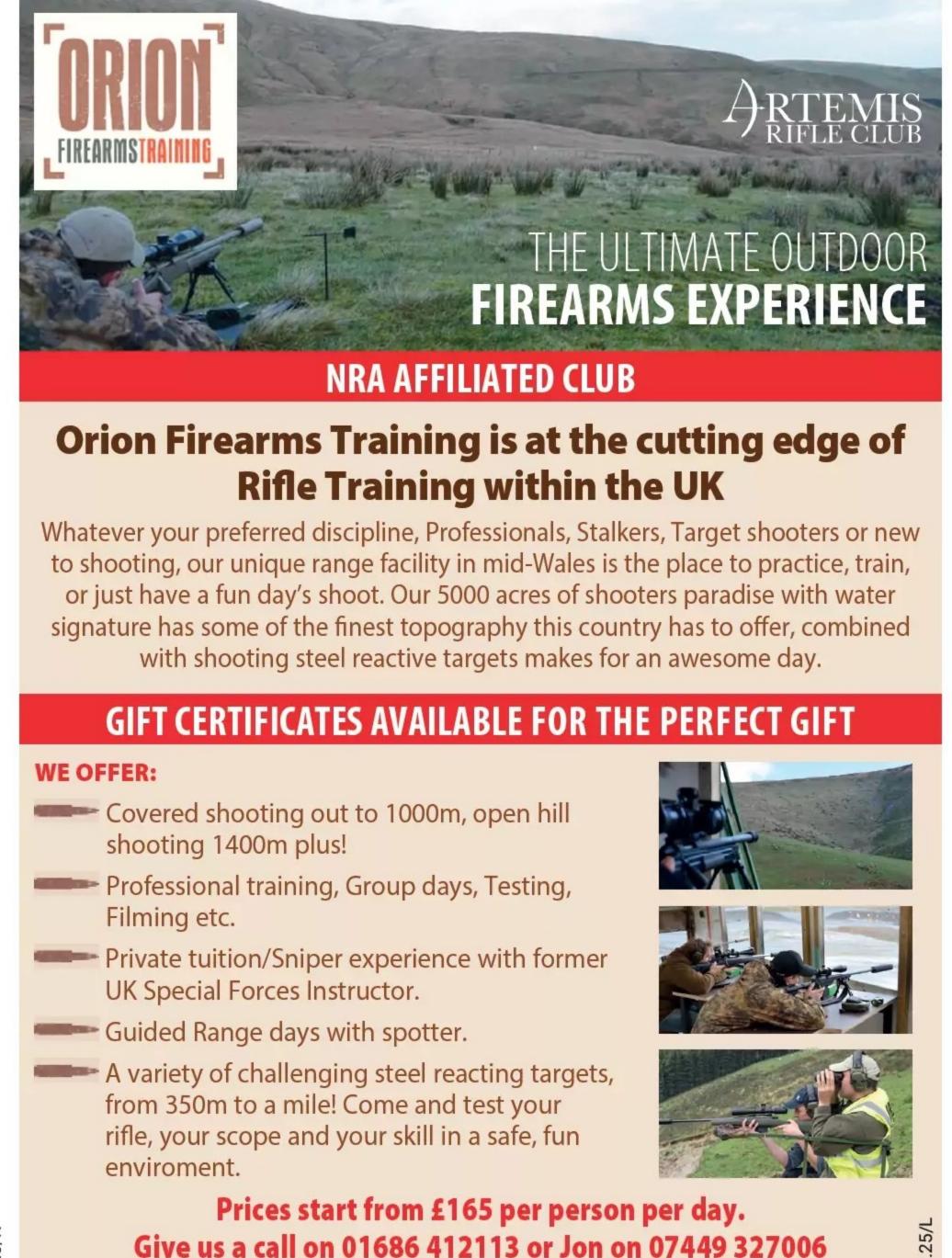




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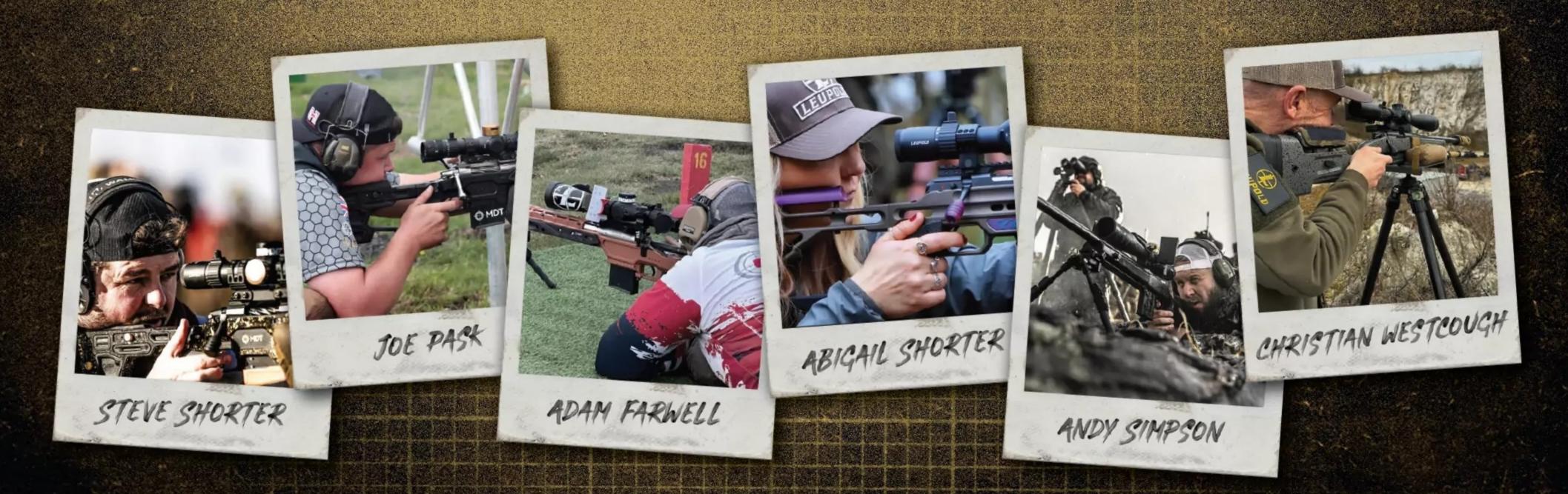


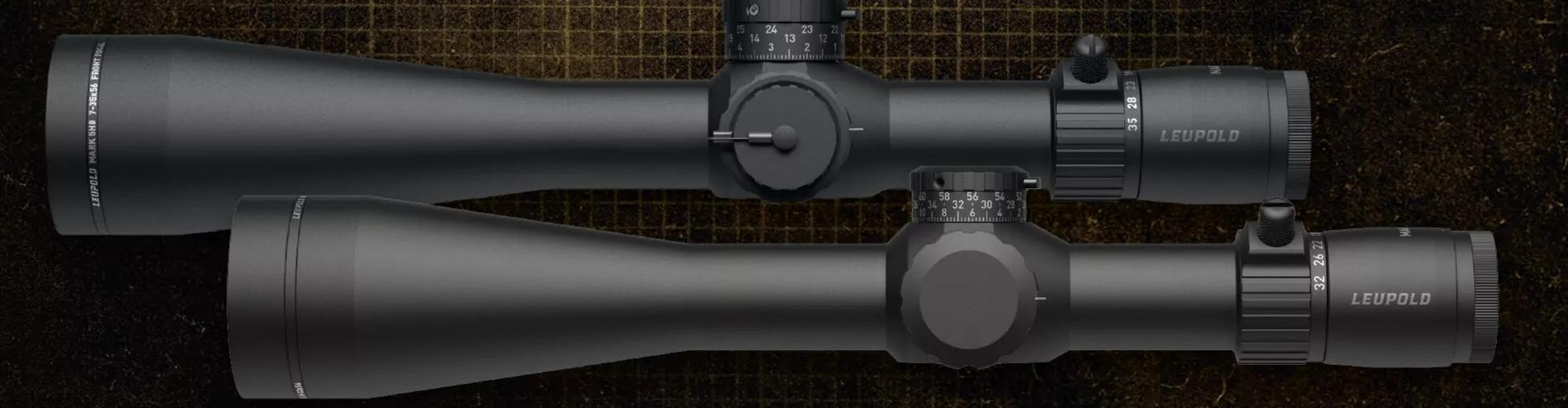
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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Welcome to a brand-new issue of Gun Mart, packed with the latest firearms, optics, airguns, and accessories to keep you informed and inspired. We start off with all the latest industry headlines in our news pages, before moving on to Kit Box and Best on Test, where the team take a closer look at some of the hottest new gear. Don't miss Five in Focus either, as this month it's all about airguns suitable for youngsters.

Airgun fans are in for a real treat, as Dave Barham reports on the BSA Ultra CLX, a superaccurate, compact hunting rifle with a walnut stock. Mark Camoccio, meanwhile, gets hands-on with the Crosman Vantage, a budget-friendly springer, and takes a closer look at the striking Remington Vought. If that wasn't enough, Dave also explores the impressive HikMicro Alpex 4K Lite digital day/night scope, while the Milbro gun rest rounds out the section.

On the firearms side,
Bruce Potts puts the Sako
90 Finnlight to the test to
see if this latest incarnation
still earns its reputation as a
stalking classic. Jules Whicker
tries the Pixfra Taurus T650
LRF clip-on, while Chris Parkin
reviews the innovative DRS
Tactical, Leupold's VX-6HD Gen
2 riflescope, and Hill's cleverly
engineered quad sticks.

Finally, in Country &
Shotgun, Bruce Potts checks
out the Weatherby Orion
and Eley's Pigeon HV load,
while Jonny Carter shares his
experiences with a secondhand Holland & Holland Royal.

Enjoy, and as always, safe shooting!

Ed Jackson
Managing Editor



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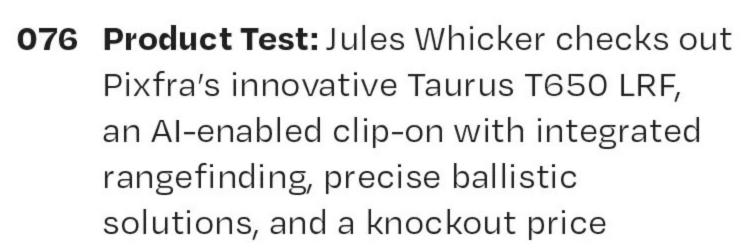
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All the latest news and views from the shooting world

'Knee-jerk' gun laws threaten local dealers

Members of Britain's gun trade are warning that they may not survive the new firearms licensing rules that came into force on 5 August. Jason Harris, who owns Trulock & Harris Gunsmiths in Suffolk, fears the reforms will destroy the impulse purchases that keep independent dealers alive.

"Until now, if a buyer came into my shop and a shotgun caught their eye, they could buy it, provided they held a valid shotgun licence," Mr Harris explains. "Customers like that are the lifeblood of stores like mine, but under the new licensing system, all that will change."

The problem is twofold: existing shooters are abandoning the sport, while potential newcomers are being deterred by daunting new requirements. For gun shops, this potential drop in footfall represents a catastrophe.

New applicants face enhanced background checks, social media screening, mandatory GP assessments, and police interviews with family members about domestic violence. They must also provide two referees instead of one.

The reforms respond to the 2021 Plymouth shooting, though inquests revealed the tragedy resulted from police failures to apply existing laws.

Mr Harris, who has worked in the trade for over 40 years, calls the legislation a "knee-jerk reaction" that threatens his family business. "I had hoped that my daughter would follow me into the gunsmith trade, but now I fear for the craft's future as a whole," he says.

While the shooting industry agrees domestic abusers should not have firearms, there are concerns about implementation. Paul Green, Technical Director of the Gun Trade



Credit: JackF via Getty Images

Association, warns enhanced domestic abuse checks could backfire.

"Despite being well-intentioned, this measure risks misuse with malicious and vexatious claims," Mr Green says.
"The past has repeatedly shown that police will automatically confiscate guns whilst these malicious claims are investigated, which in nearly all cases takes many months. For the registered firearms dealer, the impact can be

disastrous, with the loss of income and ultimately the loss of their business."

Mr Green does welcome some changes, particularly restricting police forces from routinely using Section 7 permits to manage backlogs.

With rural gun shops already struggling, the reforms threaten to hollow out the retail infrastructure on which British shooters have relied for generations.

Northamptonshire firearms amnesty running through to October

Northamptonshire Police is running a county-wide firearms amnesty until 5 October, accepting unwanted guns and related items without prosecution. The

five-week programme launched on 26
August as part of efforts to keep firearms
from falling into the wrong hands. Police will
collect illegally held firearms, ammunition,
imitations, airguns, antique weapons, Tasers,



stun guns, and CS gas. The amnesty offers anonymity and immunity from prosecution at the point of surrender. Anyone wanting to surrender items or report illegal firearms should call 101 to make arrangements with the police.



Credit: Hirurg via iStock / Getty Images Plus

PDS pushes police forces to coordinate on firearms database

The Police Digital Service has told forces considering their own firearms licensing systems to align with the national database replacement project instead.

The guidance, published on the PDS website, states: "Forces who are considering local investment in firearms licensing systems are encouraged to contact PDS to align with the NFLMS replacement project."

The advice comes as the contract award for the replacement database is expected in October, following the closure of tender applications in June.

The current system has operated since the mid-2000s but lacks basic digital functionality. Many forces still process licensing applications using paper forms and cheques, while others have struggled with data integrity.

Recent BASC research has highlighted the scale of inconsistency across forces. Processing times range from 18 days to over two years, with the cost of processing each certificate varying from under £130 to more than £300 depending on force efficiency. Only 45% of new grants are completed within six months, with some certificate holders forced onto temporary permits for extended periods.

The system's communication failures have also drawn scrutiny.
A coroner recently raised concerns about the lack of information

sharing between forces regarding certificate holders, particularly when they move between properties in different police areas.

Bill Harriman, BASC's Director of Firearms, criticised the current system as "an outdated legacy IT system that is not fit for purpose". He outlined what would be needed from any replacement, saying it must serve police by "accurately recording certificate holders' details and those of their firearms" while providing "wider access to allow dealers to process one-for-one variations". For individual certificate holders, Mr Harriman said the system should allow them to "manage their certificates by notifying and recording acquisitions and disposals".

The PDS promises the new commercial off-the-shelf system will deliver "enhanced public safety through better oversight and data sharing" while offering "reduced time and cost for policing". The replacement will use "modern technology, automation, and advanced analytics" to "future-proof" the system.

The coordination call reflects broader concerns about inconsistent service delivery. The Countryside Alliance has separately campaigned for "a single, centralised firearms licensing body" to provide consistent service and allow police to "focus on law enforcement, rather than licensing".

Gunmakers' Trust welcomes first apprentice in Scotland

> The Gunmakers' Trust has announced that Rachel Moir of McKay Brown Gunmakers Ltd is the latest apprentice to receive a Gunmakers' Trust **Bursary Award and the first** apprentice in Scotland to be supported by the Trust. Rachel will be undertaking a four-year apprenticeship, developing her skills as an actioner, lock-maker, and finisher. On successful completion, she will be eligible to apply to the Worshipful Company of Gunmakers Certification Panel for accreditation. The Gunmakers' Trust said it was delighted to welcome Rachel and wished her every success as she embarks on her training journey.



Credit: Gunmakers' Trust

Northern Ireland proves size doesn't matter at WFTC 2025

Target Association (NIFTA) has received international praise after hosting the 2025 World Field Target Championships (WFTC) at Palace Stables, Armagh. The event attracted competitors from 27 countries, including Uruguay, Colombia, and Australia.

NIFTA secretary and World
Field Target Federation President
Dave O'Hara said the association
aimed to provide competitors with
a high-quality experience. "Some
of these competitors pay out of
their own pocket," Mr O'Hara said.
"We set out to make sure they had
the best experience possible."

Volunteers prepared 75 lanes across three courses, while NIFTA members trained and served as marshals, stepping aside from competing to support international participants.

On the field, Spain's José Redondo
Martín-Benito led the main PCP class
with a score of 136 out of 150, while
Germany's Jan Homann won the
spring-powered division with 125
points. In team events, Spain narrowly
defeated England by three points in



the PCP category, and the USA topped the spring-powered division with a seven-point margin over England. Additional categories included Ladies' and Junior competitions.

Competitors widely praised the organisation. England's John Chopping called it "exemplary", and others described the event as "one of the best ever WFTCs". Mr O'Hara said he hopes NIFTA's success encourages smaller nations to consider hosting major competitions. "We want smaller nations to realise it can be done," he explained. NIFTA is already collaborating with Canada's organising committee for WFTC 2027.

Full results and information are available at WFTC2025.com.

Scout leaders qualify as BASC shotgun coaches

> Two Scout leaders have successfully qualified as BASC shotgun coaches through a programme funded by the association's Legacy Fund, creating new opportunities for young people to access shooting sports.

Richard Ruddick and Henson Appleby, from Gravesham District Scouts in Kent, passed their final assessments at The Game Fair in late July.

The initiative, launched in September 2022 with £26,000 from BASC's Legacy Fund, subsidises training costs for Scout leaders. The three-day shotgun coaching course, normally costing £750, is offered to Scout leaders for just £150.



Credit: BASC

Both Kent leaders were mentored by Tom Friar, a former BASC Shotgun Coach of the Year, who praised their enthusiasm and grounded approach to learning. "It's not an easy thing to do, becoming a BASC Shotgun Coach," Mr Friar explained. "We deliberately set out to achieve a high standard to ensure that the lessons they then provide to others are of the highest quality." The programme builds on BASC's established relationship with the Scout and Guide movement, with BASC coaches regularly attending jamborees nationwide to introduce thousands of young people to shooting.

For Mr Appleby, the training exceeded expectations. "We came away from the first day, and we were like 'wow'. We then went on the residential training days, and they were just immense," he said.

So far, 53 Scout leaders have accessed funding to become either shotgun coaches or airgun instructors. BASC's Head of Training, Peter Marshall, said that funds remain available for additional Scout leaders to join the programme.

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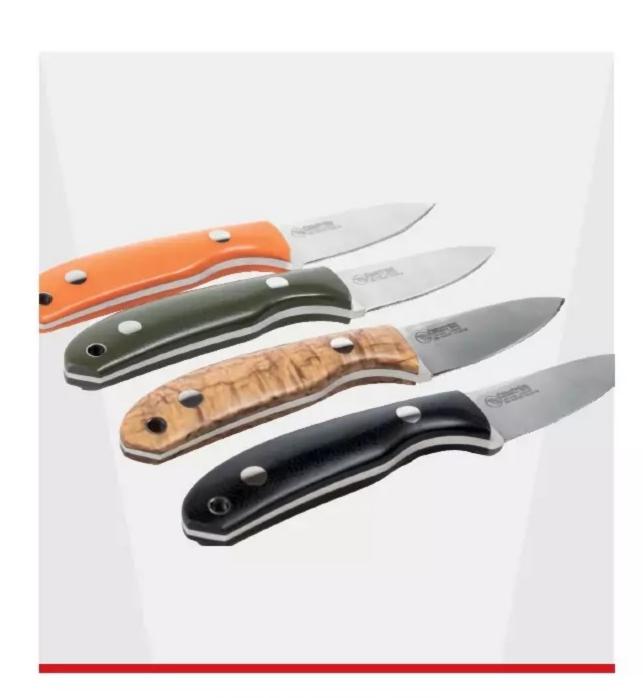
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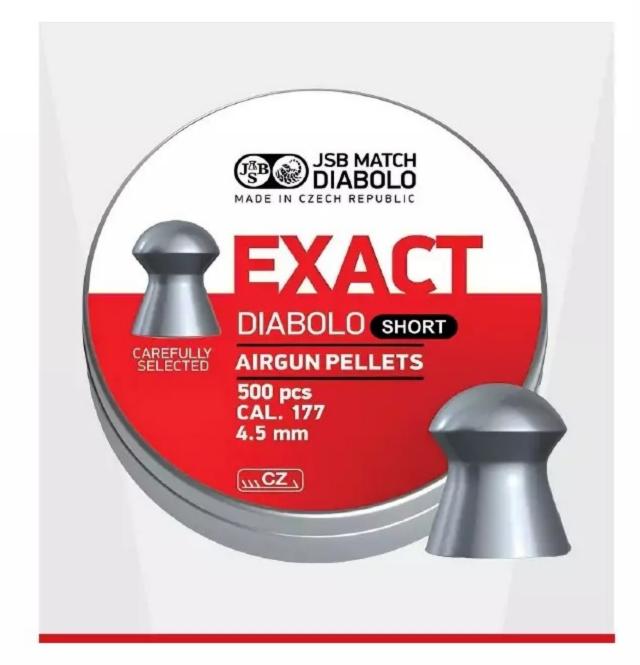
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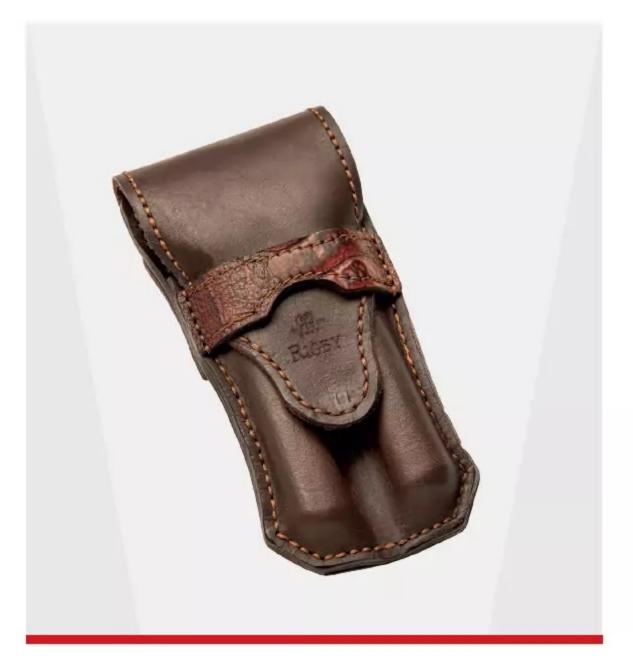
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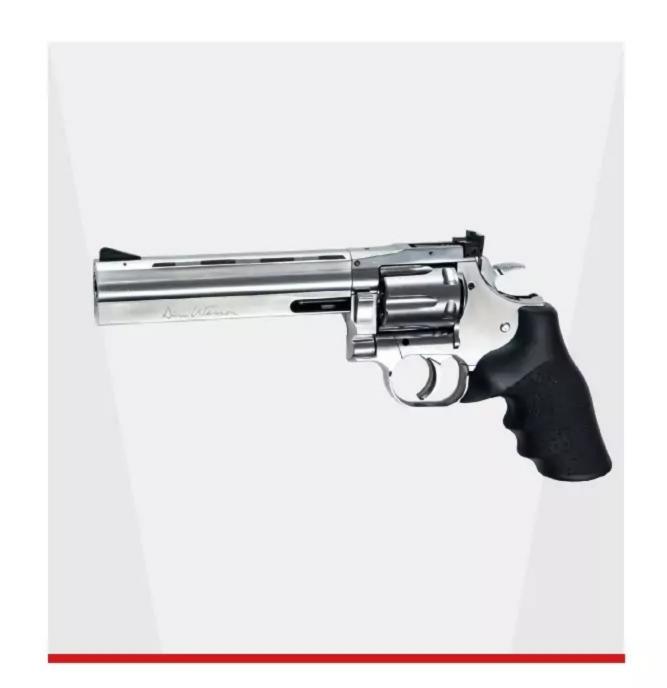
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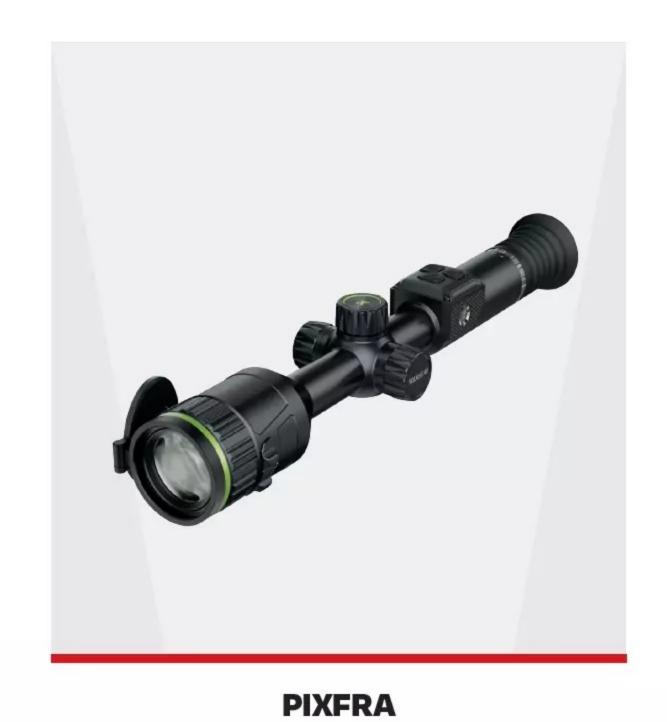
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Yamashiro, cover & notes£1250.00
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Solingen & Scabbard£595.00
Gendaito Katana 'ITO SAI YASU TSUNA SAKU
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Scabbard & Frog,£375.00
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Sabre & scabbard£675.00
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Sidearm, Etched,£1245.00

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

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Mosquito, full history. for display £5450.00
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Propellor, 9' 8" long. Superb£2450.00
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Cap & Badge. Original cond£475.00
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(Steyr Daimler Austria) & case£4250.00
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Birchwood Casey Gallery and Gallery Expert .22 Targets



The Gallery and Expert targets from Birchwood Casey may look similar to the commonly seen airgun targets, but they're made with a key difference: thicker, harder steel and reinforced frames, making them suitable for use with .22 rimfire rifles. Although I've used these with my .22LR, I primarily wanted them for testing the ever-growing fleet of FAC-rated airguns I've been reviewing recently.

Airgun evolution

Whereas the .22LR, generating around 100ft/lbs of muzzle energy, is more than capable of handling the smaller centrefire-rated steel targets I already own, those tend to be heavier and bulkier. These Birchwood Casey targets are smaller, lighter, and much more portable, thanks to an integral frame.

FAC airguns used to generate between 20 and 40ft/lbs, making them suitable for serious pest control, but it's now increasingly common to see high-powered, larger calibre precharged pneumatics producing 60 to 100ft/lbs of energy, with muzzle

velocities between 900 and 1,000fps.
As such, the Gallery targets from
Birchwood Casey have been ideal.

Large or small

The larger Gallery .22 target has four lower gongs measuring 2.5" (64mm) that swing freely when hit, flipping up to rest on a horizontal bar beneath the upper gong. Once all four are hit and latched against that top bar, you shoot the fifth, upper target to reset them. It knocks the lower gongs loose, so they drop back down vertically.

The all-steel framework is foldable for easy storage and transportation. Birchwood Casey applies its signature orange target dots to the gongs, but as these are obviously sacrificial, you can either replace them or simply respray after each session.

Testing capability

The smaller Expert target works in the same way but features 1.75" (45mm) gongs that are slightly thicker at 9.5mm, compared to the 4.5mm gongs on the Gallery model. Both targets

share the same 11.1mm steel bar frame construction with a thick powder coat, and the forward legs slide along the vertical frame, allowing you to angle the unit towards the shooter as needed.

Both are rated for use with standard velocity .22LR ammunition, and it's reasonable to assume the Expert's thicker steel and added leg braces/pins are intended to withstand closer-range impacts, where projectile energy is still relatively high, while the lighter gongs on the Gallery model are optimised to spin freely at longer ranges.

Read the instructions

Instructions and safety warnings are included: do not use anything more powerful than .22LR, including higherenergy rounds like .22WMR or .17HMR. Avoid using BBs, and always shoot from a minimum of 25 yards, wearing appropriate ear and eye protection.

I tested both targets at 50m to properly put the steel to the test under maximum energy delivery, and they both held up perfectly. Birchwood Casey advises that the steel may mark or bow slightly over time, but both targets can be completely reversed to extend their usable life.

Although airguns are not mentioned, the targets appear to be compatible if due diligence is applied. I would, as always, ensure a suitable backstop is in place to capture all projectiles. While a struck gong will deflect the projectile downwards, any miss that strikes the frame or edge of the target can still result in a ricochet, so all standard safety precautions must be followed. GM

REVIEWER: CHRIS PARKIN

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Birchwood Casey Gallery and Gallery Expert .22 targets

Price: £46.80 each

Contact: Hannam's Reloading - www.hannamsreloading.co.uk

Hawke Tactical Cantilever Ring Mount

The Hawke Tactical Cantilever Ring Mount is a neat design, and it is one of those specialist mounts that can get us out of a mounting problem, courtesy of its versatile specification.

The cantilever profile means a large section of the mount (2") can be used to reach forward or back, depending on orientation. The 2.75" long Picatinny/Weaver base means this mount will squeeze in where space is at a premium. Two chunky bolts can be fingertightened, with holes for an Allen key to fully secure them if needed.

Cleverly, the Picatinny/Weaver recoil cross bars can be withdrawn and turned over, which then creates a smooth profile. But as the instructions point out, just make one bar inactive, and the mount will still stay put under heavy provocation. This feature is



useful, as many guns with Picatinnystyle mounting don't have standard spacing. Two fixed recoil bars won't always align, so being able to remove one makes it much more likely the mount will fit snugly.

On the downside, each ring is secured with six screws, which feels excessive and becomes tedious when fitting or swapping scopes. The small felt pads inside

the base of each ring are also unnecessary in my experience and may become tacky over time.

Moving on to the positives, the hollow central section offers two key benefits: it reduces weight and provides a channel that can allow open sights to be viewed through the mount on certain setups.

The overall profile creates a high sight line, making it ideal for scopes with large objectives. GM

REVIEWER: MARK CAMOCCIO

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Hawke Tactical Cantilever Ring Mount Price: 1" £89, 30mm £95 Contact: Hawke Optics www.hawkeoptics.com

Jack Pyke Rifle and Sight Slip

A good-quality rifle slip is particularly important if you have a rifle with a valuable optic attached to it. While you can sometimes squeeze a scoped rifle into a standard slip, the Jack Pyke Rifle and Sight Slip is purposebuilt for the task, with ample room for both rifle and scope.

The slip is made of highly durable Duotex and lined with very soft, 1" thick internal padding. This protects the contents from accidental knocks and is thick enough to hold the gun securely in place.

The full-length zip allows easy access to your rifle without the risk of scratching it, and a leather cap at the end provides extra protection for the muzzle and front sight.

A wide, fully adjustable shoulder strap, a strong carrying handle, and a hanging hook provide versatile carrying and storage options, while the zipped and padded side pouch is ideal for ammunition or accessories.

JACK PYKE

At 49.2" long and 9.8" wide, this is a very roomy slip, and its classic look is topped off with real leather trim.

Overall, this slip is strong, lightweight at just 965g, and impressively well-padded. With a gun safely stored inside, a quick squeeze reveals just how well protected it is. For the lightweight and secure transport of a valuable scoped rifle, this slip is an excellent choice. **GM**

REVIEWER: MARK UNDERWOOD



Contact: Jack Pyke -

www.jackpyke.co.uk

Lee Precision Micrometer Adjust Screw

a micrometer adjustment screw for its bullet seating die. It is a feature that has been missing for far too long. The screw replaces the original adjusting screw on any Lee bullet seating die and instantly adds a controllable, recordable adjustment facility.

The very clear, laserengraved divisions represent one
thousandth of an inch, allowing
you to make very fine adjustments,
and the built-in friction ring
keeps the screw from moving
out of adjustment. As this screw
does not use a 'click' mechanism
to stop it from moving, you
can actually set it between the
thousandths markings and it
will still hold in place, allowing
even finer adjustments.

The screw is available in three sizes: handgun, rifle, and large-

calibre rifle, and you can also now buy Lee Precision bullet seater dies complete with the new micrometer adjuster fitted.

The screw is very well made, with no movement or wobble, and it takes just seconds to fit—you just back out the existing screw and replace it with the micrometer.

Being so easy to install, the micrometer screw can easily be moved between Lee bullet seating dies, but because it is so well priced, it is actually economical to get one for each die.

Overall, this is a great addition to any Lee Precision bullet seater die, and it certainly represents a very useful upgrade to your existing setup. GM

REVIEWER: MARK UNDERWOOD



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Lee Precision Micrometer Adjust Screw

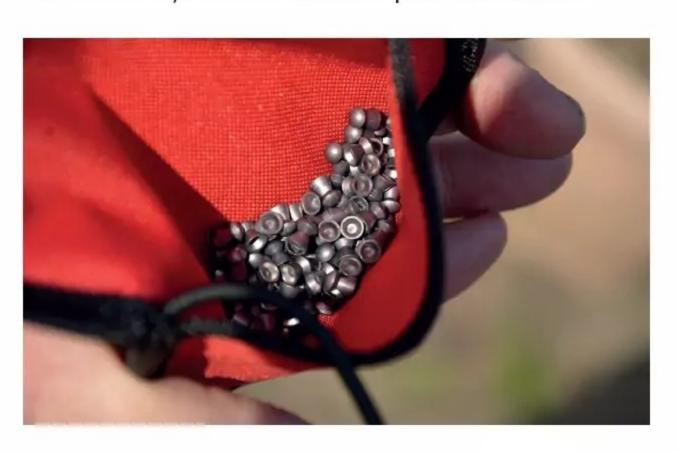
Price: £17.90

Contact: Henry Krank - www.henrykrank.com



Leave a tin of pellets on the floor while shooting, and there's a high chance that grit and dirt will enter the equation, and if it begins to rain, your ammo and gun are unlikely to benefit from the additional moisture content!

So, for those who take their airgun shooting seriously, a pellet pouch can make a big difference.
While pouches have become an essential accessory for competition shooters, hunters and plinkers can



still benefit from being able to keep their ammo safe, dry, and ready for action at a moment's notice.

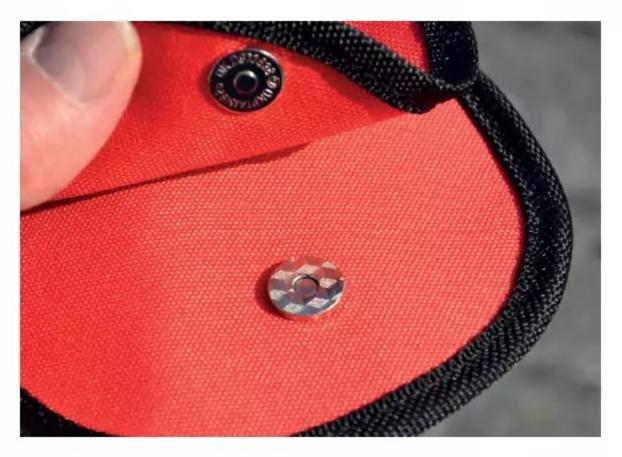
This Sure Shot pellet pouch is a great piece of design, as it stays shut by using a small, neat magnetic catch under the flap. Pellets are simply dropped into the generous main bowl, and the flap is snapped closed.

Adjust the robust, elasticated lanyard to sit around your neck, and pellets are then held exactly where you need them, free from harm. Just nudge it open, and snap it closed.

Available in a variety of colours and made from a Cordura-style material, these pouches are a steal at the price. There's even room to store a range prompt card. GM

REVIEWER: MARK CAMOCCIO





TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Sure Shot Pellet
Pouch with magnetic flap
Colours: Red, blue, olive,
green, camo, tan, and grey

Price: £9.99

Contact: Sure Shot Airguns - www.sureshot-airguns.co.uk

Direct Action Ghost MK2 Backpack

The Direct Action Ghost Mk 2 is an extremely durable, yet lightweight pack with some great features.

In addition to the 28L capacity of the main part of the backpack, there is an additional 3.5L of space in the detachable pocket organiser, which is attached via straps to the front of the main unit.

Storage and features

The organiser has multiple storage compartments for holding smaller items, while the main backpack has larger spaces for bigger items.

The main compartment is accessed via a large two-way YKK zip and consists of a single spacious section, with one internal mesh pocket and a slot for a hydration bladder.

There is also a sturdy strap with a quick-release buckle to suspend the bladder and prevent it from slumping to the bottom of the backpack.

On the front of the pack, there is another simple compartment, accessed via a single zip, which has no divisions inside and is ideal for gloves, hats or other items that you might need to get to quickly. Above this, there is a dedicated eyewear compartment with a soft lining to prevent lenses from getting damaged.

On the sides of the backpack, there are small pockets with Velcro closures and very strong, elasticated rims to hold drinks containers securely so they do not fall out.

On the back of the pack is a large concealed compartment with a hanger

ket

strap for a second water bladder, and this ability to carry two water supplies is especially useful when you are out all day in hot weather. It can also be used to carry spare clothing or flat items like maps or targets.

The detachable pocket is effectively a large admin pouch, featuring seven pockets and four slots for pens and similar items. It would be ideal for holding a full first aid kit and, being removable, can easily be taken directly to where it is needed.

It is secured to the main backpack with four adjustable webbing straps featuring quick-release buckles, along with elasticated shock cord running down either side. The space between the two sections can be adjusted to

accommodate anything from a helmet to coats, shooting mats, or even a tent.

There are several compression straps to prevent the contents from moving around, and numerous external fixing points are provided for attaching additional items.

Comfort and carrying

The back of the pack is heavily padded with a Combat Vent System for enhanced ventilation, and the low-profile shoulder straps and detachable hip belt are also padded and shaped for comfort. Even with a heavy load, this backpack is very comfortable to carry.

There is also a very strong carry handle on the top.

Conclusion

The Direct Action Ghost Mk 2 Backpack is a well-designed piece of kit, with practical features such as the capacity to carry two hydration bladders and a detachable pocket organiser. The build quality is exceptionally high, and details such as the oversized storm flap over the main compartment zip reflect excellent attention to detail. GM

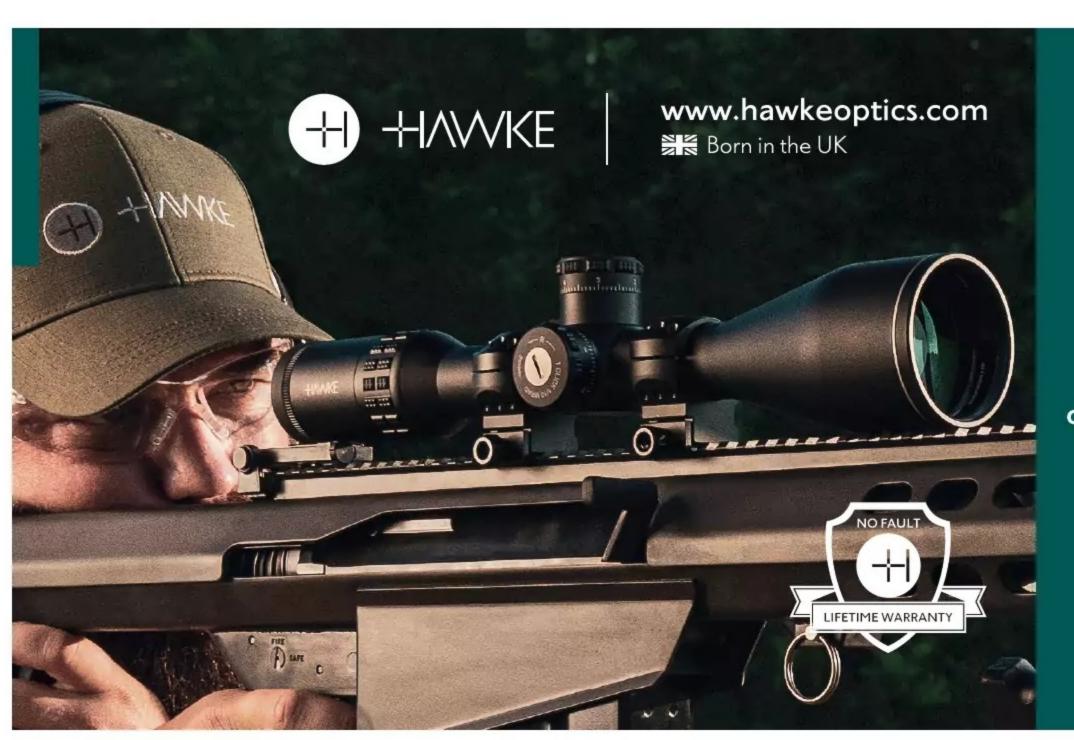
REVIEWER: MARK UNDERWOOD

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Direct Action Ghost MK2 Backpack

Price: £217.76

Contact: Military 1st - www.military1st.co.uk



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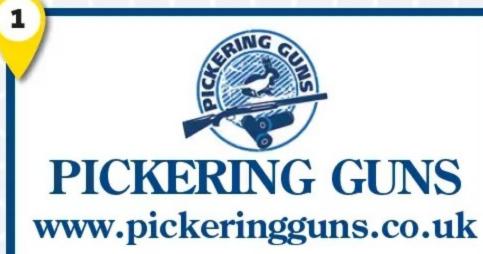
Lighter, stronger, 4 inch eye relief, better crown glass, improved illumination, a new locking turret system with witness window and comes with the Hawke No-Fault Lifetime Warranty.

These are just some of the reasons to upgrade.

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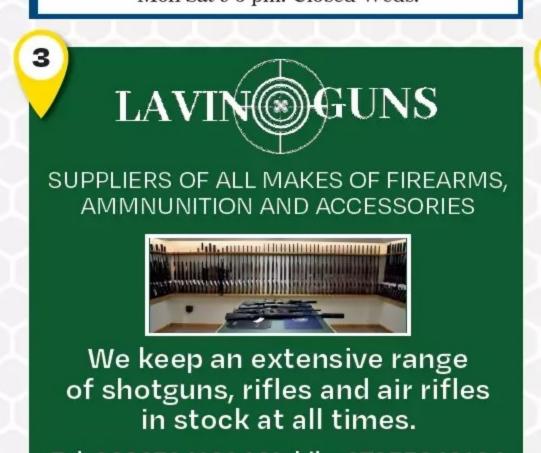
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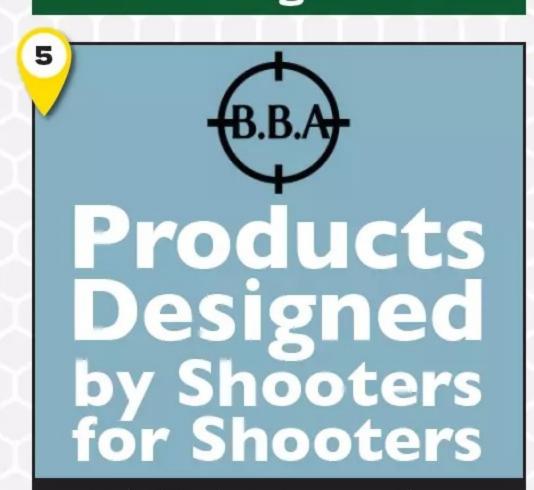


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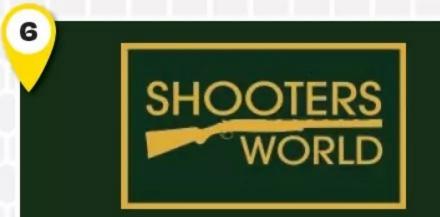
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Designed for younger shooters, this compact PCP air rifle offers a cold hammer-forged barrel, an onboard pressure gauge, and a quick-fill system. It features a fully adjustable two-stage trigger and a junior-sized beech stock option, with the further option to upgrade to a full-size synthetic stock. A 12ft/lbs version is also available.

Type: PCP

Calibre: .177 and .22 Muzzle energy: 6ft/lbs Shot count: 120 (for both .177 and .22)

Action: Bolt-action
Stock: Synthetic,
ambidextrous

Overall length: 27.1" Barrel length: 11.8" Weight: 5lbs

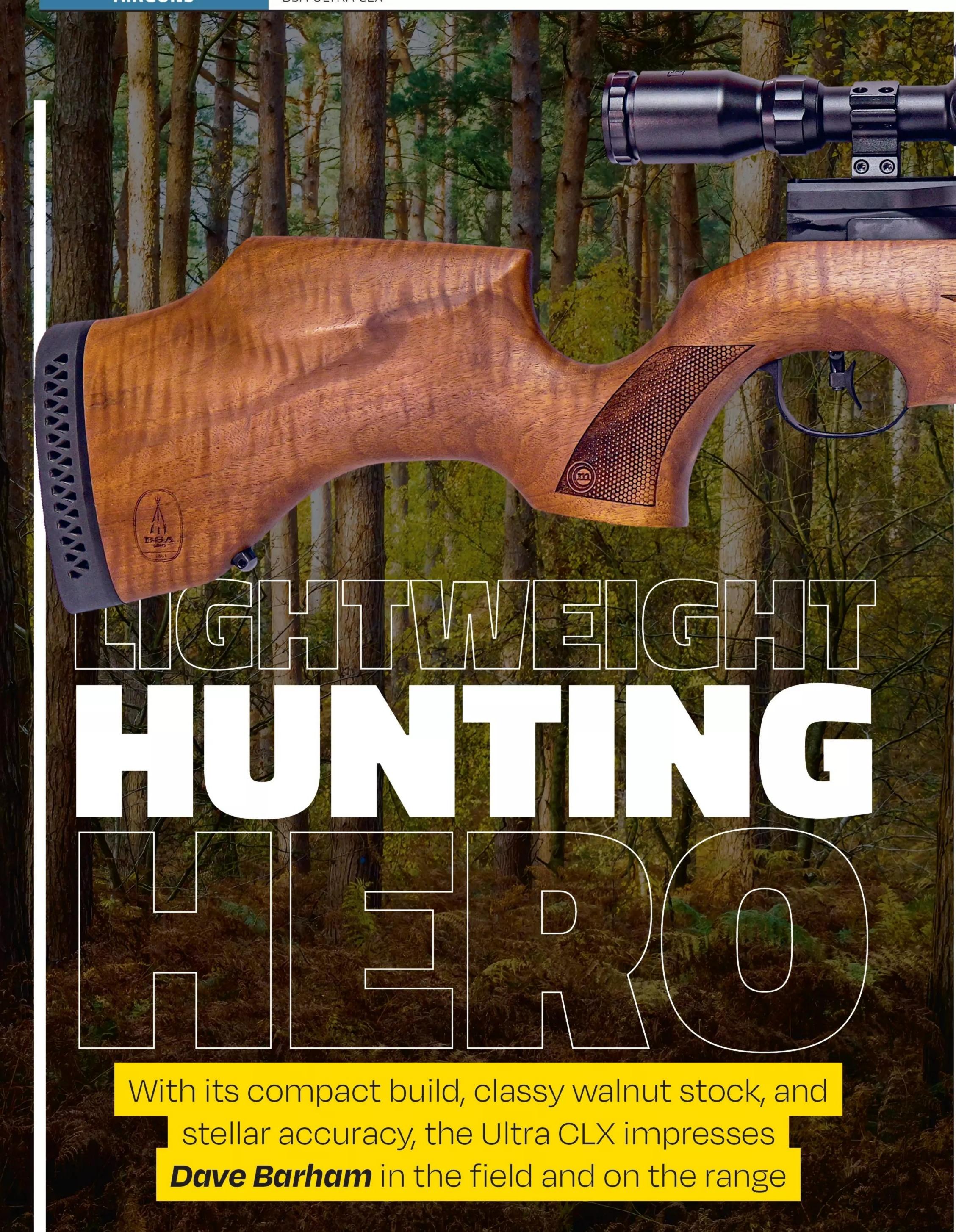
RRP: £499

Contact: BSA Guns - www.bsaguns.co.uk











about owning a BSA airgun. Apart from being exceptionally well-made and very accurate, this British gunmaker's air rifles have a pedigree that spans more than 160 years. BSA is constantly evolving and tweaking existing models, as well as working on brand-new rifles, so it was a natural progression to revisit the original Ultra model and produce a side-lever CLX version. It's available with a beech or walnut stock, but I'm a sucker for a nice bit of wood, so I opted to review the walnut-stocked .177 version.

There's no mistaking the shape of an Ultra stock, and this walnut version is the work of Italian gunstock gods Minelli. What's more, it's ambidextrous, so it truly is a "one size fits all".

Long enough to keep your hands clear of the cylinder when employing a variety of hold styles, the foreend is nicely shaped, and there is ample stippling for added grip.

The pistol grip features the same stippling, and I really like the steep rake and the deep scallop shape.

As someone who likes to shoot with their thumb up top, I really like the cut-away that scoops into the rear of the action to provide a very comfortable thumb support and easy access to the safety catch, which you flick to the right for safe and to the left when you're ready to fire.

At the very rear of the stock is a vented rubber butt pad, which is in a fixed position. Pre-fitted studs are another nice extra on the stock, which

provide secure anchorage for a sling or bipod. From an aesthetic perspective, having them fitted by the factory team saves you from having to attempt the job yourself. Yes, it's an easy job, but it's also easy to get wrong.

Precision build and balanced handling

Scope-mounting is via a split dovetail rail, which provides plenty of clamping space for most scopes, and with a 3–9x40 scope fitted, the point of balance falls around 35mm in front of

the metal trigger guard, which is just right for me, not that it makes too much difference in the case of the Ultra CLX. It's tiny and weighs just 5.7lbs unscoped.

The entire rifle is built around the new "Mono Block" platform, which is super-strong and machined to ridiculously high tolerances. One feature that does remain the same as the original bolt-action Ultra is BSA's famous cold hammer-forged barrel, which is 317mm long (12.5").

It comes supplied with a fitted muzzle brake, but I would suggest









that if you are a hunter then you should add a silencer to the ½" UNF thread underneath. It's got an impressive "crack" when you pull the trigger, which I really like, but for serious hunting situations, a silencer will make all the difference.

Behind the barrel sits the new 12-shot magazine, which pulls out from the left when the side-lever is pulled all the way back, and it is held securely in place by magnets. It's very easy to load, and you simply drop a pellet in, then

The magazine features a strong magnet to hold it in place

rotate the inner drum anticlockwise to drop another pellet in, which in turn increases the spring tension inside. It is very pellet-friendly and features a countdown display so you can keep an eye on how many pellets you have left.

This CLX model also accepts the new high-capacity magazines, too, which hold 20 shots in both .177 and .22 — they're a godsend for rat shooting!

The side-lever itself is a short-stroke biathlon-type. It is spring-loaded, so when you make the initial pull, it springs



back, and you just have to pull the final inch or so to cock it. The entire action is silky smooth, aided by the short-drop handle, which has loads of vertical stippling for added grip, and it actually rotates as you pull it.

Trigger perfection

One of my favourite features on this Ultra CLX is its excellent two-stage trigger. Apart from being able to adjust the length and weight of the second stage, you can also tweak the length of pull and the height and angle of the match-type blade.

Straight from the box, the trigger on the review gun had a long first stage, which came to a clear stop before a short, crisp and relatively light second stage. It didn't need any adjustment, as it was exactly how I like it to be. The break is extremely crisp, with absolutely zero creep – it's an absolute joy to shoot.

Regulated power and shot count

The Ultra CLX features a new regulator, which has improved efficiency compared to the Ultra

SE. Using 8.64gr BSA Gold Star pellets, the .177 calibre test gun was running at 11.5ft/lbs with a variation of just 7fps over a string of 10 shots. From a full 232bar fill, you can expect 60 shots in .177 and 72 in .22, which again is a vast improvement and perfect for hunting.

Filling is achieved using a probe that inserts into an inlet concealed behind a rotating shroud at the end of the cylinder, and a colour-coded fill gauge is also located at the very tip.

You can actually pull the shroud straight off the end of the cylinder





very easily, if you so choose, when it comes to filling up.

Apart from being great fun to shoot, the new Ultra CLX is also insanely accurate. Its excellent barrel, consistent power output, and very predictable trigger make for really precise shooting. From a bench at my local club range, I was regularly landing pellet on pellet at 30m, and still cutting tiny groups that could be covered by a 5p piece at 40m. Again, it's well worth adding a silencer. That "crack" as you pull the trigger

is great, though, and it will certainly turn a few heads down at the range.

Field performance and practicality

I did manage to take it out twice to one of my rat permissions, too, where it excelled. The fact that it's so light, so short and easily manoeuvrable makes it the perfect hunting rifle, in my opinion. It's ideal for carrying on long walks, when you're stalking, and being so short, it's a dream to shoot in confined spaces, such as heavy brush, woodland, or even out of the car window. GM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: BSA Ultra CLX

Type: PCP

Calibre: .177 on test, .22 available

Barrel Length: 12.5" Overall Length: 32"

Weight: 5.7lbs (without scope)

Energy: 11.5ft/lbs Price: £729

Contact: BSA Guns – www.bsaguns.co.uk





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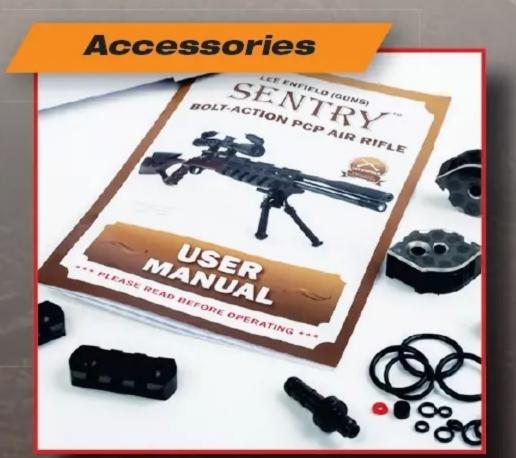
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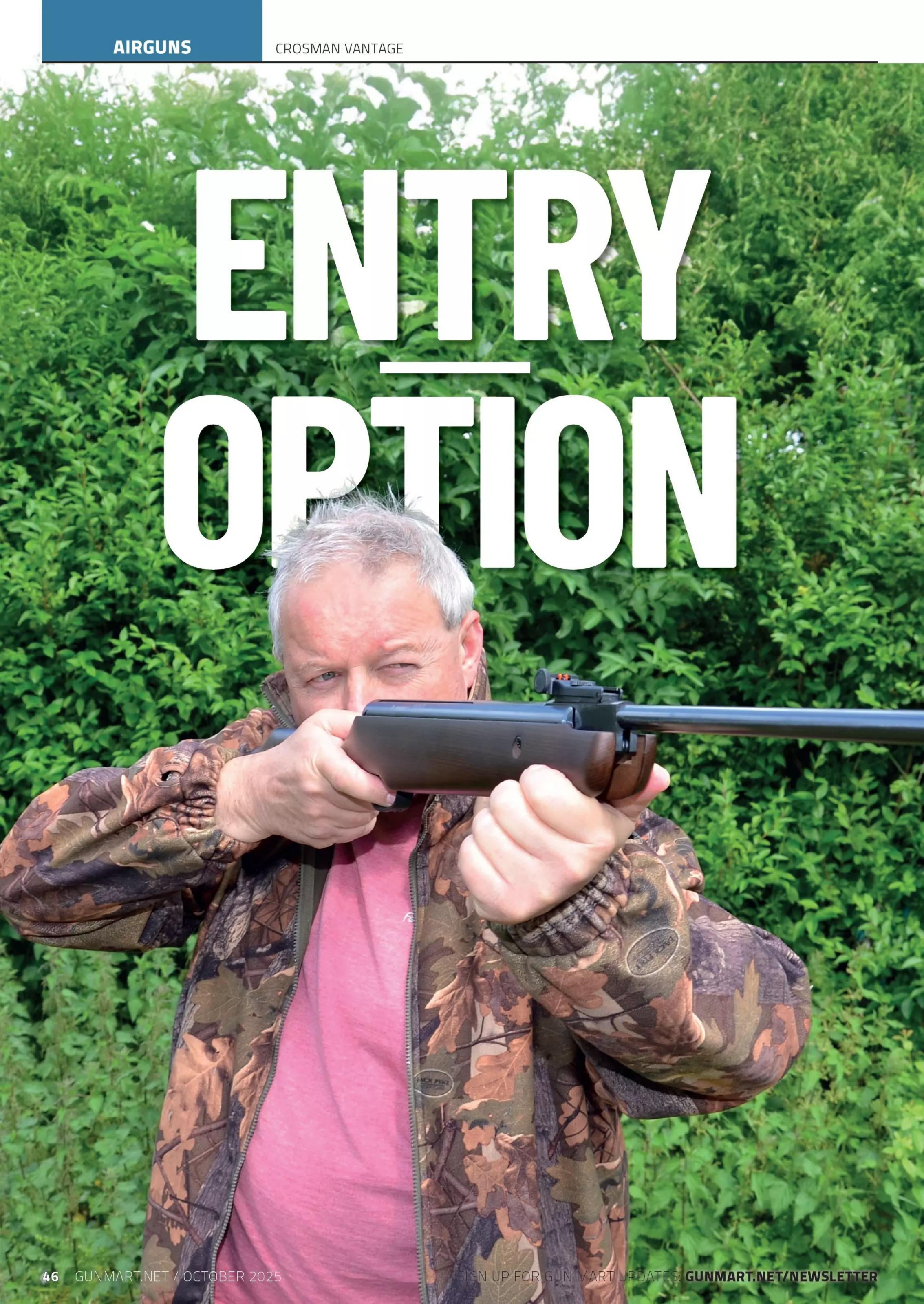
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It ready for use straight out of the box. That said, fibre-optic open sights also come fitted as standard, and these work a treat. The foresight gets a bright green element up front, while the rear sight has a notch formed with two red elements. Finger-wheel adjusters are fitted to the rear sight, and while these don't have number values marked, there are directional arrows.

Once I had experienced the fibre-optic sights, I did eventually fit a scope, just to see what sort of accuracy was possible. As with all spring-powered rifles, recoil is an issue, and it either pays to use a one-piece mount to prevent the mount from moving or two-piece ring mounts with an arrestor block.

Handling and feedback

In use, the Vantage revealed an irritatingly tight breech that needed a firm jolt to release the barrel from the jaws. This is a niggle that will vary with different examples of

the Vantage, I'm sure, and with a small amount of wear over time, it's something that should improve. Once the breech is open, the actual cocking stroke is fairly reasonable. Just be mindful to grab hold of the barrel slightly further back, as the green fibre-optic foresight element looks vulnerable with no protective hood.

With the Vantage cocked, it's worth noting that the action cannot be decocked due to the internal anti-beartrap system. This is something that is very common on this type of airgun, and I suppose it should be welcomed, given the inherent safety afforded.

If you choose to use the manual safety catch, located in the trigger guard just in front of the trigger, it can be a minor source of irritation, as the tab sits very close to the trigger blade once engaged. But hey, the clue is in the name – it's manual, so just ignore it if it offends. The trigger itself is unsurprisingly basic, yet pulls slowly through the creepy stage, and the final release is acceptable.

Figures

On the range, my test rifle was prone to 'dieseling', where excess lubricant/ oil inside actually ignites as the shot goes off, and the accompanying spring resonance was also significant. This, however, is quite common for spring-powered rifles, as the mechanism burns off excess lubrication applied at the production stage.

Accuracy with the scope in place proved a little disappointing, with groups around the 2" mark over 30 yards. Imagine tin cans set up end-on, something I used to revel in during my early days with airguns, and the Vantage is suddenly in its element. Here, to be honest, I would stick with the open sights, as up to 30 yards, the sight picture was spot on.

Moving to the chronograph, and using Crosman Ultra Magnum pellets, the Vantage produced a total velocity spread of 22fps, which is highly respectable, and an average of 10.9ft/lbs. These are healthy figures for sure.









Verdict

A mixed bag, then, but let's remind ourselves that the Vantage is a budget gun, built down to a very affordable price, and as such, is a solid piece of machinery for the money. It should give many years of enjoyment, and with prices spiralling ever skywards at the top end of the market, it's reassuring to see that cheap and cheerful guns are still available, as they so often provide the first step into our great sport. GM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Crosman Vantage

Type: Springer

Calibre: .22 on test, .177 available

Barrel Length: 18.5" Overall Length: 44.6"

Weight: 6.7lbs Energy: 10.9ft/lbs

Price: £99

Contact: Range Right – www.range-right.co.uk











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The Remington Vought delivers striking looks and capable performance. *Mark Camoccio* finds out whether style meets substance

> Ever since spotting this rifle in the
Sportsmarketing catalogue, probably around
a year ago, I've been wanting to get my hands
on one. Still, with one thing and another, and
alternative projects being thrust my way, it
never quite happened. Naturally, I was genuinely
quite excited when I finally had a box in front
of me bearing the name Remington Vought.

Big and bold

If bold styling is your thing, then the Remington Vought just demands a closer look. The beefy profile really does set it apart from the crowd. No standard barrel clamped over a cylinder here, as the Vought is more akin to a centrefire rifle. Several factors come together to create the visuals, and whilst the end result may not have universal appeal, I have to say I absolutely love it. At a time when many manufacturers are switching to subtle side-lever operation, the Remington Vought well and truly bucks the trend with a stonkingly good-looking, chunky bolt handle and slide mechanism.

The stock shows a straight-line butt, whilst the beefy fore-end smacks of a heavyweight target gun. Cutting-edge configuration comes with the lack of an obvious cylinder, since the compressed air is actually wrapped around the barrel within the chunky main tube. FX has

gone down this route with their DRS models, and it's a wholly radical setup for sure.

More goodies

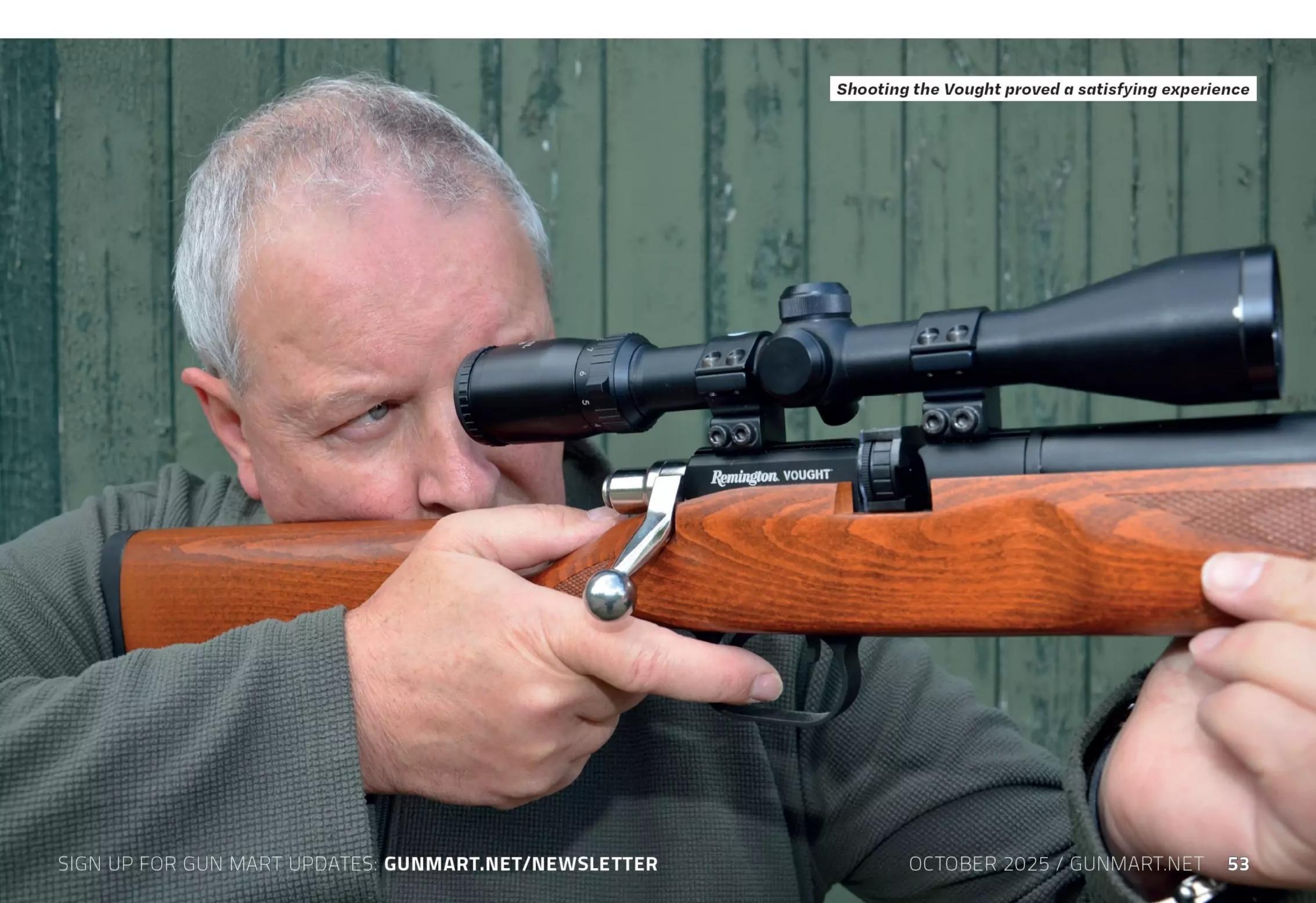
Alongside the stunning Vought, there's a host of goodies that make this model, on the face of it, great value for the current asking price of around £600. Three magazines are supplied, along with spare seals, a filling adaptor, and a 3-9x40 scope with mounts.

The Vought's action is technically regulated, which explains the presence of two manometers. One, located just in front of the trigger, shows the regulator pressure, while the other, positioned on the underside of the fore-end tip between twin Picatinny rails, displays the residual pressure in the main tank.

All the metalwork is finished in matte black, which is highly practical in any hunting scenario, it must be said. As for the laser-chequered sporter stock, the attractive medium brown hue doesn't mask any of the grain pattern of the hardwood, and overall, I reckon this is one good-looking rifle.

Preparation time

OK, time to get everything ready for the range, and that means we have to check over the magazines, charge up the Vought, and also get a scope bolted into position. Now, on the subject of glassware,



as mentioned, a 3-9x40 scope and mounts are included. While this is a great addition for a starter pack, the quality and sharpness are nothing amazing, so for my test, and to give the Vought a fair chance in any performance assessment, I fitted my own optic. The dovetail rails are comparatively short on this model, but I soon had an MTC Genesis 3-9x40 all ready to go. Just bear in mind the height of the magazine when fitted, especially in relation to any planned scope mounting.

OK, let's talk about magazines. With many manufacturers vying for business, it's definitely getting more competitive out there, and the recent trend for guns to be supplied complete with three mags is surely evidence of this. Set them all up in advance, and that's a lot of firepower at the ready. In the case of this Remington, each magazine has a ten-shot capacity, and while they are an allplastic design, they feel fairly well made. As for the filling procedure, it couldn't be easier, as no pre-winding is necessary. Just drop a pellet headfirst into the one open chamber, keeping a finger over the back of the hole to prevent the pellet from falling through. The first pellet should then hold the spring-loaded mechanism, and the drum can be rotated to reveal the next hole. Drop a pellet in here, and repeat the process until the mag is full.

Charging

Now to charge up the Vought's air supply. First, the dust cover must be unscrewed from the muzzle end to reveal a ½" thread for a silencer, as well as the inlet valve. The filling adaptor is the stick type, which has to be the easiest to use, since one end snaps straight into the Foster link from the air supply, and the other end pushes into the valve inlet hole. The instructions state that the recommended fill pressure is 190bar, and the maximum fill pressure is 200bar. So I did as I was told and stuck to the former. Check the probe is fully inserted, then slowly charge, bleed the line, remove the probe, and screw back the cover.

Hands on

An honest assessment of this Remington on test here has to conclude that, while the chunky silver bolt handle looks superb, the cocking operation wasn't exactly the smoothest I've encountered. All I would say is that adopting a precise, superpositive approach is the way forward. Lift the bolt handle to clear its notch, then pull it fully to the rear to cock the action. Next, snap the loaded magazine into position from the left side using its guide groove, then return the bolt and lock it down. Ten shots are now ready and waiting.











IT'S HARD NOT TO WARM TO THIS HEAD-TURNING AIRGUN. IN SHORT, IT'S NOT WITHOUT FAULT, BUT NOTHING ELSE QUITE LOOKS LIKE THE VOUGHT"

MARK CAMOCCIO

The in-guard safety catch is manual, though it has proved unreliable in my tests, as occasionally the gun could still fire! Not ideal, but I would ignore it anyway. While on negatives, the straight-line stock means cheek height is maybe a tad low for comfort, but a small piece of padding here would be mooted if this were my gun.

The trigger on the Vought is nicely set back, and I love the shape of the broad blade. I couldn't find any reference to adjustment in the instructions, and I'm not quite sure whether it counts as a two-stage or single-stage unit. In use, while it was a little vague with a small amount of creep over a short movement, the release was extremely light, which suited me just fine. The usual safety regime applies: just keep off the trigger completely until ready to take the shot.

The firing cycle was fairly loud, so if hunting duties are on the cards, I would strongly advise making use of the threaded muzzle. On test, with a silencer spun into position, the muzzle report really was tamed to a whisper. OK, the additional length takes away from the manoeuvrability of the Vought, and slightly detracts from the sleek visuals, but the resultant stealth mode will pay dividends, believe me. And on that note, don't forget the twin Picatinny rails up front, allowing for any additional accessories to be bolted in place. There's also a mini run of dovetail rail to play with on top of the action tube, so all bases are well and truly covered.

Facts and figures

This Remington is regulated as specified, and the regulator pressure was set to 900psi











on my gun, which equates to around 60bar. Shooting some initial test cards, just to set up zero and get an overall feel for the action, I soon concluded that shorter pellet designs would cycle a bit better in the magazine. QYS pellets (8.44gr) were initially used, but the shorter-bodied Air Arms Diabolo Express (7.87gr) seemed just that little bit smoother.

Over the chronograph, using QYS, I clocked 55 shots with a total spread of 33fps. Nothing incredible in terms of shot count or consistency, yet plenty of usable performance for a hunting rifle, which is, incidentally, punching out a healthy average of 11.3ft/lbs. I stopped at 55 shots as the residual main cylinder pressure had dropped to only a fraction over the regulator pressure. So for those obsessed with a huge shot count, OK, you'll have to look elsewhere. Otherwise, the quirkiness and all-round appeal of the Vought will see many shooters acknowledge that this model has plenty enough in the tank to do the job asked of it.

In terms of accuracy, I started at 30 yards. Both QYS and Air Arms Diabolo Field pellets produced groups measuring around ½". Very respectable. Still, as mentioned, I just had a feeling the shorter-bodied designs may improve things. Switching to Diabolo Express, this closed

the groups to $\frac{1}{4}$ ", and moving back to 40 yards, these hardly increased in size. Excellent.

Verdict

Clearly, with the right ammo, the Remington Vought can perform, and while there are better multi-shot systems on the market, with this one having proved a little sticky on test, it's hard not to warm to this head-turning airgun. In short, it's not without fault, but nothing else quite looks like the Vought, and add in the fast-handling, unique feel, and genuine performance potential, and it looks like a steal at the current RRP. GM

Thanks to Range & Country Shooting Supplies in Sleaford, Lincs, for the kind loan of this airgun.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Remington Vought

Type: PCP

Calibre: .177 on test, .22 available

Barrel Length: 23.75" Overall Length: 43.75"

Weight: 6.8lbs Energy: 11.3ft/lbs Price: £599.95

Contact: Sportsmarketing – www.sportsmk.co.uk





Remington



Dave Barham tests the new HikMicro Alpex 4K Lite and discovers just how far digital optics have come

One of the standout new products for 2025 has to be the new Alpex 4K Lite digital day/night-vision scope from HikMicro. It has been designed specifically for airgun use and provides the same amount of tech as the original Alpex 4K, but with around 50% less size and weight. I've been lucky enough to have one at my disposal for the past two months, and I have to admit that I'm totally and utterly in love with it.

It may look like a traditional 30mm tubed scope, but this compact unit measures just 283x30x65mm and weighs around 468g. You'll notice that there is a Class 1 laser on top, which is where this unit comes into its own, as you can laser rangefind with it from just 3m out to a 1,000m detection range with the press of a button. It also has a built-in ballistic calculator, which is very easy to set up and invaluable out in the field. This scope makes pest control a doddle. The ballistic calculator is pinpoint accurate, and with the simple press of the laser rangefinder button, the scope works its magic and gives you a point of aim in milliseconds. I've been using it exclusively on rats and rabbits recently, and I'm amazed at how much it has changed my hunting. I rarely took shots past my 30m zero range in the past, but I've been taking rabbits at 42m without even thinking about it with the Alpex 4K Lite, such is the precision of the calculator inside.

It is powered by an internal battery but can also cleverly accept an additional 18650 battery to provide a total continuous runtime of around eight hours, which is pretty impressive given the amount of tech held within its shell. You get one 18650 battery and a smart charger supplied with the scope.

Advanced features and connectivity

This unit features five different viewing modes: Day, Night, Green, Yellow and Auto. Anyone who's into photography will tell you that an f/2.0 aperture lens is the ultimate for night-time and low-light photography, and in photographic terms, a quality fixed 50mm lens can cost well over a thousand pounds. Here,

you get a 40mm f/2.0 lens with a digital 1–8x zoom included. You'll need to buy an external IR torch in order to use the Night mode, but HikMicro makes a great IR torch and quick-release mount specifically for the Alpex range of scopes.

Another great feature is the ability to record UHD video with sound, thanks to the onboard microphone. There's plenty of onboard storage capability, and you can also connect the unit to the HikMicro app on your smartphone to browse and download your files, and even view everything live. This hotspot connectivity is also used to install the regular firmware updates that HikMicro releases to provide continuous improvements, eliminating the need to faff around with leads and downloads from your computer.

Power on, pair up

One thing that strikes you when you turn this unit on is its simplicity. Press the on/off button, and the unit fires up in less than a second. A short press of this button once the unit is switched

The HikMicro Alpex 4K Lite is nice and compact, and weighs only 468g



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: HikMicro Alpex 4K Lite **Laser Ranging:** Yes **Ballistic Calculator:** Yes Sensor: 4K CMOS

Frame Rate: 50fps and 100fps Lens: 40mm

Aperture: F2.0 **Ranging Distance:** 3m-1,000m Magnification: 8x (3.5 - 20.5x)Eye Relief: 55mm **Display Resolution:** 1920x1080 HD

Reticle: Choice of 10

Reticle Colours: 8 **Operating Temp:** -30°C to 55°C Weight: 468g

Battery: Internal, plus external 18650 (supplied)

Battery Life: 8 hours (approx) **Price:** £649

Contact: Elite Optical www.eliteoptical.co.uk

the scope







on will put it into standby, and again, it's an instant start-up from here, too, with a short press of the same button.

Up top, there are three buttons with a rotating collar underneath, and it's these you need to use to operate the entire unit. The right-hand button takes you into the menus, the left-hand button is your video record or photo capture, and the bottom button operates the laser rangefinder. Simple.

All the menu options are accessed by pressing the right-hand button on the three-way pad up top. A long press opens the first menu page, then you use the rotating collar to scroll up and down. A short press of the menu button selects whatever you have chosen, then a long press takes you back to the main menu or saves whatever data you have entered.

The first thing you have to do is connect the scope to your smartphone. To do this, simply scroll down through the menu by twisting the rotating collar until you get to the "Network" setting, then use the push button and rotating collar to toggle between "Hotspot" and "Close" — you want it to stay on the former.

Now open the app on your phone and follow the instructions, which are basically opening your internet settings on your phone, selecting the unit, and then entering the password, which is displayed on the screen in the scope. With your Alpex 4K Lite paired to your phone, you can now

take photos and record video directly to your smartphone via the unit.

Profiles, reticles and colours

The first port of call is to get into the main menu, then scroll down to "Advanced Settings" and press the Menu button to enter the submenu. Scroll down to "Zeroing" and short-press the Menu button again. This takes you into the zeroing menu. These are your five different saveable profiles to choose from, which is really handy to have because you can set No.1 to, say, 30m (you can choose either metres or yards in the settings), with a lightweight pellet, then maybe set No.2 to 15m for barn ratting with a heavier pellet, and so on.

In this menu, you can also set your reticle type, of which there are 10 choices, as well as a choice of eight colours: blue, green, red, yellow, orange, white, grey and black.

Zeroed

I love how easy it is to get the Alpex 4K Lite zeroed; it really is child's play with HikMicro's "One Shot Zero". Simply line up on your target and adjust the focus ring found on the objective to make sure everything is crisp, then press the Menu button and scroll down once more to "Correction", and this is where the magic happens. Input your distance, scroll down and increase the zoom range to whatever you want for zeroing, and then take a shot at your target. The choice below the zoom in the menu looks like a snowflake, and this is what you use to freeze the frame. During





zeroing, I would suggest that you have the rifle on a bench, either on a beanbag or a bipod, but you must make sure it's a rock-solid position.

Once you have taken your first shot, place the crosshair back onto the bullseye of your target and freeze the frame. You can then scroll down one last time to the X and Y adjustments screen and move the additional crosshair to where your pellet hit the target. Once you've done this, simply long-press the Menu button and then save the parameters. Your next shot should be bang on target. If it is slightly out, that's because you didn't freeze the screen in exactly the same place as you took your initial shot. Just go through the process again, and you'll get it, although it will be easier this time because your point of impact will be way closer to your point of aim.

Ballistic calculator

The next step is where a lot of people tend to get a bit twitchy, but I can assure you it's really very easy to set up. You just require a few very basic bits of information.

Below the "Correction" menu option is the "Ballistic Calculator" option. Scroll down to it and shortpress the "Menu" button. Once

THIS SCOPE MAKES PEST CONTROL A DODDLE. THE BALLISTIC CALCULATOR IS PINPOINT ACCURATE, AND WITH THE SIMPLE PRESS OF THE LASER RANGEFINDER BUTTON, THE SCOPE WORKS ITS MAGIC AND GIVES YOU A POINT OF AIM IN MILLISECONDS."



The box contains a user manual, lens cloth, a 18650 external battery, and a smart battery charger



there, press the button again to turn "Ballistic Calculation" on. This brings up a screen to input all of your data. With regards to the first "Drag Model" setting, I just left that as it came. Next, you have to input the speed at the muzzle, which for my .177 R10 SE using QYS Streamlined Heavy

pellets is 227m/s (you can select metric or imperial in the main menu to have measurements in metres or yards, and millimetres or inches).

Next is your altitude. How much difference this makes for airguns, I'm unsure about, but a quick ping on Google Earth will tell you that.

I just left mine at 0. Next up is temperature. For the sake of it, I entered the correct temperature at the time of zeroing.

Now comes the important bit. You have to use Google and find the ballistic coefficient of the pellet you are using. It took me all of three seconds to find it for the QYS. Last but not least is the height of the scope above the bore. You can use a ruler to get a fairly accurate measurement to the nearest millimetre.

Now save it all and you're good to go. It really is that simple.

Advanced ranging and seamless viewing

With the ballistic calculator set up, you can now test it out at your local range, or try setting out targets at 5m, 30m and 45m. With the scope at base magnification (3.5x), you'll see a little white box near your reticle. This is where the onboard laser will ping, so it's important to position that white box on your target, not the centre of the crosshair. Press the laser ranging button once, and the scope will ping your target and tell you how far away it is in the right-hand menu on screen. You'll also then notice an additional crosshair either above or below the centre of the reticle, and that's where you need to aim. Yes, the clever little Alpex 4K Lite has worked out your holdover/under for you. Honestly, this function really has changed the way I hunt now; it's brilliant.

Another key selling point of the new Alpex 4K Lite is the ability to switch between 50 and 100 frames per second. The 50fps setting is superb, with absolutely no lag when tracking your quarry, but the 100fps is out of this world when tracking a fast-moving target, as there's zero motion blur. The electronics onboard give smoother rendering and faster response, and you won't even realise that it is, in fact, a digital scope.

Pinpoint precision and crisp, clear viewing in both daylight and complete darkness, plus extremely simple operation, make the new Alpex 4K Lite absolutely perfect for any airgunner. GM



Many shooters love to tinker, and those with the necessary level of proficiency will even service their guns as and when necessary. But for all of us, whether skilled in that area or just an enthusiastic novice, being able to gently stand our treasured gun in a rest can be invaluable, and there are many instances when it makes sense, keeping everything organised.

Basic adjustments

Mounting a scope is a case in point, and this task deserves care and attention in order to get everything set up true and correctly. Having the rifle sitting in a gun rest to start with just makes the job so much easier. It also makes it safer, with the gun firmly held in the cradles and set at exactly the angle required for the job. Making adjustments elsewhere, fitting addons to the barrel, or adjusting a butt pad, for example, are all tasks best tackled with the gun held securely.

Milbro's perfect design

A rest is therefore a prerequisite for any shooting enthusiast, and on test here is the Milbro Gun Rest, marketed by Sportsmarketing (SMK). The Gun Rest comes supplied effectively flat-packed, with the kit consisting of the two end assemblies, two metal rods that form the base, a bag of rubber push-fit spacers/ washers, and two wall brackets and fixings.

Assembly is straightforward and proceeds as follows: first, a rubber spacer is eased onto the thread at each end of the rod, then the rods are inserted through the holes in the end pieces. A further spacer is fitted to each corner, followed by the rubber cap. All these fittings are extremely snug, giving the finished product a solid and sturdy feel. Finally, the rubber feet must be eased over the base strips. This proved fiddly and awkward during testing,

but once in place, the job is done.

Adjustable

Once assembled, this is a super sturdy design, but further versatility comes with the adjustable cradles. Just gently slacken the adjustment knob at one or both ends, and the cradle moves up on a

ratchet, with up to 1.75" of height adjustment possible. Larger gun combinations can be accepted, and just having that feature is brilliant. The cradles feel rubberised to protect and grip any gun held, but further padding can obviously be added. In short, this gun rest does a great job while being light and portable.

Great value

The two moulded wall brackets allow the rack to be mounted on a wall and used effectively as a gun display. Otherwise, the unit is self-standing and very stable in use. Indeed, given the design and robust construction, it's easy to conclude that this Milbro Gun Rest is excellent value for money, and a must-have accessory for any enthusiast. GM

REVIEWER: MARK CAMOCCIO

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Milbro Gun Rest

Price: £32.95

Contact: Sportsmarketing - www.sportsmk.co.uk







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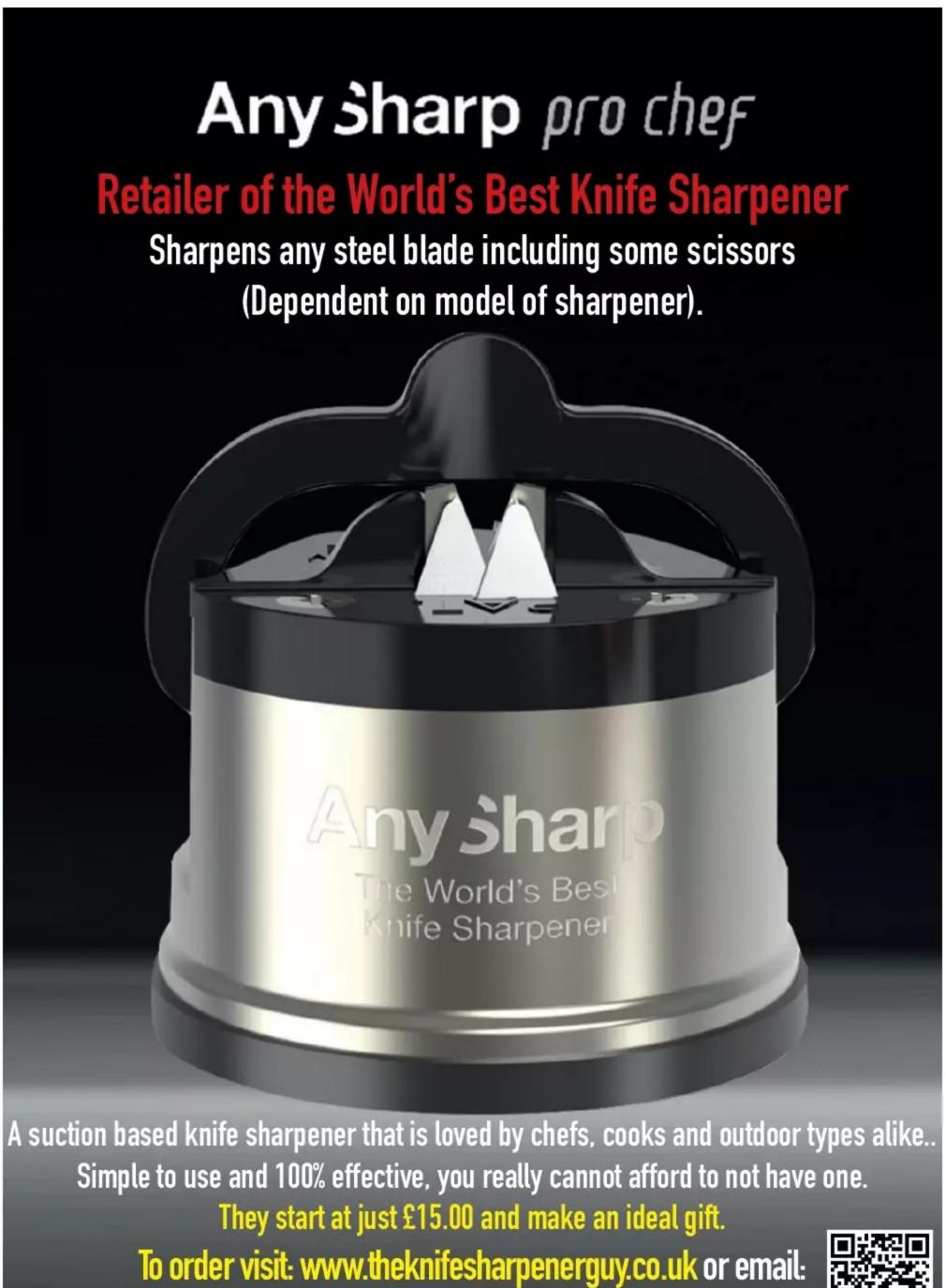
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Helle Fjording 50-Year Limited Edition Knife

birthday of one of their most famous knives, the Fjording, Helle has revisited this classic and given it a number of upgrades. It still features the short, stubby blade and a nicely contoured handle, which has quite an unusual shape, although it has undergone something of a makeover.

A tougher, sharper blade

The original version of the knife featured a thinner carbon steel blade, but the new model on test has a thicker laminate H3LC steel blade, representing a considerable upgrade. This triple-laminated carbon steel is exceptionally tough and offers excellent edge retention. The blade now measures 2.8mm thick and 69mm long. It is completely rigid, with no flex whatsoever, and the edge is remarkably sharp.

The stick-tang design is not typically regarded as the strongest option for larger, heavy-duty knives, but in the case of the Helle Fjording, it is more than sufficient for the intended uses of this small knife. The end of the tang protrudes from the back of the knife, where it is secured with a small brass stud.

Stylish handling and comfort

The handle has also been updated with additional styling and modern materials.



The original one-piece birch design has been replaced by a composite handle made from curly birch, stabilised green curly birch, and leather. This combination of materials and colours, including the distinctive 'Helle-coloured green', has become one of the brand's signature features. The materials are combined and finished to give a flawless feel and striking appearance.

The size and shape of the handle, which measures 89mm in length, 39mm in depth, and just 15mm wide in the middle, are unusual and look like they shouldn't work. Nevertheless, it sits perfectly in the hand for intricate tasks such as carving or preparing meat. When held in the fingers rather than the palm, and supported by the thumb

against the front portion of the handle, the knife feels very comfortable to use.

The wrap-around sheath has also been upgraded, with high-grade tan leather, and it features slots for attaching it to your belt. It also has a very clever additional feature for securing the knife. The small round pommel on the butt of the knife, which secures the blade to the handle, fits into a hole in the top of the fold-over flap on the sheath to hold the knife very securely. The flap also tucks into a leather loop on the top of the sheath for even more security.

A compact classic reimagined

Helle has very cleverly honoured the Fjording legacy while bringing the execution into the 21st century. The result is a fantastic-looking knife that is very practical and particularly sharp, straight out of the box. Weighing less than 4oz, it is extremely lightweight and takes up very little space in your backpack. The quality and finish of the knife are exceptional, which is actually the norm when it comes to Helle, and as well as being a high-quality tool, this is also a superb collector's item. GM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Helle Fjording 50-Year Limited Edition Knife

Price: £149.95

Contact: Whitby & Co - www.whitbyandco.co.uk

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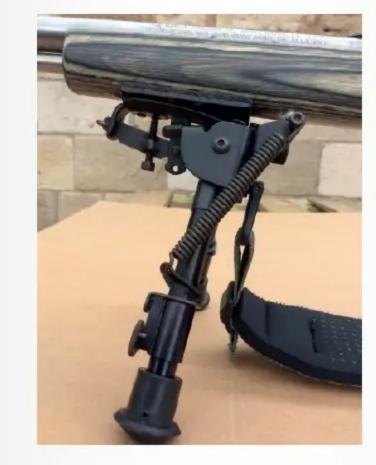
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Harris also produce the M-LOK (modular lock) mounting system to some of its swivel bipods, namely S-BR, SLM, SL and S-BRM from £163.00





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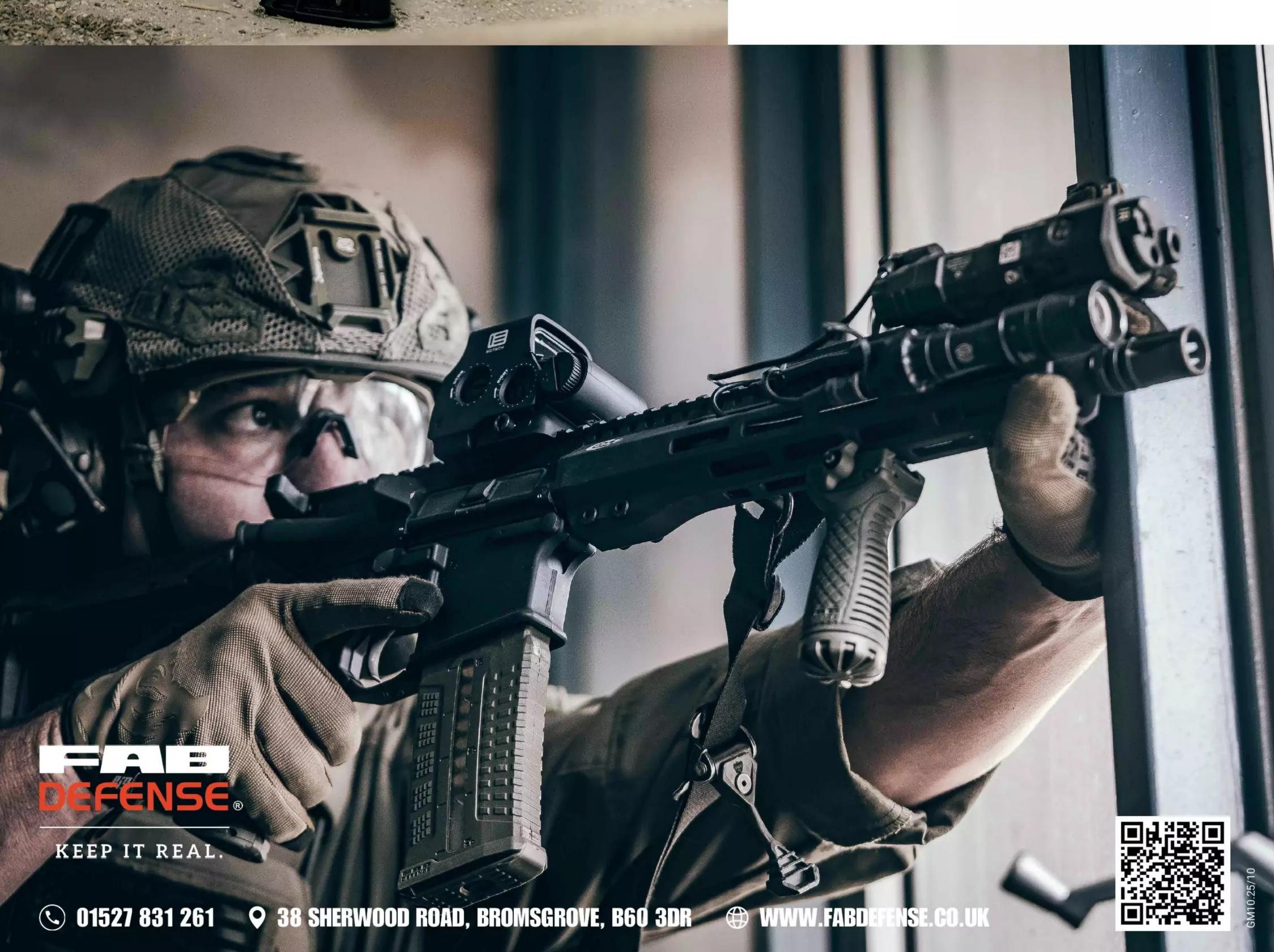






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Bruce Potts takes the new Sako 90 Finnlight into the field to see if this lightweight legend still lives up to its name

The Finnlight is back! Among all the new Sako 90 models entering the market, its absence was glaring. A firm favourite in the 75 and 85 series, it earned a reputation as an affordable, all-round stalking rifle that British shooters loved.

This new model comes in a range of calibres from .22-250 to 9.3x62mm. It is priced at £1,899, and is likely to appeal to stalkers who appreciate Sako's renowned out-of-the-box accuracy and reliability. It is available in both right and left-handed configurations.

The stainless steel action, bolt, and barrel make the Finnlight ideal for serious hunters, with a choice of 20" or 22.4" fluted barrels. The composite stock is a practical alternative to carbon-fibre, as it is slightly heavier but just as rugged.

In a nutshell, the new Sako 90 Finnlight combines lightweight materials with built-in durability and excellent handling. I bet it will be Sako's best-selling 90 model.

Stainless steel

The 90 supersedes the 75 and 85 models, yet it retains the same lovely, smooth bolt operation, along with some great new features.

Action sizes match the length of the cartridge, so you can have a lighter rifle depending on what you shoot. This means that with this .308 Win version, the medium-sized action is used.

The stainless steel action beds to the stock via a flat-bottom receiver, with a small tenon that engages into a steel mortise that is secured to the stock. This arrangement provides a strong and consistent union between the action and stock so that good accuracy is maintained in all weathers.

Up top, the 90 has an integral Picatinny mounting system and a recontoured action top, allowing you to load the magazine in situ. Equally, the oversized ejection port is not obstructed by a mounted scope, making this part of the 90 action equally user-friendly.

The bolt

The 90 uses a push-feed bolt face rather than controlled feed, and what I like most about the bolt is that Sako has opted to incorporate a twin-plunger ejection system for very positive cartridge expulsion. Extraction is via a single claw on the face of the bolt. The whole bolt



SISLEY BISLEY 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 Snoko chame who BISLEY - GUARANTEED PRECISION 1-01 BISLEY - GUARANTEED PRECISION **BISLEY - GUARANTEED PRECISION** BISLEY BISLEY BISLEY 5 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 HORMANY MARINA I was able to extract good accuracy from the Sako with both lead-cored and lead-free ammunition 170 25/17/5/5 258 2501 Name 3004, 2989, 3994

Controls and feed

The safety is still a lever type, with a push button that lets you open the bolt while the safety is engaged, allowing the safe removal of a chambered round.

The trigger has a nice, broad, smooth blade that can be positioned to your liking, and the new weight adjustment system uses a rotary, five-position

indexed adjuster that sets the sear weight from 1lb 14oz to 3lbs 10oz on this rifle when tested with my gauge. This is a great addition, and I used the mid setting, which gave a crisp release and a safe weight.

Sako magazines have always been reliable. This stainless steel, double-stacked five-shot version sits flush





operation is super smooth, and the lock-up is fast and precise.

The three-lug geometry, now commonplace, offers a lower bolt lift than a two-lug system. The straight bolt handle shows a comfortable, rounded knob, which can be swapped for a larger one if preferred.

On the bolt shroud is a small plunger or bolt assist that makes decocking the bolt or disassembly extremely easy.

Inside the bolt body, Sako has worked hard to develop as short a lock time as possible for the greatest accuracy.













with the stock and can be top-loaded through the action. It features a twopoint release system: a slight push upwards at the front, followed by the magazine catch, which pops it out.

Select your barrel

Sako has long been known for producing high-quality, long-lasting barrels, and the Finnlight's free-floated, fluted, cold hammer-forged tube delivers spot-on accuracy straight from the box. It features a smooth inner bore that needs no running in and a nonreflective, 'glass-peened' matte finish that helps reduce glare in the field.

There are three .308 Win models available: two with 20" barrels and either 5/8 UNEF or 15x1 muzzle threads, and one with a 22.4" barrel threaded 15x1. All have a rifling twist rate of 1:10", which is a bit faster than some of the earlier models, which were 1:11". This is no doubt to cater for the more common use of lead-free ammunition. The test rifle was the 20" option, which measured 39.7" overall.

The furniture

The overall design of the stock is very pleasing visually, but even better when shouldered, as it just feels right. It shows a durable finish with a textured surface for optimal feel and grip. It's a moulded composite synthetic, so cheaper than carbon-fibre, and the slight weight gain is no real problem. This rifle weighs 7lbs, whereas a similar spec Sako 90 Peak is 5lbs 12oz with carbon-fibre furniture.

I like the special synthetic leather material on the pistol grip and fore-end, which maximises grip and control with a good degree of comfort too.

New QD sling sockets replace the old swivel studs to provide quick and secure attachment of slings, but I needed an adaptor for my Harris bipod.

Finished in Hunter green with black grip sections, the stock's clean lines and ergonomics offer an ideal shooting posture and perfect balance for smooth bolt operation, with stippled areas around the bolt release, handle and safety adding visual appeal and extra resistance to wear.

The adjustable, spring-loaded cheekpiece has the same soft faux leather trim as the grip areas, and the whole mechanism is very solid.

The length of pull is 14", making it comfortable for most people, and it can be fine-tuned by moving the trigger blade.

A soft black rubber recoil pad ensures a correct mount and secures the rifle in the aim, too. Although the .308 Win isn't a heavy kicker, recoil was mild and felt straighter than usual, thanks to the stock's effective geometry.

Ammo tests

In keeping with the lightweight theme, GMK included a short, light Steiner Ranger 8 1-8x24 scope. I like short scopes, and for the intended woodland stalking in Scotland, it would be ideal. I then fitted a very light 15x1 Freyr & Devik titanium moderator.

Factory load tests were conducted at 100 yards off the bench, and velocities were recorded with an FX True Ballistic chronograph. Although conditions were breezy with light rain during the test, this did not affect the performance of the Finnlight.

First, a couple of Sako GameHead loads seemed appropriate: a lighter 123gr and a more conventional 150gr projectile. The heavier round produced an average velocity of 2,749fps with 2,518ft/lbs of energy and a 1.01" group. With the lighter load, velocity increased to 2,908fps and 2,311ft/ lbs, with a similar group size of 0.98".

If you appreciate a heavier, stronger-constructed lead-cored bullet, then the Norma Tip Strike 170gr would be a good choice. With a more sedate velocity of 2,575fps, equating to 2,504ft/lbs of energy, and a



cracking three-shot group measuring each rifle to ascertain its dietary only 0.63", it's ideal for reds or boar.

After a thorough barrel clean, which is always a worthwhile procedure when switching from lead-cored to lead-free bullets, and popping off a few 'conditioning' rounds, the first copper bullets were my favourite: Hornady's International ECX. They did not disappoint with an unbelievable 0.37" group, which is amazing for a factory load and well worth the cost. Velocities from Hornady's Superformance range were equally impressive at 2,996fps and 2,492ft/lbs.

Next, I tested the Remington Copper 150gr bullets that shot so well in the Mauser 25 rifle, but here we had a large 1.48" group, which demonstrates why we test

requirements. Still, they are more than capable of toppling a stag or fallow, generating 2,760fps and 2,539ft/lbs.

Going lighter obviously favours this Finnlight, as the Geco 136gr lead-free load shot really decent 0.69" groups at 2,819fps and 2,400ft/lbs energy.

Into the field

I took the Finnlight into the Scottish hills and woods, where its short stature came into its own. I prefer lighter rifles these days, but the Finnlight still feels rugged. The sturdier stock balanced perfectly with the scope and moderator combination, and the faux leather grips performed well in both rain and hot, humid conditions.

An evening trip out yielded one of my best encounters in 47 years of





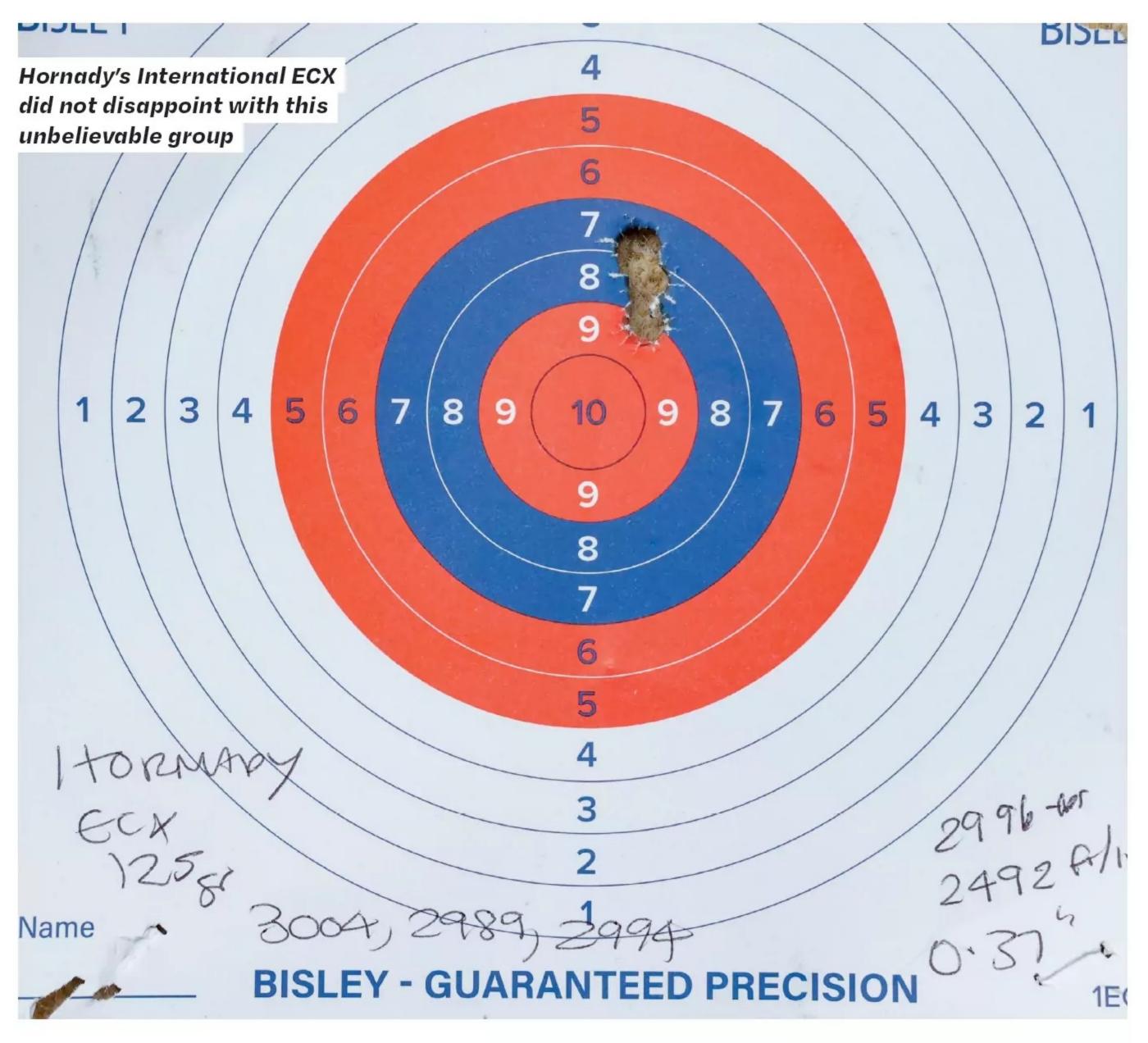
IF YOU APPRECIATE A HEAVIER, STRONGERCONSTRUCTED LEADCORED BULLET, THEN THE NORMA TIP STRIKE 170GR WOULD BE A GOOD CHOICE."

BRUCE POTTS

stalking. A small woodland track led to a forestry deer fence and into a twoacre pasture. It's a great spot that deer use as a passing place from forestry to field, and I settled downwind, 10 yards from the fence. A small roe appeared, walking down the track towards me.

At 75 yards, he continued closing the distance to 50, then 30, before turning and coming straight at me. He had only one antler and, at just 12ft away, was still completely unaware. He then jumped the fence and calmly wandered into the field to feed.

You may wonder why I didn't take action with the Finnlight, but stalkers will tell you that it's sometimes moments like these which separate true stalkers from those who simply enjoy shooting game.



Verdict

I may not have pulled the trigger on that roe buck, but the Finnlight still made a very good impression. It's one of those rifles that has all you need and won't let you down. And it is a great price, too. I know plenty of stalkers who love their custom rifles but actually own a Finnlight as their 'go-to'. There's no messing around – just pick up a box of factory ammo and off you go. **GM**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Sako 90 Finnlight Calibre: .308 Win Barrel Length: 20" Overall Length: 39.7"

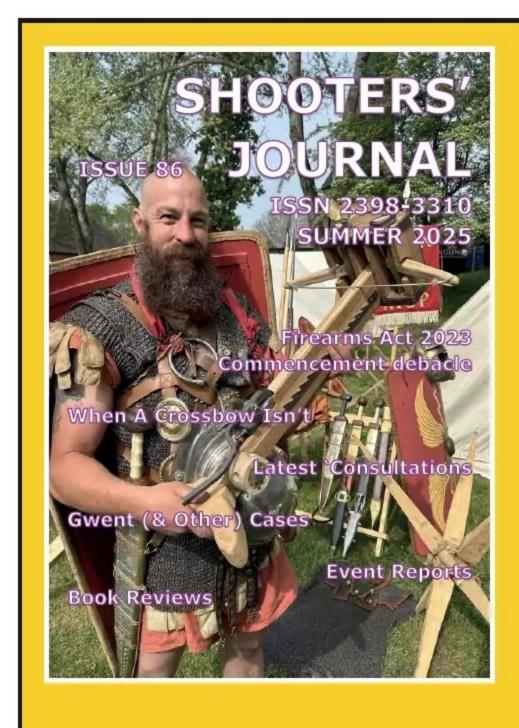
Weight: 7lbs Length of Pull: 14"

Magazine Capacity: 5 rounds

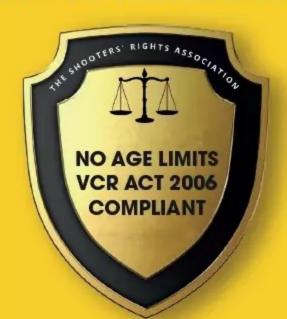
Price: £1,899

Contact: GMK – www.gmk.co.uk





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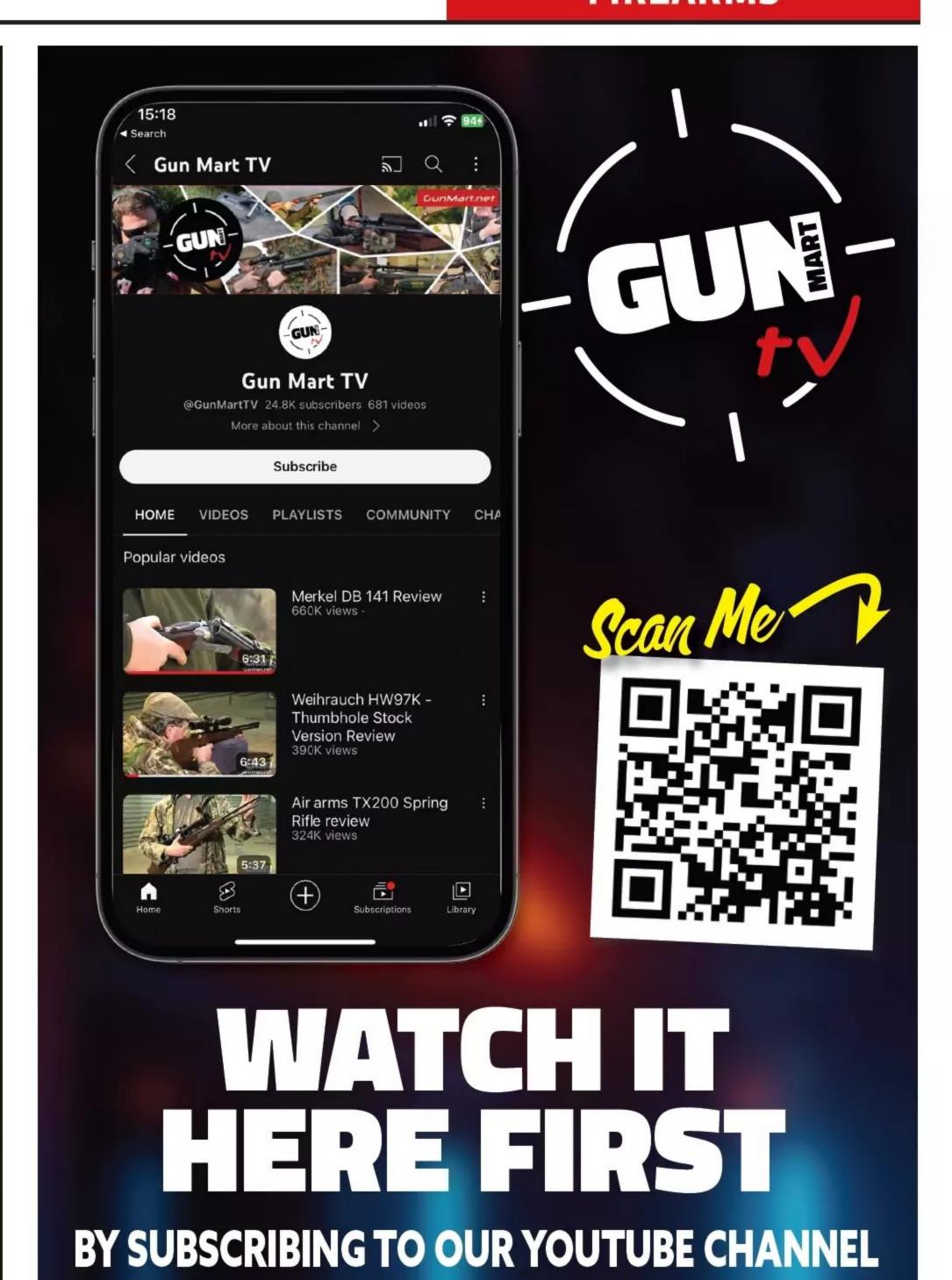
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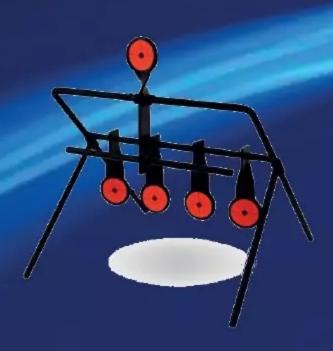
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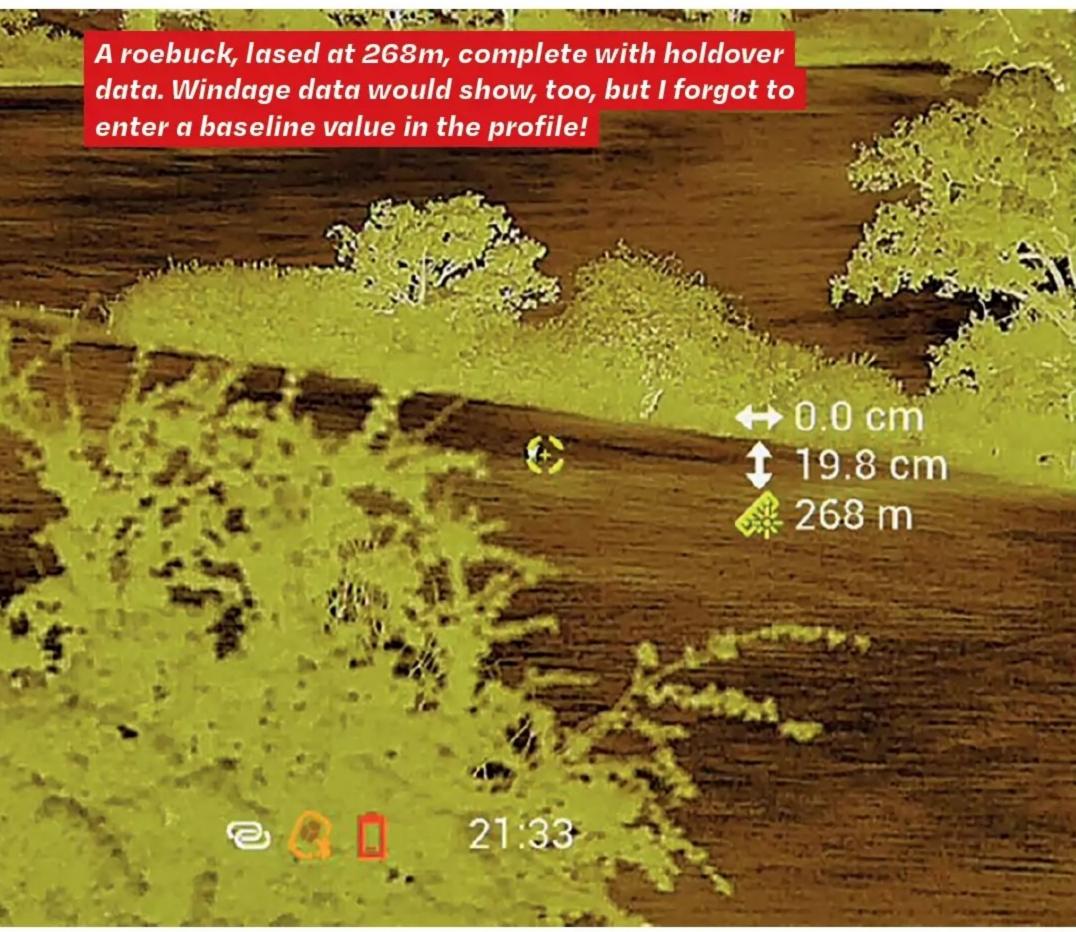


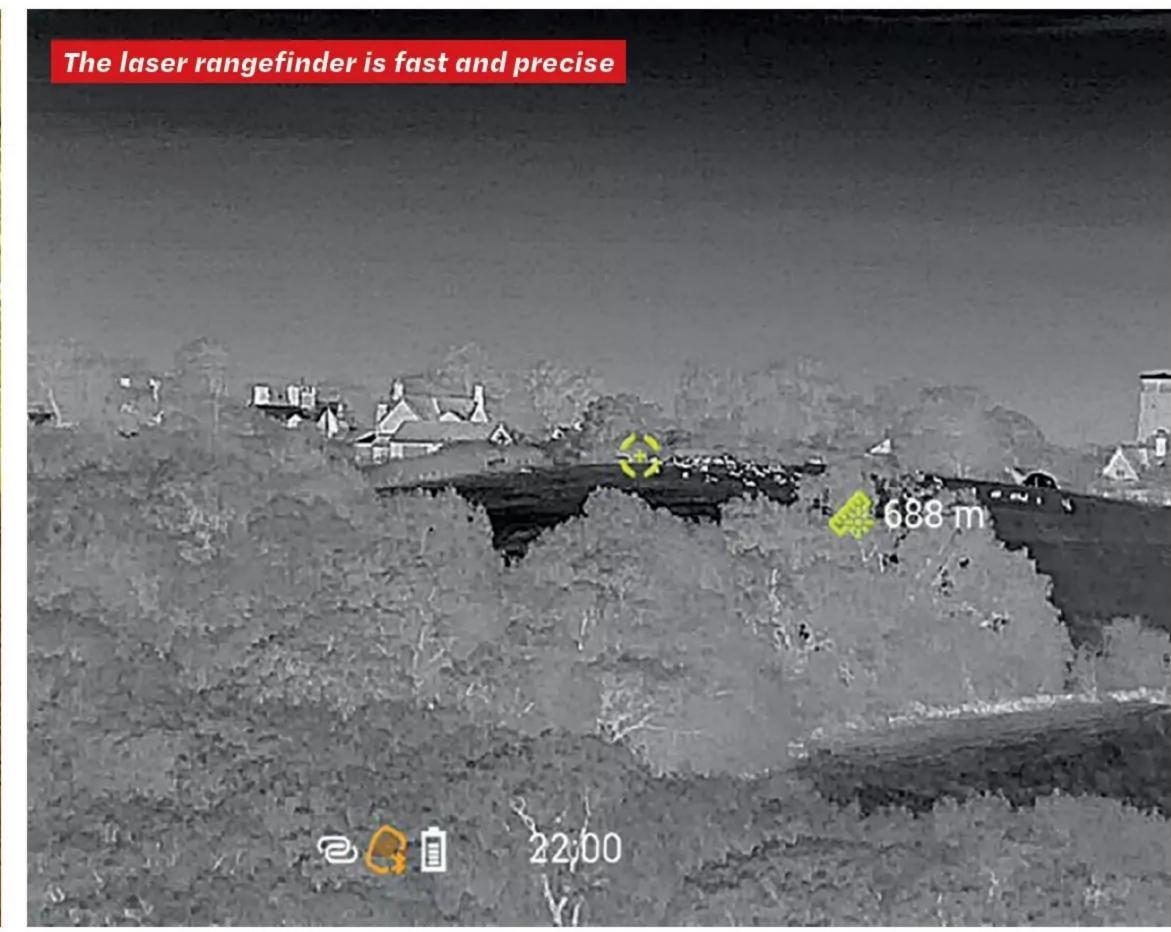
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Sausia ON DEMAND

Jules Whicker checks out Pixfra's innovative Taurus T650 LRF, an Al-enabled clip-on with integrated rangefinding, precise ballistic solutions, and a knockout price

I don't get to test many clip-ons, but I enjoy it when I do, especially when the device in question is as good as Pixfra's Taurus T650 LRF.

It's rugged, well-finished, nicely designed, and has intuitive controls, but what really makes it interesting and innovative is its combination of integrated laser rangefinding and ballistic compensation. Consequently, this review will focus on operation rather than physical characteristics, because that's where the Taurus stands out, delivering exceptionally practical performance in a package you can swap between rifles.

Old faithful vs new tech

Until now, integrating laser rangefinding with ballistic compensation has been the preserve of dedicated thermal scopes, which, barring the use of a suite of inter-compatible, high-quality, zero-retaining mounts, effectively tie you to one rifle. The beauty of clip-ons, in general, is that they can turn any day scope into a thermal in seconds. For example, my own Pulsar Krypton (a.k.a. "Old Faithful") does solid duty on everything from a sub-12ft/lb air rifle for rats all the way up to a deer rifle for woodland stalking. When I need thermal, I've got it; when I don't, I enjoy all the advantages of glass optics, including a pin-sharp image, reliable mechanical



adjustments, and no battery icon hovering in the corner of my view.

My Krypton can't do ballistics, though. For that, I've relied either on a programmable hand-held rangefinder or on a basic rifle-mounted unit backed up by old-school holdover stickers on my elevation turret or inside my lens cover. Both systems get the job done and can even feel satisfyingly low-tech, until something like the Taurus LRF comes along, which does it all in one hit.

Profiles and precision

The Taurus pairs via Wi-Fi with Pixfra's Outdoor app, which offers a live stream from the device, remote

configuration, and the ability to create profiles for different rifles and loads. For the latter, you'll need to enter scope height-over-bore, projectile weight, BC, muzzle velocity, and zeroing data, such as range and atmospheric conditions. Here, as ever, accuracy matters, as the quality of your inputs directly affects the precision of the firing solutions. If you prefer, you can enter the ballistic parameters directly into the Taurus itself, but the app makes it faster and easier to keep multiple profiles organised.

Zeroing works in the familiar digital/thermal scope fashion: fire a shot, zoom in, freeze the frame with



the crosshairs on your point of aim, move a secondary cross to the point of impact, save, then confirm and finetune with further shots. The Taurus even displays the click value for each adjustment, perfect for dialling in small corrections. This is worth doing because the system permits sub-0.1 MRAD precision. It's the first clipon I've tested that offers more than calibration. It's often said that clip-ons don't need zeroing or calibrating, but I consider it an essential performance optimiser. Better yet, with the Taurus, each profile can be individually zeroed, so selecting the appropriate profile gives you tuned electro-optical precision, as well as a ballistic data set tailored to your rifle and load.

Holdovers only

In the field, ranging a target generates holdover data in the top-right quadrant of the display, above a windage value. The lasered range interacts with the data in the active ballistic profile to generate both values. I found configuring my profiles with a wind value of 10 km/h at 90 degrees and guesstimating the offset applied to each shot based on the prevailing weather conditions worked well.

Offsets are shown in centimetres or inches, which is usable, but I would

prefer MOA or MRADs. What's lacking is a secondary aiming point (SAP) that shows you exactly where to aim. Unlike a dedicated digital or thermal sight, where the reticle and zoom belong to the same electronic system, the Taurus doesn't "know" what reticle you're using or what magnification it's set to, and so cannot know where to generate an SAP. Consequently, you have to apply the correction shown in the display manually by dialling in or adjusting your point of aim, resulting in a slightly longer engagement time than with a dedicated rangefinder-equipped electronic sight. That said, it's still a fair bit slicker than combining hand-held or rifle-mounted ranging with stickon drop guides, especially at night.

Round-the-clock relevance

Thermal isn't just for night work, of course. In daylight, it's invaluable for spotting quarry in deep shadow or dense cover, such as feral pigeons in the rafters of a cowshed, rats in brambles, squirrels high in the trees, and deer in thick woodland. With practice, you learn to read the intensity of a heat signature to judge when you've got a clear shot. Even so, the usual rule applies: never touch the trigger without 100% confidence in your ID and backstop.

Threads and bayonets

Mounting the Taurus was straightforward. The distributor, Thomas Jacks, asked for the outer diameter of the scope I'd be using, then supplied an adapter to match. This slipped over the objective bell and locked with a fore-and-aft cam lever. The Taurus screws into the front of the adapter via a male thread, and once you've found the best view through your day scope, you lock it in place with a threaded ring, using the supplied flat spanner.

The adapter stayed perfectly aligned throughout testing, but it's not as flexible as the Pulsar design, which includes bushings for different objective bell diameters, so you'll need a dedicated adapter for each scope. Additionally, if you opt to dedicate Pulsar adapters to different scopes, their current model features a bayonet mount for rapid swapping. The Taurus has a similar feature, but it's a different size from Pulsar's, and currently serves only to mount a monocular eyepiece (available from Pixfra or Rusan). Nevertheless, it raises the possibility of a full QD system in the future. Overall, the information on Pixfra adapters for the Taurus is sketchy at present, so it is worth looking to Rusan and Smartclip for immediate solutions.



Zoom sweet spots

With the right adapter, you can mount a clip-on to almost any scope, but magnification is a key factor in compatibility. On a zoom scope, 2.5-3x is ideal, as it shows the maximum display area without intrusive pixelation. Zooming in narrows the field of view and makes individual pixels more noticeable. With my Krypton, these constraints make zooming in beyond about 7-8x counterproductive. On the same 3-15x50 Minox ZP5, the Taurus stayed usable right up to 15x, with 10x a sweet spot for image smoothness and precision aiming. Beyond 5x, the tightened field of view began to crop out the on-screen information, but this was easily fixed via a menu option that shrinks and centres the readouts.

Remote is handy

You still have to reach out to operate the focus knob, but a remote puts all the other controls at the fingertips of your supporting hand (left or right!). The Taurus' Bluetooth remote is particularly good, as both it and the magnetic cradle it snaps into are made from the same light-but-tough magnesium alloy as the Taurus itself, and the unit comes with a roll of double-sided

hook-and-loop tape, allowing you to mount it anywhere you like.

AI we like

The image quality was everything I've come to expect from Pixfra's combination of a 640x512, 12µm thermal sensor, 1920x1080 0.49" OLED display, PIPS 2.0 algorithms, and AAIC technology. The latter employs Al to learn from every frame. It works, and I think this is how. As the device moves or the scene changes, each 50Hz frame captures a slightly different signal. "Dumb" thermals (sorry, Old Faithful!) discard this extra data, but AAIC "remembers" it, combining information from successive frames to build a more detailed image. The effect is similar to having a sensor with more, smaller pixels, only better, because AAIC's cumulative processing improves not only detail but also accuracy, complementing the precision already provided by the Taurus' zeroing capability and ballistic profiles.

Four of a kind

The Taurus LRF series comprises four variants: the T425 LRF, T435 LRF, T635 LRF, and the T650 LRF tested here. The numbers are logical: 4-prefix variants have 384x288 sensors, and

successive digits indicate lens size (25, 35, or 50mm). Across the range, weight variation is only 50g, and battery life from the 3,200mAh 18650 cells supplied is seven hours for the 384x288 models, and six hours for the thirstier 640x512 models. Everything else, including the dimensions, is the same, except the price, which is amazing at both ends of the scale, topping out at just £2,649.95 for the T650 LRF and kicking off at a mere £1,299.95 for the T425 LRF.

Final thoughts

The T650 LRF I received was an early sample, so I had some feedback to offer on both hardware (adapter options) and firmware (menu layouts). Even so, its performance, pricing, and promise, combined with Pixfra's build quality, the underlying versatility of clip-on devices, and, in LRF models, the innovative and practical inclusion of integrated laser rangefinding and ballistic compensation, make the Taurus T650 LRF an exciting and highly attractive route into thermal, especially for anyone with an enduring appreciation of high-quality conventional optics.

Contact: Thomas Jacks - www.pixfraoutdoor.co.uk



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The DRS Tactical's barrel-through-cylinder design impresses *Chris Parkin*, offering rigidity, stability and superb accuracy straight out of the box

> Airguns have become increasingly complex.

While this added sophistication, particularly the ease of tuning, has attracted shooters who enjoy tweaking and methodically testing different pellets and slugs, many still prefer to open the box and simply start shooting.

Barrel-through-air

The FX DRS system needs little introduction. In my opinion, it represents one of FX's finest innovations to date. The DRS platform is available in several configurations but essentially still uses FX's signature Smooth Twist barrel liners, which are now housed inside the air cylinder. This integration offers two significant benefits and, in my view, very few real drawbacks, which is rare in a world full of compromises. The pressure tube, with a 34.4mm diameter, is remarkably rigid, and the rifle still holds 310cc of air at 230 bar, delivering a realistic shot count for this FAC-spec model.

Barrel and cylinder length

The "Sniper" model features a 700mm barrel, but options of 500mm and 600mm are available for

those seeking a more compact, hunting-friendly platform. A threaded muzzle allows for the easy addition of a moderator after removing the end cap. The sleek, integrated barrel and air tube run into a 300mm (12") long octagonal fore-end that fully free-floats the tube. It's exceptionally rigid and ideal for accessory mounting. There's a full-length Picatinny rail on top of the receiver for scope installation, and the fore-end includes both an ARCA rail below and M-LOK slots for further customisation. You won't have stability issues whether you're using a bipod or a tripod.

Got the look?

It's hard to ignore the trend, as many airguns are styled to resemble AR-15s, and some execute this better than others. The DRS Tactical offers one of the most visually satisfying designs in this regard. Its proportions are spot-on, and the 500mm barrel mimics the silhouette of a fully suppressed centrefire rifle. A distinctive underslung plenum chamber, designed to work in conjunction with the AMP II regulator, is fitted within the receiver and visually recreates a .223 magazine beneath the rifle.





Trigger, safety and modularity

The trigger guard is machined into the rifle's aluminium chassis and houses an adjustable two-stage trigger that broke at 350g. It was crisp, predictable, and a real pleasure to use. Staying with the AR-15 theme, there's a two-position safety lever above the trigger on the right-hand side.

The rifle comes without a buttstock but includes FX's UG1 rubberised grip, which features stippling and a subtle ambidextrous palm swell. I found it comfortable, with a 70mm reach to the trigger, maintaining solid ergonomics. While the supplied grip is excellent, the rifle is fully AR-15 compatible, which means users can customise it with their own buffer tube, stock, and grip. My review rifle came with a basic Smith & Wesson stock, which was functional but minimal. Still, the rifle's modularity means you can go as premium as you like.

Considering its power, consistency, and FX pedigree, the DRS Tactical is very competitively priced, so just remember to factor in your buttstock and other accessory costs.

Multishot

The 12-shot magazine follows FX's usual format. To load it, rotate the latch 180° to unlock the clear cover, then manually rotate the internal rotor anticlockwise to preload the spring. Next, insert the first pellet to lock the rotor, load the remaining 11, and re-lock the cover, which is recessed to accommodate projectiles up to 14.2mm in length.

When empty, the internal rotor stops the rifle's probe from moving forward, providing a clear indication that the magazine has been depleted. This also helps prevent the user from wasting air by dry-firing. The side-lever has a smooth, silent toggle action and will not open unintentionally.

Efficiency and accuracy

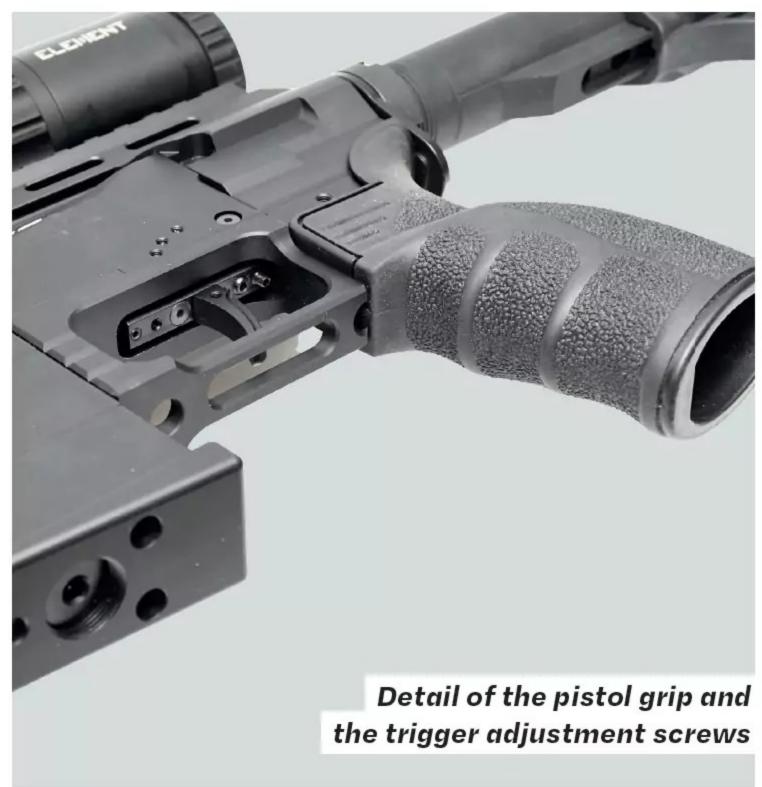
FX has equipped the DRS Tactical with a newly designed plenum. Although smaller than the one found in the DRS Pro (SHP plenum), it delivers exceptional efficiency. Unlike the Impact or Leopard platforms, the DRS Sniper has no external manual adjusters for pressure or hammer strike. While some may interpret this











as simplification or cost-cutting, I'd argue the opposite. It's factory-tuned and ready to shoot, perfect for those who want to skip the setup and get straight to the range. There is a single fill pressure gauge on the left side, allowing you to focus on shooting and addressing other aspects of marksmanship that are often overlooked when the shooter is fixated solely on tuning.

I still love pellets

I tested the rifle with FX's .25 calibre, 34gr pellets. FX claims 52 shots per fill at this tune, which matches my experience. Across a five-shot string, I recorded 884fps with a 12fps extreme spread, equating to 59.3ft/lbs of energy, which is more than enough for most airgun applications.

Over four magazines (48 shots), the rifle remained consistently accurate, producing ragged single-hole groups at 50m. The worst was 20mm centre-to-centre, while most groups stayed within 10 to 15mm. These results were achieved outdoors in real-world conditions, making them even more impressive.

Stability

What stood out most to me was the rifle's phenomenal aiming stability. The long fore-end, ARCA rail, and Tier-One wide-stance bipod that I fitted gave me one of the most stable shooting platforms I've used. Without an underslung buddy bottle, the gun's profile remains low and manageable, with a lower centre of gravity.

The cheekpiece, while a personal preference item, aligned perfectly with my scope setup, and I had ample room for a rear bag. The long Picatinny scope rail allows you loads of space to set correct eye relief, and the smaller magazine allows the scope to remain relatively low.

FX now uses a steel fill probe instead of brass, and I experienced no leaks when refilling.

Would I?

FX once again proves that the over-barrel air cylinder configuration used by the DRS series is one of its best engineering solutions. The rifle held zero all week, even after being boxed, unboxed, and jostled around in the back of my truck. FX includes



If you want a rifle that will deliver pellets with power and efficient air usage, the DRS is a good choice, and with multiple options for calibre and barrel length, I could finally be converted to the AR-15 layout, as it's functional here, not just aspirational.

The trigger was superb and can be easily adjusted via screws accessible through the trigger guard. If you prefer a slightly heavier pull for colder winter weather, there is ample space within the trigger guard to accommodate gloves.

I can't really comment on the eventual buyer's choice of buttstock, but in fairness, the S&W unit was certainly comfortable to use, although its polymer construction was a little at odds with the delightful mechanical design and build of the barrelled action. All the machining was seamless, and the black hard anodising was equally perfect.

Which barrel length?

This rifle keeps things simple and shoots well straight out of the box, just as FX intended. It's interesting to note that FX itself publishes data on the different power levels and shot counts available from the three different barrel length/air cylinder combos with Superior and Superior Heavy liners. For hunting, I don't think I'd really be at a loss with the 500mm barrel for pellets, but as always, slug shooters might want that extra time in the bore for air expansion that the longer tubes offer. Plus, the Sniper is the only one available with the Heavy

liner; the 500 and 600 have slower twist rates for pellets. Yet, the Sniper, with a slug liner, still shot perfectly with heavy (longer) pellets, so there is still that experimentation required that FX are so famous for. Does the extra friction from the longer barrel justify the extra air usage for your needs?

Conclusion

I can't exactly say why, but the DRS Tactical has really caught my attention. They all offer so many factors to balance out, but this seems to hit the magic mark for me. But I am predominantly a hunter, not a target shooter. The long foreend gives exceptional stability from a bipod, and the ARCA accepts any decent tripod. The mags are reliable, the shot count is realistic, and yet again, the barrel-through-cylinder has impressed me on yet another FX. GM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: FX DRS Tactical Sniper (FAC)

Calibre: .25 on test, .177 and .22 also available

Barrel Length: 700mm on test, 500mm

and 600mm also available

Overall Length: 878mm, not including butt stock

Weight: 2.72kg, not including butt stock Magazine Capacity: 12-shot in .25 calibre

Price: £922.99 (without buttstock) **Contact:** Sportsman Gun Centre - www.sportsmanguncentre.co.uk



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RELOADING BASSES

Mark Underwood examines the implications of switching to a different brand of cases for your reloads



Feloaders all tend to have a favourite 'pet' load for each calibre, and they stick with it most of the time, but occasionally a shortage of components can force a change. When it comes to the brass that you are using, having to switch to a different brand can have a very significant effect on your preferred load.

External dimensions

The external dimensions of cases tend to vary very little from brand to brand, with almost all cases being made to SAAMI standard dimensions. It is only manufacturing tolerances that might mean that dimensions

Weighing cases full of water is the easiest way to compare case capacities

vary by a fraction of a thousandth of an inch here and there between brands. If you full-length resize all of your cases, including new cases, before you use them for the first time, this will standardise the outside in line with the dimensions of your particular die.

Internal dimensions

The internal dimensions, and therefore the volume, of different brands of cases can vary significantly, and this can have a big effect on how your ammunition performs. The thickness of the brass in the case walls varies a lot from brand to brand, with the more expensive brands usually having thicker brass, and the thicker the case walls are, the less volume there is inside the cases for the powder and

the combustion. If a given powder charge is confined to a smaller space when it ignites, the chamber pressure generated will be increased. When you are using a nearmaximum load and you change to cases with a lower internal volume, it is possible

that you will push the chamber pressure to a dangerous level.

When you change the brand of cases you use, it is a good idea to check and compare their internal volumes. The easiest way to do this is to completely fill a case with water, so there is a curved bulge of water under surface tension at the case mouth, and weigh it. Then do the same with the other brand. A gram of water occupies one cubic millilitre, making it very easy to compare volumes. Some reloading software, such as QuickLOAD, allows you to input the case capacity (in grains of water or cubic centimetres) and then recalculate muzzle velocity and chamber pressure, which is really useful if you are using cases from different manufacturers.

If the new cases have a smaller internal capacity than the ones you have been using, you will need to reduce the powder charge slightly to achieve the same muzzle velocity and chamber pressure. While it is not possible to measure the chamber pressure easily, it is relatively easy to check muzzle velocity, and this is a good indicator of any changes in chamber pressure. The powder charge will only need to

Max: 100g/1500gn d: 0.005g/0.1gn

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be adjusted by a couple of tenths of a grain, and a bit of experimentation will be needed to duplicate the muzzle velocity of your pet load.

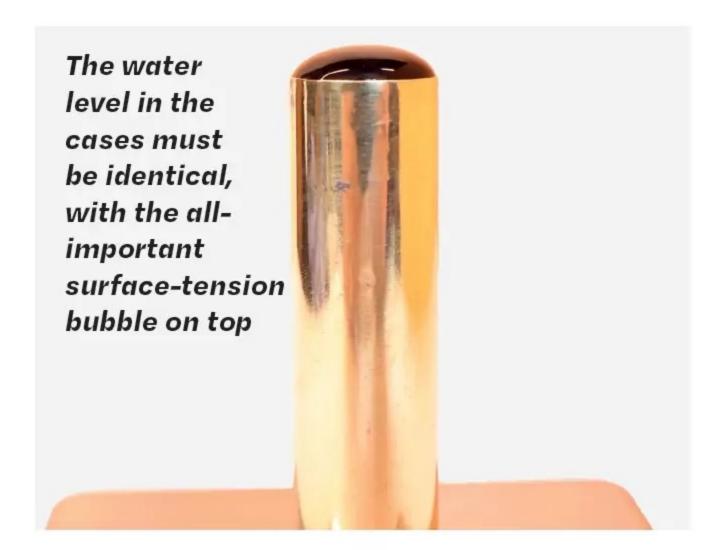
If the new cases have a larger internal capacity, then you will have to increase the powder charge slightly to achieve the same muzzle velocity. Again, just a tenth or two of a grain adjustment should be all that you need.

Neck tension

Different case manufacturers
use different metals, of different
thicknesses, and apply different
heat treatments to them, so the
way that the metals behave can vary
significantly. Nowhere is this variance
more important than at the neck of the
case, where it engages with the bullet.

If the metal is thicker, and the outside dimension of the brass at the case mouth is the same, then the brass will naturally grip the bullet tighter, as the inside diameter will be smaller. When you are resizing cases, the case neck area is resized, which dictates the amount of neck tension, and the amount of tension will vary depending on the thickness of the brass.

In a situation where you find that the brass at the mouth of the new cases is 0.0005" thicker than that of the previous brand you were using, they will produce neck tension that is 0.001" (2 x 0.0005") tighter in the same die, if it is not adjusted or changed. With dies that utilise neck sizing collets of different diameters, you can vary the amount of tension you achieve and cancel out the effects of the different brass thicknesses. In the above situation, you could simply change the neck sizing collet to one that is 0.001" larger, and this will accommodate the thicker brass and keep the neck tension similar. Due to other factors, such as heat treatment and the composition of the brass, it is unlikely that the neck tension will be exactly the same.







New brass cases are typically annealed, particularly in the neck and shoulder area, to prevent cracking or splitting during either firing or reloading. The method and temperature used by different manufacturers will vary, and this will affect the 'springiness' of the metal, typically ensuring consistent neck tension within the brand, but varying between brands. The annealing process also reduces the tendency of the brass to spring back to its original size after resizing, again making it possible to achieve consistent neck tension. Although some reloaders do anneal their cases themselves to keep things as consistent as possible, most reloaders do not go to this extreme, and the differences between how

Flash holes

Another area where cases from different brands can vary is the size

cases from different brands perform

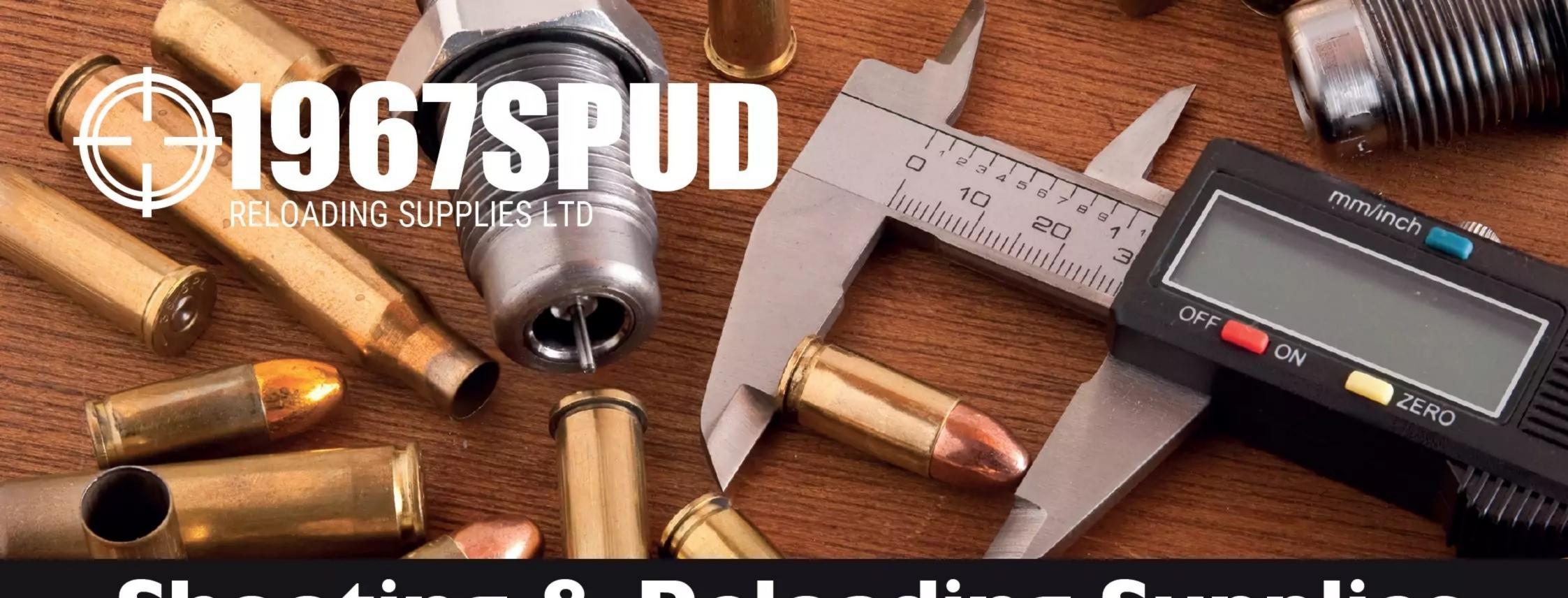
not realistically possible to address.

due to the ways they are annealed are

of the flash hole, and this can also be significant. Most are formed to a standard size, but some brands have slightly smaller or slightly larger flash holes. Variations in flash hole size can affect how consistently the primer ignites the powder charge, which will directly affect accuracy and chamber pressure. This can be addressed by uniforming the flash holes, making them all the same size and shape. Specialised flash hole uniforming tools are readily available and can be a worthwhile addition to the reloading bench.

Conclusion

Although not ideal, if you find that your usual supply of cases dries up, and you are forced to buy another brand, you can manage a lot of the impact it has on your reloads. The case capacity and brass thickness are significant, but can be counteracted to a large degree, and the flash holes are easily standardised. **GM**



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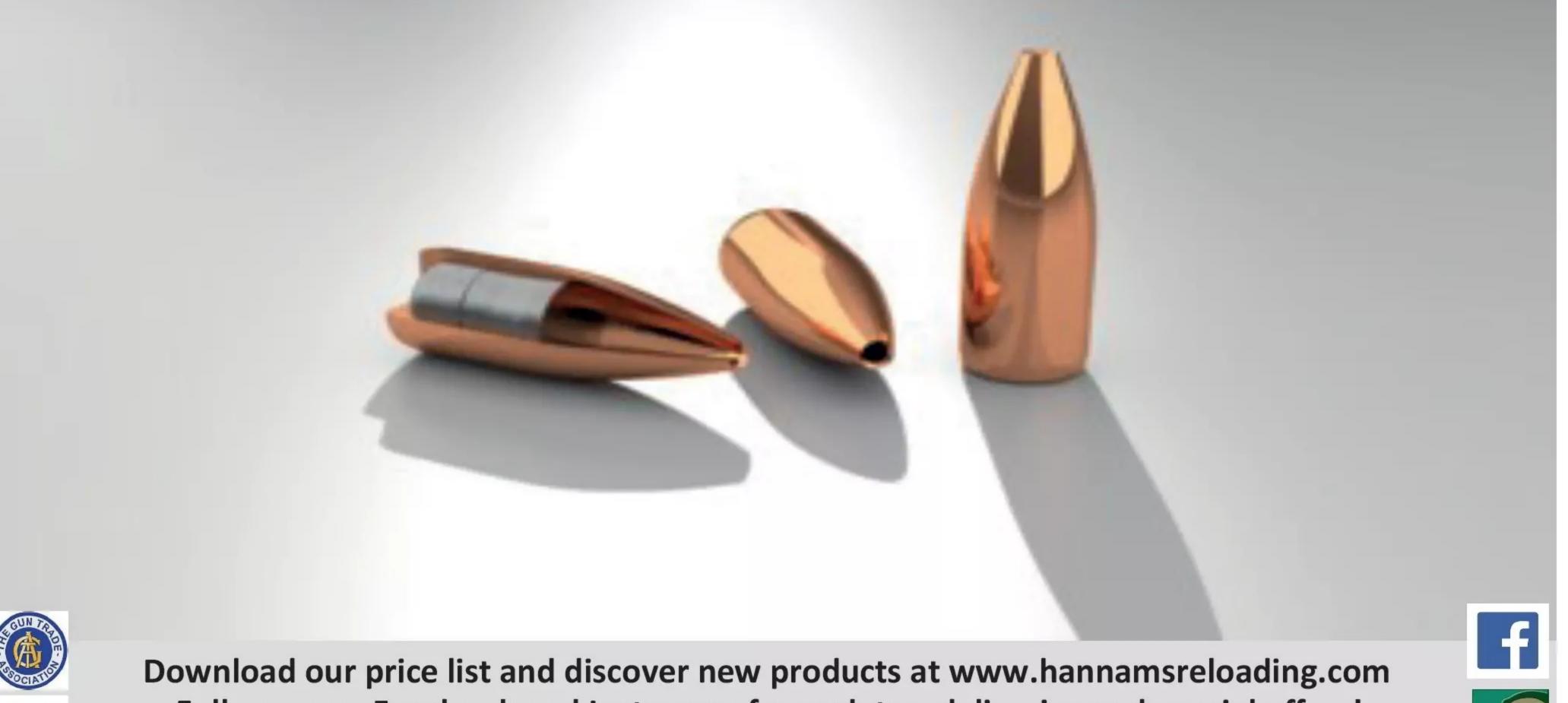
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Optics without compromise

Chris Parkin puts the latest Leupold 4-24x52 VX-6HD Gen 2 riflescope through its paces to see if the premium optics and cutting-edge turret design justify the price tag

Leupold's latest VX-6HD Gen
2 series of scopes builds on the performance and styling of the previous generation, combining toptier optics and mechanics to deliver exceptional riflescope versatility.
The build uses a 6x erector tube

The build uses a 6x erector tube and zoom ratio, providing a wide field of view for close-range use, even when you choose a scope intended for long-range and precision shooting at high magnification.

Variety is the spice of life

The VX-6HD models are available in 1-6x24, 2-12x42, 3-18x44, 3-18x50, 3-18x56, and the 4-24x52 unit seen here. The scope features a 34mm hard-anodised aluminium main tube, and both front and rear Alumina lens caps are included. These caps fold up silently and lock into position parallel to the body. The anodising is smooth and resists collecting skin dust.

CDS

Although it may sound bulky due to the 34mm tube and high magnification, the scope remains relatively compact thanks to Leupold's latest Custom Dial System (CDS) windage and elevation turrets. Both turrets are marked with ¼ MOA clicks, with 20 MOA per full revolution. A pushbutton unlocks each turret, allowing

for quick, tactile adjustments with a reliable zero-stop return.

The right-side windage dial provides 10 MOA of adjustment left and right of zero, while the elevation dial offers nearly two full rotations for 38 MOA of travel, which is enough to take a .308 past 1000 yards, depending on other factors.

Although marked as standard in MOA, you can have custom-engraved dials made specifically to match your ballistics, hence the CDS name.

SpeedSet

These turrets now feature the SpeedSet system, eliminating the need for tools when zeroing the scope or setting the zero-stop. A small spring-loaded button unlatches the dial's locking lever, allowing you to lift it clear and essentially 'float' it. Both dials are easily removable, with no small parts to lose, granting you access to the central finger-adjustable blue rotor, too, if you lift them off completely.

This provides up to 100 MOA of total mechanical travel, making initial setup straightforward, intuitive, and fast.

Precise clicks

Once your zero is precisely set and the CDS dials are reinstalled, a simple lift of the SpeedSet lever lets you fine-tune adjustments incrementally, without overshooting your settings.













It locks back in place instantly. In my opinion, this represents the future of turret design: functionally superb, even if the precision machining involved is costly. You can set up your turrets at the range without fiddling with Allen keys or worrying about misplacing them or other removable components.

To infinity

The left-side parallax dial runs from 50 yards to infinity and offers crisp, reliable focus. Reticle illumination is red, controlled by a central rubber button on the end of the parallax knob. One press activates it, and additional presses cycle through eight brightness levels. Once it reaches the brightest setting, it flashes and cycles back down. Leupold's Motion Sensor Technology (MST) automatically powers the reticle down after five minutes of inactivity. A single button press reactivates it at your previously selected brightness level. You can also turn it off manually with a long press, but honestly, why bother? The MST is effortless and extends the battery life up to 1,600 hours on low intensity. The CR2032 battery is housed under a cap at the end of the dial, which includes an integrated tool, though fingertip removal is possible.

Don't tip it

A more subtle yet highly useful feature is the integrated cant indicator. If the rifle is not level, the reticle will blink on and off until you correct your aim, which is great for long-range precision shooting.

The second focal plane TMOA reticle provides hash marks across

all the stadia lines for windage and elevation holds. Just remember that being in the second focal plane means accurate use of the reticle requires a specific magnification setting.

The illumination is crisp, with no flare or bleed, and remains visible in both low light and bright outdoor conditions.

The magnification is adjusted smoothly and silently via the zoom ring at the front of the ocular body, and a throw lever is included for quicker operation. Both ends of the magnification range have defined stops, with no sense of internal mechanical movement. The eyepiece includes fast-focus adjustment, and best of all, eye relief only varies by 0.1" (2.54mm) across the magnification range. Some shooters may still associate Leupold with variable eye relief, but this is now a thing of the past and relates only to older designs. The latest optics are far more consistent.

Extend your horizons

Leupold promotes a professional-grade optical system that claims "unmatched light transmission", and to my eyes, the image remained delightfully bright and consistent. There was no stepped drop-off in light transmission as magnification increased, just smooth, linear progression. Low magnification in daylight was brilliant, and higher magnification in lower light was still impressively usable. Many scopes show abrupt brightness changes; the VX-6HD does not.

I started using Leupold scopes 20 years ago and always found their mechanics reliable, but now they've added optics that rival high-end European models, finally combining elite visual performance with proven durability and mechanical innovation.

The usual guarantees

Naturally, Leupold guarantees that their scopes will be waterproof, fog-proof, and shockproof. Their 'Guard-ion' hydrophobic lens coating effectively repels dirt and moisture, helping keep your sight picture clear.

Conclusion

I think this scope reflects a stable phase of design innovation and practical usability without becoming overcomplicated. The turrets offer everything required, even for target shooting, yet they haven't made the scope too bulky or impractical for dynamic hunting situations. The eye relief is now stable at 95mm, with a relaxed eyebox and fast, sharp reticle focus at all times. However, this is an expensive scope that can ill afford any weak points, so I was pleased to find it a genuinely enjoyable optic to use.

The VX-6 range offers some great optics, with a variety of specifications to suit your exact needs. The 3-18x56 would be my favourite for general hunting requirements over mixed distances, with the greatest light admission area from the large objective, even if the 50mm option is slightly more compact. GM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Leupold 6-24x52 VX-6HD Gen 2, CDS-SZL2 Reticle: TMOA, second focal plane, illuminated

Weight: 740g

Eye Relief: 3.7–3.8"

Click Values: 1/4 MOA

Field of View: 28.1–4.8ft
@100 yards / 5.4–0.9°

Body Tube: 34mm

Minimum Focus: 50 yards Length: 14.5" / 368mm Elevation Adjustment: 20 MOA per revolution

Total Elevation and Windage

travel: 100 MOA Price: £3,350

Contact: Viking Arms - www.vikingarms.com



From clever damping levers to carbon-fibre legs, **Chris Parkin** examines the technical mastery behind Hill's quad stick design

Quad sticks have become an essential companion for almost every hunter, offering stable support for standing shots, helping to clear crops and fences, doubling as a walking aid, aiding in glassing, and extending the effective range for precision shots.

Ernest Hill, long known as the go-to source for air compressors and pumps for air rifles, has applied its fluid engineering expertise to develop a unique (patent-pending) variation of quad sticks that offer breathtaking capability.

Quad sticks are all about stability, and Hill has enhanced this with redesigned yokes that allow greater lateral movement to track quarry. If the target moves significantly, you can traditionally lift one leg and reposition, but this often results in tangled brambles, noise, or unstable footing. Hill's ingenious solution incorporates a valve and hydraulic damper into all four telescopic legs, enabling silent, seamless panning 45 degrees left or right, without needing to move your sticks' feet.

It's difficult to describe without a video, but in use, the system is astonishingly versatile. Since the legs are hydraulically linked and share fluid volume, they extend and compress in perfect harmony. This means the overall height of your rifle remains constant while allowing smooth lateral sway. At a range of 150m, the Hill sticks

allow for a full 300m of lateral panning, which is an outstanding advantage in the field.

Engineering excellence

Looking at the construction, the quad sticks feature carbon-fibre-reinforced Nylon 12 yokes at the top of each leg. These include softer copolymer inlays to grip your rifle's fore-end or butt securely. A high-visibility orange elastic cord keeps the front and rear assemblies from spreading too far apart, and each pair of legs ends with stainless steel feet for traction on loose terrain. Rubber snap-on covers are included for hard or rocky surfaces.

A brass lever at the top of each leg pair controls damping. Turned fully left, the system allows smooth, easy sway; swing it right, and the damping tightens and then ultimately locks. This is ideal for leaning into the shot. This also allows you to adjust for rifle weight, as heavy varminters might benefit from increased resistance, whereas lightweight stalking rifles may need less.

Proudly designed and manufactured in Sheffield, the original Steel City, the Hill quad sticks combine British craftsmanship with advanced materials. Aluminium and carbon-fibre dominate the construction, and the total weight comes in at 1,400g. This is slightly heavier than a full carbonengineering complexity easily justifies the tradeoff. The sticks arrive well packaged, with a printed manual and a QR code that links to an assembly video, which takes around five minutes to follow. It's important to note that the sticks don't collapse telescopically like some rivals. However, the legs can be unscrewed for tight storage and travel.

How did they perform?

Firstly, the rubberised leg clips help keep the sticks quiet and compact while walking, with the orange cord further securing the assembly. The aluminium joints house carbon-fibre tubes, which appear to be securely bonded, something I always check. Poor carbon/aluminium bonding is a common failure point among cheap sticks and tripods, but Hill's manufacturing quality is flawless.

Rubber O-rings at the joints help minimise any rattle, and the screwed joints use Nyloc nuts to prevent loosening. The height is controlled by the spread angle of the legs, rather than staged length adjustment. Initially, this feels unusual, but the fluidity of motion quickly becomes second nature. You can lean in or out, move your feet, and maintain a natural body posture, yet the rifle follows your movement effortlessly.

To firm things up, simply nudge the brass damping levers at the front, rear, or both. To lock the system completely, swing the levers fully to the right and return to a traditional fixed quad stick setup.

Switching targets

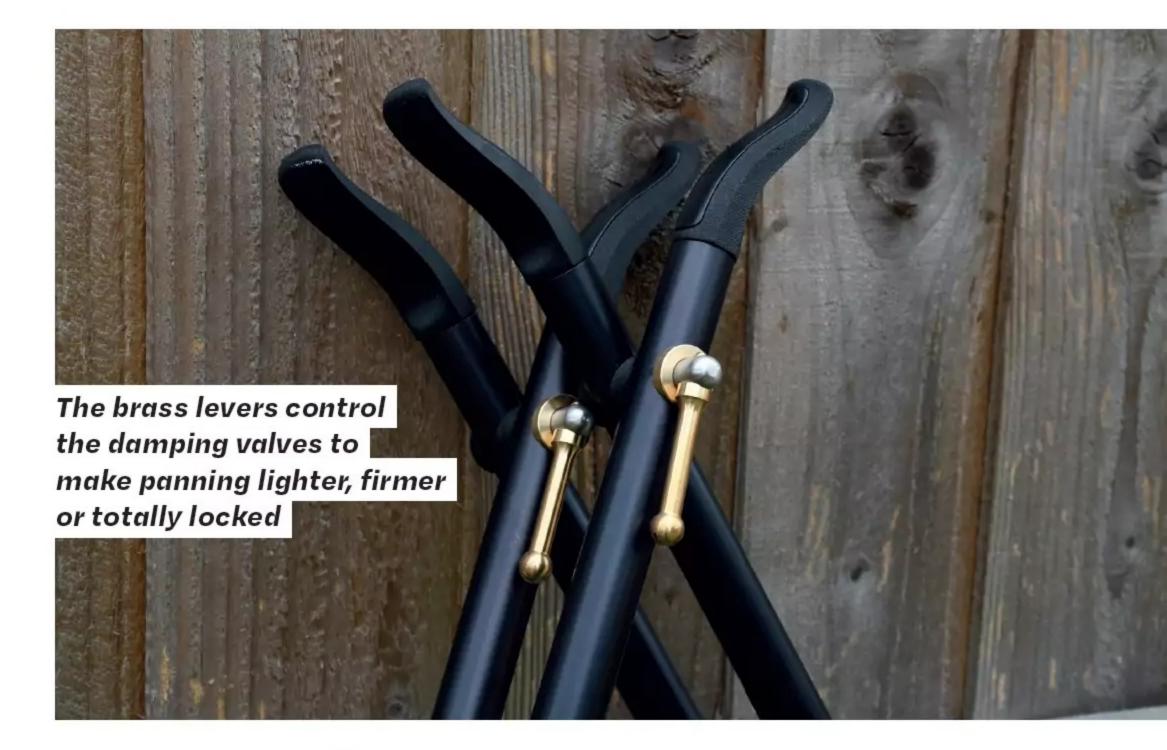
I set myself a specific challenge, placing realistically sized steel plates across a wide arc of fire in the field. I fired a few shots with a .17HMR CZ and a few more with a 6.5x55mm Mauser. One had a wooden stock, the other synthetic, and both fitted securely into the yokes.

I left the damping levers in the central position; neither rifle is particularly lightweight, and I have a realistic amount of size and strength to control them. I'm probably average height at 5'11" and just blended into using the Hill sticks instantly. My taller friend, at 6'2", had a go. He simply drew the feet slightly closer together to increase the height, and his expression immediately showed how naturally the sticks allowed him to aim and fire.

The steel feet lock into the ground. The legs are light, but not too flexible, and the copolymer inlay on the Nylon 12 yokes grips the gun effectively.

Final thoughts

The biggest advantage of Hill's hydraulic quads is that both front and rear yokes remain firmly on the rifle, while the differential leg extension—via fluid damping—accounts for all motion. I found them remarkably stable when it mattered most. The cleverness of the design almost fades into the background; the system works so intuitively that





There are stainless steel spiked feet for soft ground, with snap-on rubber covers for hard surfaces



Rubber O-rings wrap the carbon-fibre junctions to prevent any noise



you simply take it for granted, much like how your body naturally adjusts without conscious effort.

It's only when you stop to think about it that you appreciate the innovation behind them.

These sticks are almost like a bionic aid – an extension of your body. Simply superb.

Yes, they're relatively expensive, but in an age of fast fashion and cheap manufacturing, it's a relief and a pleasure to see this level of design excellence, technical sophistication, and build quality. Long may it continue at Hill in Sheffield. GM

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Hill Quad Sticks

Price: £449.99

Contact: Hill - www.hillquadsticks.com



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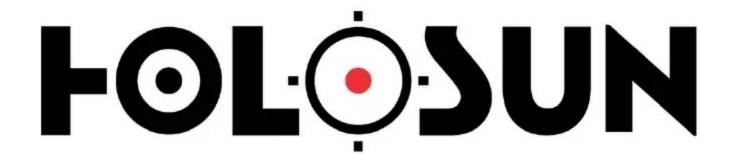
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Dependance DOUBLE

Bruce Potts tests the Turkish-made Weatherby Orion and discovers a dependable 20-bore with timeless lines and modern practicality

The appeal of a classic side-by-side remains strong, but modern shooters must now consider steel shot proof compatibility to stay up to date. Many also want the convenience of multichoke systems, which are standard on most modern guns, yet prefer not to spend too much. Finding a sideby-side that meets these criteria for under £1,000 can be tricky. This is where the Weatherby Orion comes in.

Weatherby has a long-standing reputation for sourcing firearms beyond their magnum rifle remit, re-badging them to meet customer demand, whether you're after a .22LR semi-auto or a shotgun. Over the years, many guns have proudly carried the Orion name, originating from Japan, Italy, and now Turkey.

Orion shotguns have always been designed and regarded from the outset as no-nonsense workhorses, offering solid performance, reliable patterns, and dependable service in the field at a fair price.

You can buy an Orion in either an over-and-under configuration or, as tested here, the side-by-side, and in either 12 or 20-bore. The gun has a timeless look and appeal that embodies the traditional side-by-side, featuring

an English-style straight stock, splinter-style fore-end, swamped rib, and double triggers. The overall appearance is deliberately workmanlike, with no shiny side plates or unnecessary bling, and the boxlock action is finished in a tough black chrome finish. I like its unadorned style – a good, solid, classically styled double shotgun, retailing at £995.

Classic

The stock follows the ethos of a classic English double, with straight stock lines that suit the smaller frame of this 20-bore gun. Being Turkish, the wood is walnut, and in this case, it's a decent grade with attractive grain and tiger striping, with a deep, dark colouring. Diamond chequering is applied to the hand grip, as well as to the sides and underside of the fore-end. The fore-end follows the traditional splinter-looking style, offering just enough support for the leading hand while maintaining the svelte lines so typical of a side-by-side.

Internally, it features the Anson & Deeley lever-type mechanism for fore-end removal, and the attachment is good and solid without any slack. The overall finish of the walnut is a polished oil, with a higher sheen than usual, which really brings

out the grain of the stock and complements the more understated matte black metalwork. Completing the unassuming stock is a solid yet pliable black rubber recoil pad that shoulders cleanly without snagging. The length of pull is just under 15", measured from the front trigger blade.

Boxlock

Action-wise, this boxlock features a black chrome finish, which I have to say I personally really like. There's no engraving or polished pins, just a durable, hard-wearing surface that won't reflect glare when the sun catches it. The Weatherby logo appears on the right side, but it's tastefully applied.

Double triggers

Internally, the gun uses twin articulated mechanical triggers, allowing smooth and unimpeded movement from the front trigger (right barrel) to the rear one (left barrel) during shooting.

Don't be put off by the double trigger system, as it's intuitive to use, and on this Orion it delivers very good, clean-breaking trigger pulls: 5lbs 8oz at the front and 5lbs 8.8oz

at the rear, as measured with a Lyman trigger gauge. That's impressively consistent performance for a gun at this price point, and ideal for delivering a confident second shot. One of the benefits of a double trigger is that you don't have to move a selector from left to right to select your barrel of choice; it's all at your fingertips, literally.

Safe and secure

There is a simple, tang-mounted, nonautomatic safety that moves forward to fire and rearward to engage safe, featuring a decent, round-gripped top.

I like the extended trigger guard tang that runs along the wrist of the stock, as it provides additional strength, which is a sensible feature on a slim, straight-grip design.

Built to last

Opening the Orion is done via a small black-chromed lever with a lightly chequered spade-shaped handle. It's not stiff, but you can feel the built-in longevity, making it a gun built for a lifetime of shooting. The Orion does not come with ejectors, so after firing, the spent cartridge is lifted high enough for easy removal by hand when the action is opened, which offers a more sedate and traditional way of shooting.

Barrels, rib, and chokes

Finally, the barrels have been built with a good deal of thought. They are made from steel, with a very concentrically drilled bore that is chrome-lined for longevity. The chambers are compatible with both 23/4" and 3" cartridges, and

this is clearly marked on the barrels along with "Yildiz Turkiye". They are also proofed for steel shot, which is a requirement these days and helps keep the side-by-side design alive.

But best of all is the use of the extended Yildiz chokes, which come as standard in Skeet, Improved Cylinder, Modified, Improved Modified, and Full, so all bases are covered. They are 2.5" long, with a bright blue ring at the top, and clearly marked with the choke restriction size. Each one can be screwed in and out easily by hand.

Keeping with the classic sideby-side vibe, the Orion features a swamped centre rib above the barrels, which are joined by silver welding. I really like the rib, as not only is it a traditional swamped design in



keeping with the best English guns, but the concave shape means it sits low, ensuring it does not obscure your view or the target. The single bead at the muzzle naturally draws the eye towards the aim point.

Field Test

The Orion is a very easy side-byside to shoot well. It comes to the
shoulder naturally and effortlessly,
and seems to allow you to track game
effectively. Combined with its wellproportioned 28" barrels and a weight
of just 6.5lbs, it is ideally suited as a
walkabout gun or a rough-shooter's
delight, and it also works well for
smaller-framed game shooters. The
oiled stock is practical for tougher use
and wet conditions, as it can simply be

wiped down at the end of the day and treated with a little more oil to keep it looking like new and weatherproof.

With good gun fit comes manageable and mild recoil, and that was certainly the case with the Orion. Even with Zenith cartridges, which can be rather 'playful', a follow-up shot was easily delivered while the Orion remained on aim and in swing. The balance is also very good, with the pivot point positioned just in front of the receiver, making an already light gun feel even lighter, which is a very welcome trait.

I shot the right barrel, fitted with the ½ choke, at pattern boards at our usual 30-yard distance to assess the performance of three different 20-bore loads. I also tested

the more open chokes for closerange work, just out of interest.

First up was the Eley Zenith cartridge, which uses a 70mm case. This load comprises 28g of No.6 CU shot with a fibre wad, representing a good choice for game shooting. I've used this load many times and have always found it to perform well downrange, producing tight patterns. That proved true again, with a total of 233 pellets striking the 30" board. There was no clumping of shot, as you'd expect from the CU-washed pellets, and 173 of those pellets landed within a tight 15" spread, leaving virtually no gaps. The remaining 60 were more concentrated towards the top of the pattern. That's an excellent result from a 20-bore





I like the simple, classic lines, but being proofed for steel shot and supplied with extended chokes brings the Orion bang up to date

Hull's Driven Grouse load also produced excellent patterns down-range and hit hard without heavy recoil

Detail of the extended trigger guard tang.

The well-proportioned walnut stock is comfortable and well finished

WEATHERBY®

cartridge by any standard, meaning I would confidently recommend it for game, pigeon, or vermin shooting.

Next up was Hull Cartridge

Company's Driven Grouse load, comprising 25g of copperwashed No.6 pellets in a 67mm case. This cartridge delivers a hard-hitting, ballistically superior pellet downrange, with no clumping and good, tight patterns. It also features a fibre wad, and once again, the results were impressive, with a total of 195 pellets striking the 30" board at 30 yards. The pattern was slightly raised, with 120 inner hits within the 15" circle and the remaining 75 pellets distributed around the upper edge of the 30" board. Overall, this cartridge produced a solid pattern and was very mild to shoot, making it well suited to all forms of

shotgun quarry.

Conclusion

Weatherby Orion by name and Yildiz underneath, this shotgun carries the character of a true Weatherby, bringing together the best of both companies. The Orion is certainly better than many cheap side-by-sides and is a solidly built gun with excellent reliability, capable of producing impressive patterns. Offering very good value for money, it is well worth considering if you're looking for a nimble, well-made 20-bore side-by-side. **GM**

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATION

Name: Weatherby Orion Calibre: 20-bore on test, 12-bore also available Barrel Length: 28" (29" including choke) Overall Length: 46.5" Weight: 6.5lbs Length of Pull: 14.85"

Price: £995

Contact: ESR Distribution - www.esrdistribution.co.uk

There is no auto safety or ejectors on this gun, making it simple to use and all the more appealing

Chichester Armoury

43 West Street Chichester PO19 1RP

	USED 12G OVER & UNDER	
Benelli	828U Black	£1,495
Beretta	682 Gold E	£1,345
Beretta	686 Silver Pigeon 1	£1,195
Beretta	EELL Diamond Pigeon	£3,495
Beretta	687 Silver Pigeon III	£1,395
Beretta	687 Silver Pigeon S	£995
Beretta	690 Field III	£1,495
Beretta	Onyx	£695
Beretta	SV10 Prevail 3	£1,395
Beretta	Ultraleggero	£1,795
Blaser	F3 Vantage	£3,695
Breda	Zenith	£1,145
Browning	B425 Grade 1	£895
Browning	B525 Crown	£3,750
Browning	B525 Liberty Light	£1,695
Browning	B525 Prestige	£1,395
Browning	B525 Ultimate	£1,895
Browning	B725 Hunter G1	£1,495
Browning	B725 Pro Sport	£2,495
Browning	Citori	£795
Browning	GTi	£895
Browning	Ultra XS Pro Adj	£2,895
C Guerini	Maxum Sporting	£2,195
C Guerini	Tempio	£1,795
Fabarm	Axis	£1,095
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Lincoln	Premier Gold	£495
Miroku	7000	£495
Winchester	Select Energy	£795
Yildiz	Pro Black Adj.	£1,195

	USED 20G OVER & UNDER			
Beretta	686 S	£895		
Beretta	686 Silver Pigeon 1	£1,395		
Beretta	686 Silver Pigeon 1	£1,295		
Beretta	687	£895		
Beretta	687 Silver Pigeon S	£995		
Beretta	690 Field III	£1,795		
Browning	B425 Grade 1	£845		
Browning	B425 Grade 1	£795		
C Guerini	Tempio	£1,995		
KOFS	SCEPTRE	£445		
Miroku	MK 60 Gr 5	£2,395		
Rizzini, B.	RB Regal EL	£4,450		
Yildiz	Pro Black Grade 4	£1,195		
12G SEMI-AUTOMATICS				
Benelli	Raffaello Power Bore	£995		
Benelli	Raffaello Super Sport	£995		
Benelli	Vinci	£645		
Benelli	Montefeltro	£695		
Beretta	A300 Outlander	£695		
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Beretta	A400 Xplor light	£895		
Beretta	A400 Xtreme	£2,025		
Beretta	AL391 Teknys Gold	£795		
Beretta	A400 Xplor Action	£1,195		
Browning	Maxus Camo	£795		
Fabarm	Lion H38	£395		
Franchi	620 VS	£295		
Hatsan	Escort Synthetic	£165		
Winchester	SX4 Composite	£845		
Winchester	SX4 Field	£595		

Call: 01243 774687 or visit www.Chiarm.co.uk



The silencer is currently supplied with a 12 gauge choke tube to fit one of the following choke systems:

Mobilchoke (Beretta, Benelli, Franchi, etc.) Crio Plus (Benelli M2) Invector (Mossberg, older Winchesters, Weatherby)

Invector Plus (Winchester, Browning)
Optima HP (Beretta)
Remington (870, 1100)

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FIELD-TESTED

EAVOURITE

BRUCE POTTS HEADS INTO THE FIELD WITH ELEY'S PIGEON HV, A FIBRE-WADDED LOAD CRAFTED FOR FAST-PACED PIGEON ACTION

> It's always good to have a choice when buying anything, but selecting the right ammunition for a gun can be both time-consuming and expensive. While having plenty of options appeals to me, as it's something I enjoy, there are times when you just want to grab a gun, some cartridges, and head into the woods or the field for a good day's shooting.

That's exactly what Eley Hawk has done with its Pigeon HV (High Velocity) cartridges, which have been deliberately produced in a single shot size, weight, and wad combination. Every component is the result of thorough field testing with pigeon shooting experts and Eley's ballistic team, resulting in a cartridge designed for fast-flying, twitchy woodies, with impressive knockdown power.

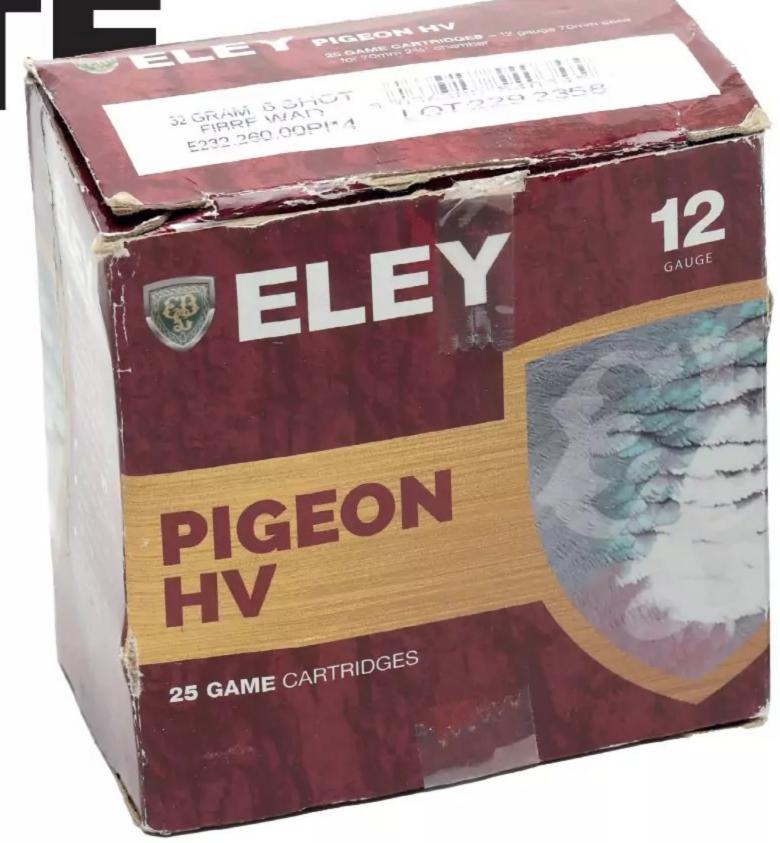
Prices vary, but typically £366 buys you 1,000 rounds.

Cartridge construction and external features

As I alluded to earlier, Eley Hawk has loaded this cartridge with a single option: 32g of No.6 shot with a fibre wad in a 70mm case. Let's take a closer look, as I'm a fan of the packaging, which offers a simple yet effective visual representation of the quarry it's intended for.

The green case is Eley Hawk's own HDPE (High-Density Polyethylene) design, which is fully recyclable and helps reduce any environmental impact. Its vivid green colour stands out clearly, with the load details printed on the shallow, ribbed surface. The usual six-star crimp is cleanly executed to keep out moisture and dirt, while also providing sufficient back pressure to ensure proper powder ignition.

At the other end is a 12mm-high brass head with a well-defined rim, ensuring that the various extractor claws used by different shotgun manufacturers





can achieve a firm and reliable grip. The case design is intended to perform reliably in any shotgun configuration, with particular emphasis on semi-automatics, which explains its popularity among shooters who favour this style of gun.

Internal components and performance

Internally, Eley's 100% Signature Primer is made from the highest-quality materials to deliver one of the most consistent primers available today, because consistency begins with the primer. Get this right and you'll achieve clean, sustained, and reliable ignition, allowing the rest of the propulsion cycle to operate smoothly. In addition, Eley's primers are weather-resistant, ensuring dependable ignition in all conditions, whether hot, cold, wet or freezing.

As for the powder, to achieve high velocity particularly with a 32g payload of lead shot—Eley uses PSB 2 powder. This is a 'low-smoke' smokeless propellant produced by MAXAM, well known among manufacturers and reloaders for its consistency and precision. It has a grey-green colour, is cut into small flakes, and is a single-based propellant made with high-nitrogen-content nitrocellulose. It is designed for high velocities and delivers a consistent burn thanks to the use of the correct additives and stabilisers during manufacture. The result is an advertised velocity of 1,377fps, offering excellent reach for fast-paced, elusive pigeons or

This combination of components

very popular with pigeon shooters

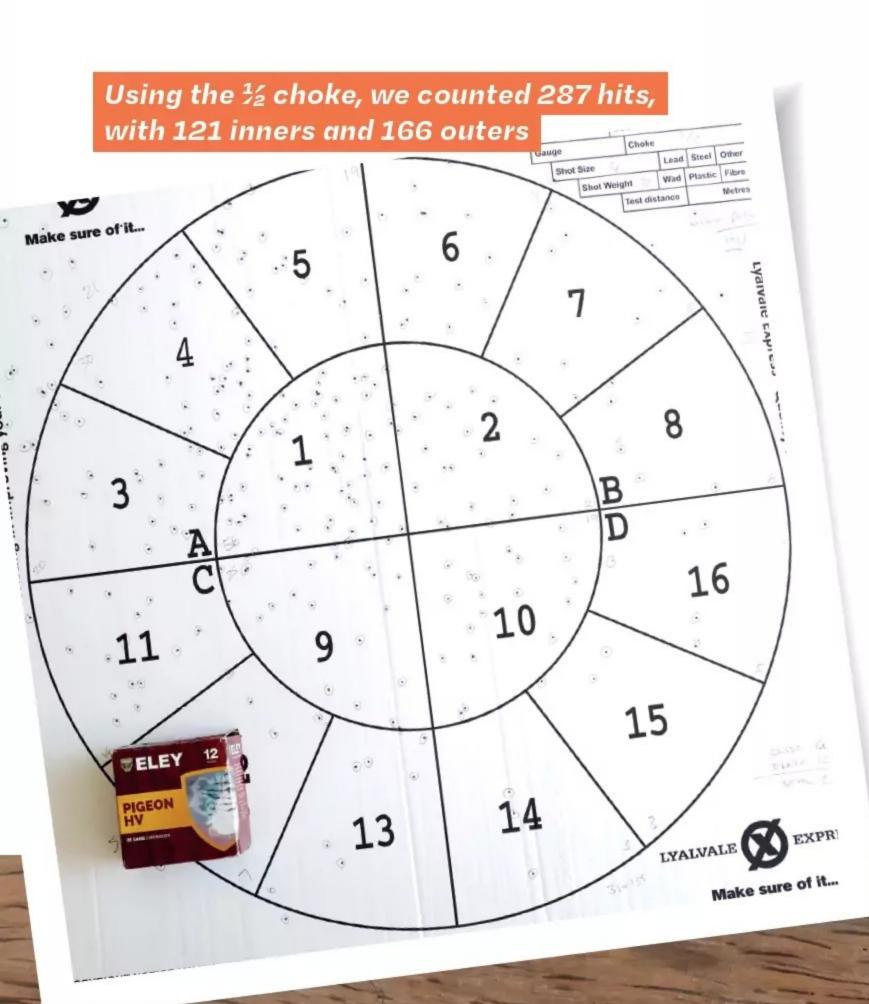
has made Eley's Pigeon HV cartridge



crows, while still feeling smooth to shoot. This is especially true in a semi-automatic, though it remains comfortable in a double as well. The low-smoke formulation also allows for quicker second-shot acquisition without your view being obscured.

Continuing the consistency theme, the HV's fibre wad is also carefully considered. It features a 4mm card powder-sealing wad followed by 16mm of tightly packed fibre in a single section. This ensures a snug fit across a range of barrel dimensions and promotes a consistent powder burn, while also protecting the pellets from damage during initial ignition. This non-disintegrating construction should not be underestimated, as it delivers impressively consistent and tight patterns for a fibre wad.

Finally, the No. 6 shot, when examined, is just as expected: all are bright and shiny, with very few, if any, dented pellets. This level of quality helps to maintain even patterns downrange.



In the field

One of the great things about the Eley Pigeon HV cartridge is that it comes in just one weight, pellet size, and wad, so there's no need to worry about changing between different combinations. It's particularly well suited to semi-automatic shotguns, so I tested it in a Charles Daly 601 with the ¼ and then the ½ choke fitted, as usual, on the pattern boards. Recoil was very mild, which is ideal for pigeon shooting from a cramped hide, and follow-up shots were a breeze.

Pattern-wise, I have to say that some of these cheaper guns have performed surprisingly well during testing. Today was no exception. With the ¼ choke fitted, we recorded 230 pellet strikes on the board, showing a very uniform distribution, with 103 hits in the inner circle and 127 in the outer. All pellets struck centrally and spread evenly outwards, so any slight variation in pigeon flight or a misjudged swing would still result in enough lethal pellets on target.

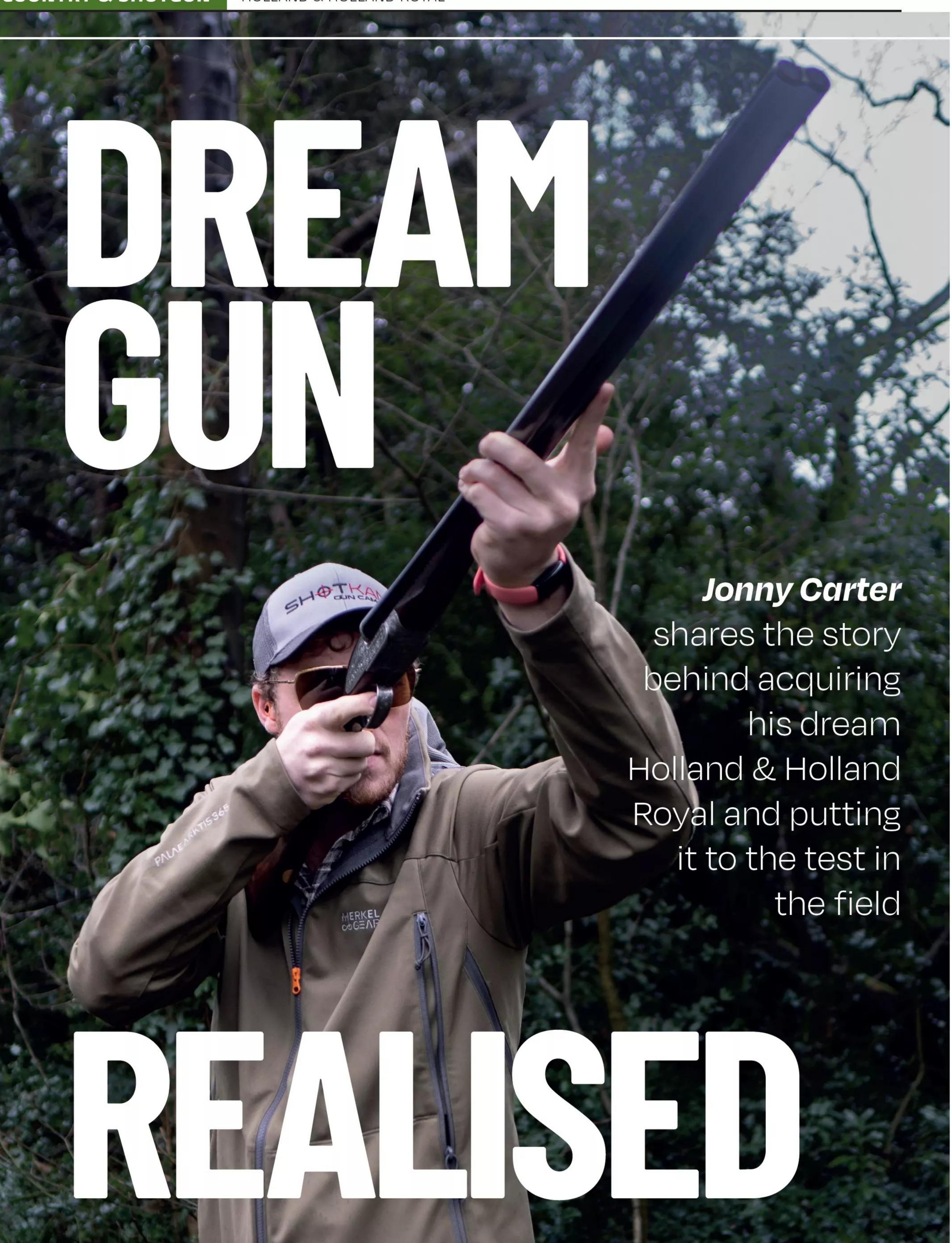
Switching to the tighter ½ choke gave us 57 more pellet strikes, bringing the total to 287 hits in the 30" circle, with 121 in the inner area and 166 in the outer. It was another excellent pattern, slightly denser overall, and ideal for longer-range, faster pigeons, crows, or branch-hopping squirrels.

Conclusion

At £366 per 1,000 (guide), these cartridges are reasonably pricey by today's standards, but you are paying for Eley's years of expertise. If you're looking for a fast, hard-hitting pigeon load that patterns very well, then this is the cartridge.

Contact:

Eley Hawk - www.eleyhawkitd.com



> Each of us has a shortlist of guns we dream of owning one day. For many, this is based on looks; for others, it's performance; and for some, it might be a gun they know will be handed down one day. For me, that list of 'grail guns' is a little longer than is perhaps healthy, and mostly features guns that are, and will likely remain, financially out of reach for me for the rest of time.

My list includes a bit of everything, including a few side-by-sides, such as a Boss single trigger, a Grant side-lever with 30" Damascus barrels, and, of course, the inevitable Holland & Holland Royal. Through luck and good fortune, I added a Royal to my collection last year, and it's this gun that I'm testing today.

New, the Royal costs well over six figures. However, a second-hand example is a little more attainable, with bargain/project guns starting at £3,000 to £4,000, and a nice one sitting at around £8,000 to £12,000. Mine was a right-place, right-time private purchase from someone retiring. It's neither perfect nor original, but those are things I'm happy with, given my income.

This version has a 1922 action, which is considered one of the best periods of gunmaking, but it was rebarrelled by H&H in the 1980s, a time considered one of the poorest.

The maker then restocked it in the 1990s to complete this time-travel mash-up.

Heritage and craftsmanship

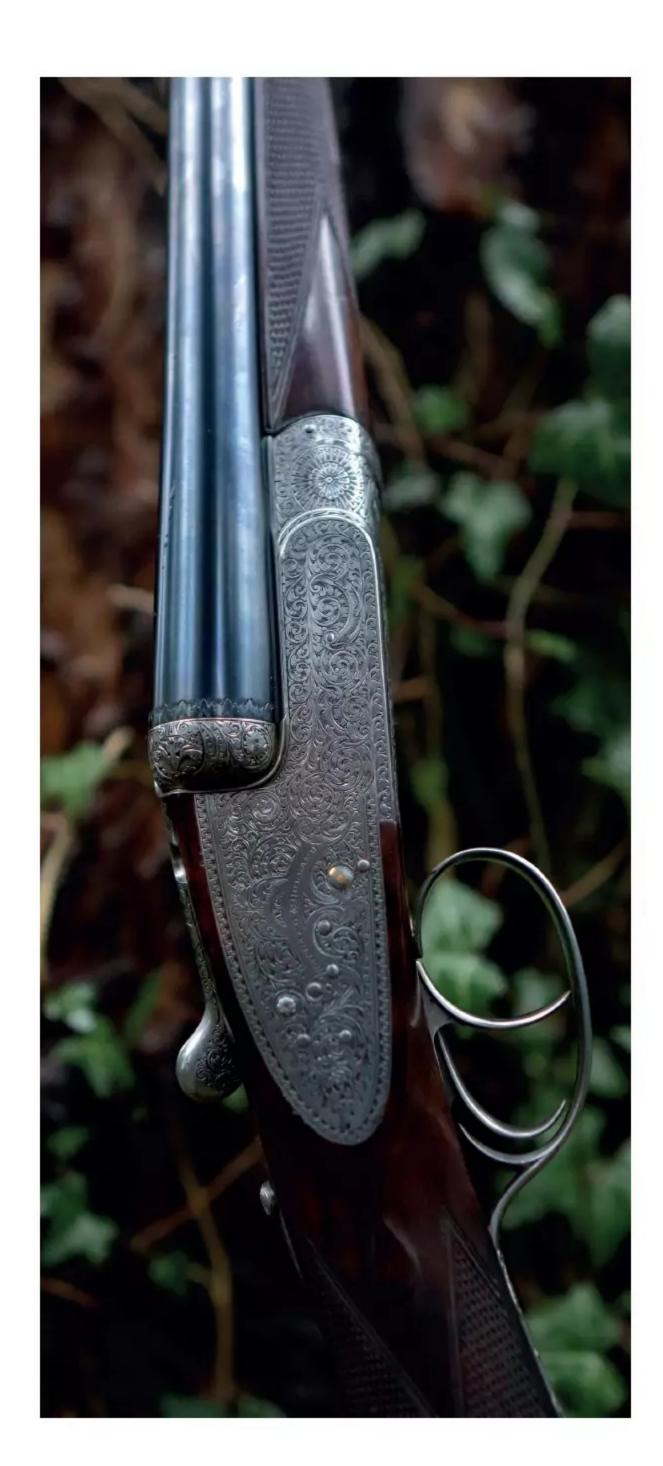
The Royal first appeared in the H&H stable in 1885, and by the early 1890s, it had evolved into something closely resembling the modern gun. One of the only changes was the addition of a self-opening system in the 1920s.

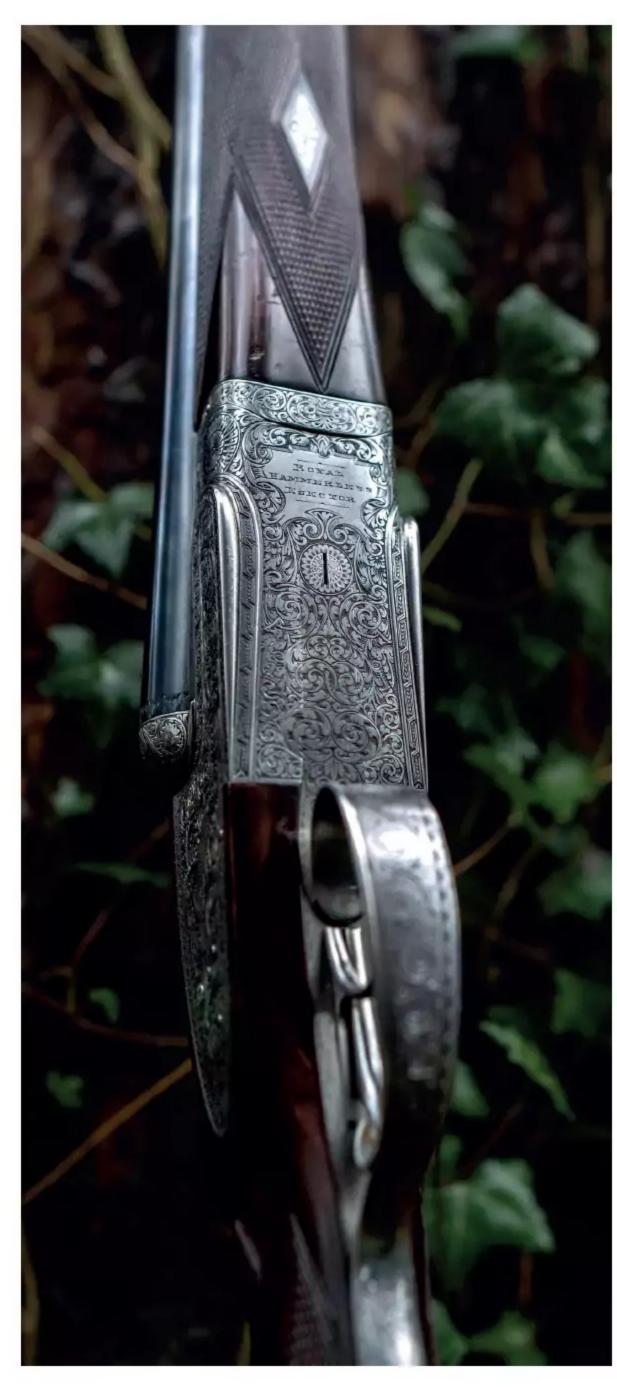
It is the quintessential London sidelock side-byside, with a strong yet sleek-looking square bar action. My gun features the legendary and much-copied house scroll. It is bolder than most other makers' classic rose-and-scroll designs, with full-coverage acanthus. It's undeniably beautiful, and I can't help but think that in the modern world of bolder engraving, it holds its own better than the Purdey or Boss house patterns.

The new stock is a lovely piece of walnut with an appealing 15" length of pull, with 1.25" and 2.25" drops. It also features 1" of cast, which is good for me, and is done all the way from the back of the action, with a slight bend in the top and bottom tangs. I always admire the skill this takes.

Being an H&H, the stock is done in the traditional diamond grip style. This means that the hand of the gun is not fully rounded, but comes out to a smooth point on the side, creating a diamond profile.

Whether this is more comfortable or not will depend on the user, but the skill of doing this and the









heritage that comes with it are the things that make this gun special. The butt is finished with chequering and, although I could do with another inch of length, I am loath to change it.

Light barrels, lively feel

The barrels measure 28" and have the name and address stamped on the tubes. If I didn't have the paperwork for the rebarrel, I would have sworn they were done by another maker, as the stamping is hideous next to the hand-engraving on the rib. They were made to be lightweight, which, in the case of side-by-side barrels, generally means reduced wall thickness.

Most modern guns have barrel walls between 30 and 42 thousandths of an inch thick. This gun was made with 22-thou walls, which is right on the recommended minimum. It passed proof and is safe, but I'll be careful with the non-lead ammo I feed it. These thin barrels are part of what makes this gun affordable, so in a way, I am happy they are that way.

The barrels do handle extremely well, which is a massive positive.
They are livelier than I would usually choose, but during my outings with this gun, I have discovered that they are effective when I adjust my aggressive left-hand movements.

The chokes are Skeet and ¼, which I've found more than adequate for average-distance quarry.

More than just a gun

Overall, this gun isn't original, but it is a H&H, and the modifications add to the richness of the history that it represents. It took me a while to want to shoot it, as I didn't want to ruin the romance if we didn't get on in the field. Thankfully, over the course of last season, we made some lasting memories.

When the opportunity to shoot grouse in Scotland arose, I knew it was time for this gun to come with me. The first step was to get to Barbury for a few shots, just to make sure it was actually working, and then the following week, I made the long trip north to the Highlands.

I have had the privilege of shooting grouse before, but never in Scotland, so this was a special occasion, and it did seem fitting to celebrate this with a special gun.



This is a consideration I have seen ingrained in the USA, and one I am seeing more and more here.

The gun you choose to take and shoot is as important a facet of the day as the place you go to and the species you are after. Dwelling on this choice a little more than I once did is turning into a bit of a thing for me.

Moments to remember

The day went well, and I lent the gun to a dear friend to shoot his first grouse with, but come lunchtime, I had it back in my hands. Within a few hundred yards, a covey of three grouse rose and, clocking a cock bird at the lead of the pack, I locked on, pulled away, and dropped him into the thick heather. A black Labrador swiftly bounded after it over the rise, picking it up with ease and returning it to its master by my side. This was a moment I will remember forever.

The next outing was an equally memorable experience. For reasons that I will likely never understand, I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience a day of driven wild birds in the south of England. Wild bird shoots and their management have been an obsession of mine since I went to

Sparsholt many years ago, and I was glad it had taken so long for this day to come. Any earlier, and I don't think I would have fully appreciated it.

Conditions on the day were thick and foggy, and I opted to shoot the first drive with a 28-bore overand-under. One pheasant came my way and went into the bag, but it was soon evident that these wild birds were more robust than their released counterparts. The H&H came out for the rest of the day.

We lined out for the second drive, 30 yards off a thick and well-managed hedgerow. One or two birds flicked to my left and right, until finally a covey of wild red-legged partridges starburst in front of me. Revelling in every wingbeat, I moved my foot to my left and waited for a bird to go through the line before letting the gun fly. All I remember was the bang, the bird falling 50 yards behind the line, and a sense that this was more special than all the reared birds in the world.

Verdict

I may not have used it a lot, but I am glad that this gun is with me. Together, we have made special days more special, and if that isn't reason enough to invest in one, I don't know what is. GM

GUN Classifieds

ACCESSORIES

A NIKKI- STIRLING RIFLE scope 4-16x50 mag side parallax 30mm tube. In good condition save for the normal wear marks. It's an excellent scope which is now surplus to requirements. £70.00 07812 567157 (Pick up only from Dudley West Midland)

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AIRGUNS

KRAL PUNCHER BREAKER WOOD stock. Discover scope 3x12x44 side focus Max 800 hardcase with foam lining Caldwell 7 rest Many accessories £400 07852351976 (Manchester)

WEBLEY & SCOTT VULCAN .177 Air Rifle. 4x32 sight. probably bought some time in the 1980s and was used a few times to shoot rabbits in the garden and that's all it was used. £100 07803365133 (Surrey)

FX DRS .177 GRADE 2 walnut stock hawk scope moderator case excellent condition. £850 pasib@yahoo.co.uk (Northamptonshire)

power this has scopes, bi pod, rabbiting torch with optional mouth switch so hands free operation and laser dot sights both rechargeable with box and charger also includes whip for refill and full set of spare seals and tin of pellets and gun slip paid £750 only shot 20 pellets ready to use. Asking £350 ono 07708710913 (Staffordshire)

LEE ENFIELD 177 BB rifle s.m.l.y with bayonet in box bran new never fired with 2 extra magazines and I have a m1 carbean with bayonet 2 extra magazines new it box never fired £350 each gun. 07485172543 (Kent)

KUB PRESTIGE 2.2 AIR rifle. Recently serviced. Selling with carry bag and air filling probe. £100.00 linz906@hotmail.com (Devon)

BEEMAN P-17, GREAT CONDITION, only been shot about 15 times in total - had to move out so no garden to use it in, hence selling. Comes with a can of Diablo Exact pellets. £75.00 07933282588 (Cheshire)

DAYSTATE PULSAR, COMES with original hard case in excellent condition. £1000.00 07533288885 (Worcestershire)

ATA AIRBORNE .177 PRE charged pneumatic, Walnut stock, 3d printed barrel band including bipod mount, Bipod (no major brand), 6x24x50 Scope (no major brand), 3x magazines (1xoriginal, 2x3d printed ones), Will come with tin of pellets. Sling screw on front. All works as it should, bought in January but it just isn't getting used so just gathering dust. Quite happy for buyer to test. £375 07395550369 (Warwickshire)

WEIHRAUCH HW99S, SPECIFICATION: CALIBER - .22, Overall Length - 1050mm, Barrel Length - 410mm, Power - Approx 11.5 ft/lbs, Weight - 3.2kg, £250. 07768615386 (Hampshire)

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AIR ARMS \$510 WALNUT carbine for sale as a complete outfit, including a scope, bipod, new Air Arms Q-Tec silencer, and a 5-litre bottle tested until 2029, £775.00, email woodse9@ntlworld.com (Kent).

WEIHRAUCH HW100 KT .22 calibre rifle in excellent condition, complete with two magazines, a bipod, and a gun sleeve, £750, call 07743 864007 (Berkshire); an air bottle is also available with a test date to be confirmed.

BENJAMIN AMADA .22, AR15 replica, air rifle. Hardly used with original scope,tripod, 10 shot mag, tripod and lux padded bag. Great condition. £445. 07890 382226 (Shropshire)

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pressure regulator to get the max LEGAL power from the rifle. This is in absolute MINT condition Now cost £3,300. For sale £2,300 Loads of accessories also for sale please ask. LBM379@AOL.COM (East London)

BSA MK1 AIRSPORTER AND Cadet major. £165,£8501189734868 (Berkshire)

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KRAL PUNCHER KNIGHT .177 - black + accessories: hard case, suppressor, gas refil tank (full) with hose. Only been out of the box a handful of times, and used even less. Reluctantly selling £700.00 Olly_lfs@outlook.com (Middlesex)

collection of 4 Junior air rifles and air pistols includes umarex mod 45 gamo delta marlin lever action and hatsan mod 25 air pistol all are in 177 cal all are nearly new with boxes. 07845647416 (Staffordshire) Gamo coyote air rifle, black polymer stock, .22 calibre moderator in great condition

£300.00.01612485508 (Manchester)

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SAUER 202 243. AS new, has only had around 50 bullets through it. Scope is Schmidt & Bender 3-12-50. £1200 ono. 07973 618458 (Sussex)

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RUGER .45 STAINLESS BLACK powder muzzle-loading pistol having fired about 120 rounds, £350 ono, email steve.338lap@ outlook.com (Kent).

ACCURACY INTERNATIONAL PALAMASTER .308 rifle with a stainless barrel, die set, cases, and heads having fired about 460 rounds, £850, email steve.338lap@outlook. com (Kent).

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