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WILD DOG CONTROL

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SPECIES GUIDE

NEW

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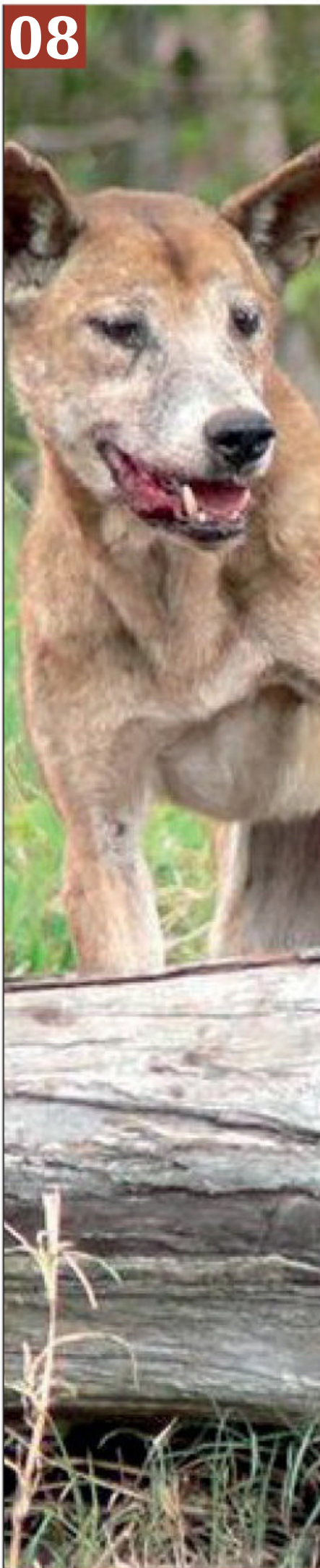
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MAIN FEATURE

Australian wild dogs, often hybridised with dingos, are canny, elusive and require all a hunter's guile to control their numbers around stock.

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HUNTING

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Josh Burnett has made a science of the art of controlling wild dogs through the use of trailcams. This guide to their use is the best we have seen to date.

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Leon Wright has mentored his children, grandchildren and nephew to all become ethical, considerate and effective hunters through the pursuit of small game.

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HUNTING

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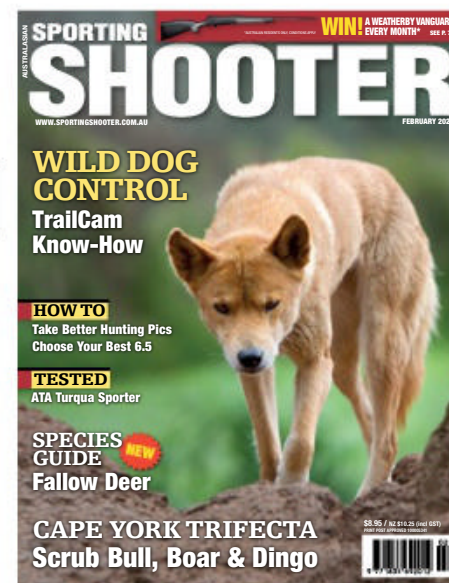


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ON THE COVER

This menacing-looking wild dog, individually or as part of a pack, poses a definite threat to any living animal, including unprepared humans.



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We Are Predators

Our physiology and intrinsic motivation are to hunt and gather.

RECENTLY in the NSW Parliament, Animal Justice Party MP Mark Pearson smugly reported that, statistically, hunting was on a terminal decline. This followed from the publication and call for comments of an Animal Welfare Discussion Paper, which many on the cross benches were keen to advance to the status of a new Animal Welfare Act. This has the potential to derail recreational hunting and

A youthful Teddy Roosevelt, who later as President, established the USA's amazing National Parks, Forests and Reserves.



fishing in NSW. We do not know where this will go. Pearson refers to us as “psychopaths”, among other nasty epithets.

I was recently watching a Steve Rinella documentary, Stars In The Sky. It traced 400 years of European hunting in the USA, regretting the wholesale, unregulated slaughter of native buffalo, beaver and many deer and antelope species to the brink of extinction in a brave new world.

Realising this parlous situation, early in the 20th Century, keen hunter and President, Theodore Roosevelt, created the United States Forest Service, established 150 national forests, 51 federal bird reserves, four national game preserves, five national parks, and 18 national monuments by enabling the 1906 American Antiquities Act. He protected approximately 230 million acres of public land during his presidency.

Later president Franklin D. Roosevelt

built on Teddy’s work. Advancing to today, the USA is a beacon to a world of diminishing wild resources with, among other measures, the shining model of game and fishing regulation, breeding programs and habitat preservation in their broad swathe of managed public lands. Americans value hunting and fishing as culturally significant through the efforts of hunters, who largely respect or even love the animals they hunt; **THEY** would not entertain widespread helicopter culling or baiting their national treasure.

In Australia more recently, the fledgling Game Council attempted to introduce game management into state forests and lobbied to allow accredited hunters into National Parks to assist with “feral” animal control. That word “feral” is problematic, indicating a disrespect for our ancestors’ wisdom in government sanctioning, indeed encouraging, the introduction of six deer species here as an enduring resource, not only for hunters. For the last 20 years state government departments have

neglected to implement any meaningful population management plans. Now they are playing catch-up with broad scale butchery. Short memories.

On the back of 1996, increasing socially insular urbanisation and the introduction of wholesale airborne slaughter and poison baiting the bush, is it any wonder that hunter numbers have declined, according to Pearson? But they have not.

Now, more than ever, negative PR spruiked by urban greens has put uncalled-for pressure on regulators to regulate us out of existence. If you are feeling this pressure, you need to act by seeing your local members to reverse this lunacy.

AND ON A LIGHTER NOTE, we now introduce a monthly four-page series on the most hunted game species in Australia. We hope you enjoy the Species Guides and



MARCUS O'DEAN
Editor

SPORTING

SHOOTER

Editor: Marcus O'Dean
Email: marcusodean@yaffa.com.au

Technical Editor: Nick Harvey

Contributors: Nick Harvey, Marcus O'Dean, Tony Pizzata, Col Allison, Goran Pehar, Paul O'Connor, Pete Briedahl, Leon Wright, Dylan Smith.

ADVERTISING

National Sales Manager:
Tony Pizzata Tel: (02) 9213 8263
Mobile: 0411 592 389
Fax: (02) 9281 2750
Email: tonypizzata@yaffa.com.au

Advertising Production:
Michelle Carneiro
Tel: (02) 9213 8219
Email: michellecarneiro@yaffa.com.au

Marketing Manager:
Lucy Yaffa
Tel: (02) 9213 8245

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Call: 1800 807 760
Email: SUBSCRIPTIONS@YAFFA.COM.AU

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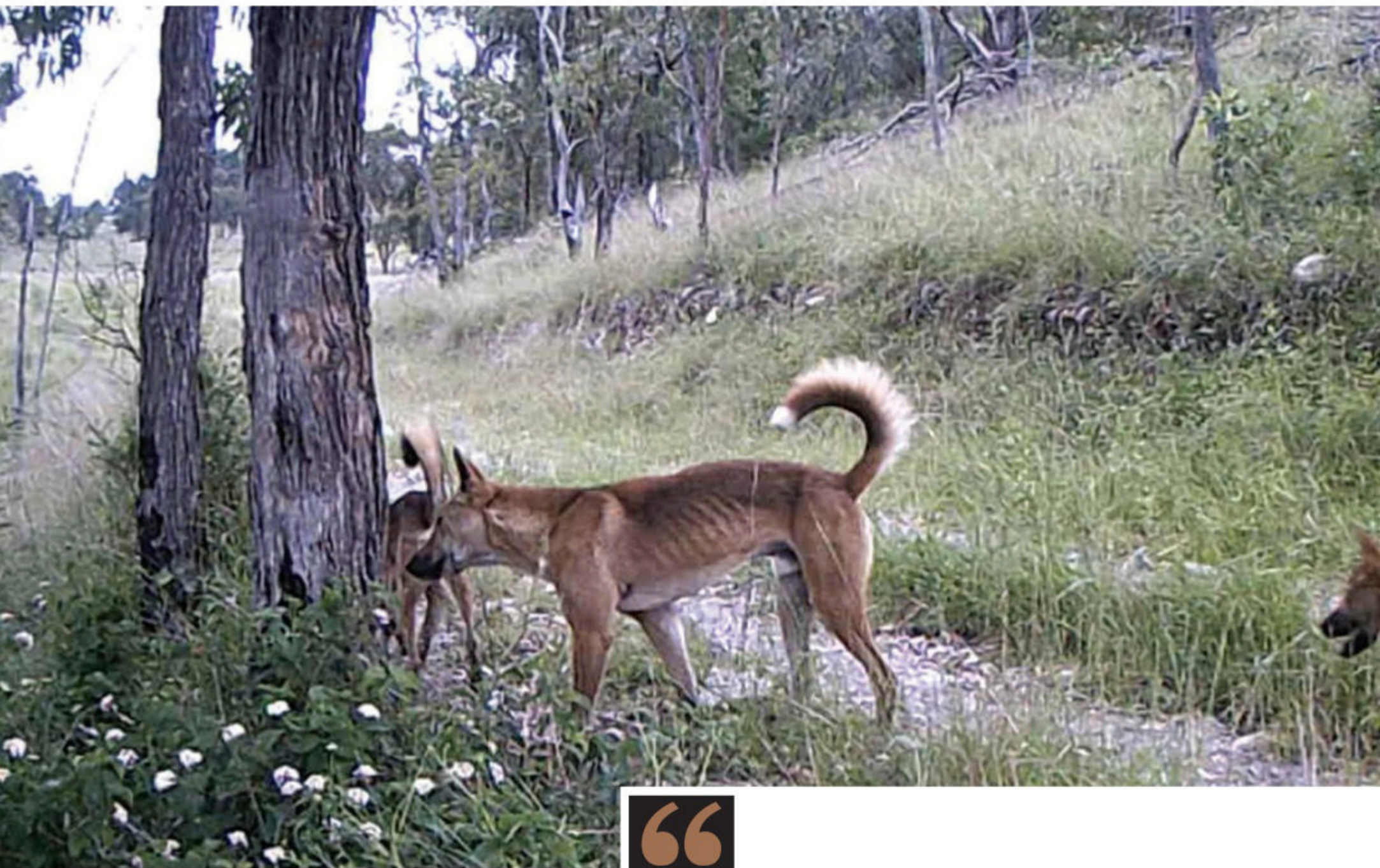
Hunting With Trail Cameras

I recently gained access through a business acquaintance to a property that held potential for wild dogs. After an ATV run with the owner, I commenced studying the property layout, boundaries and water points via google earth and Qld Globe. He ran cattle and along with two main dams, there were close to a dozen water troughs scattered throughout the hilly 2500 acre property.

RIGHT: Paired female with brindle Alpha shot at 160 yards.







DURING two 8 km walking reconnaissances, I found pig and dog sign and began the process of positioning trail cameras in key areas. The price and quality of trail cameras has improved drastically over the last five years and so I've had my use of them. On this occasion, I chose more affordable units, which allowed additional camera placements to achieve improved surveillance and reducing the amount of time required to establish target species' movement and patterns.

CAMERA LOCATIONS. Time needs to be taken when positioning cameras. I believe they need to be placed in areas where there is both fresh and old sign. Feral animal movement can vary depending on many factors and having a camera capture no images can be as beneficial as a full SD card to establish what you are dealing with.

Attempting to 'pattern' a wild dog is something I had attempted many times."

CHECKING INTERVALS. I will often check a camera every 2-3 weeks, which is normally about the halfway mark in battery life, depending how you set up the parameters for photos/videos. Unless the camera is positioned on a high activity location like a water trough, I will pretty much only use them in video mode. Depending on the model of camera, you will normally have numerous options to choose from that include length of video to be recorded, along with trigger time or delay between clips. Until you find that sweet spot in both settings and camera locations, it is advisable to reduce the video length to maximise

the number of captures that can be stored on an SD card.

DAY/NIGHT USAGE. To keep costs down I will mainly use 32GB SD cards which can often store up to 1000 15 sec clips, depending on whether they are day or night captures. Night captures in video mode use more battery power, as infrared light mode is engaged. Often cameras will stop taking night captures long before they stop taking day captures and then eventually go flat. This means that you could pull a camera with four weeks of clips, but not have any night captures in the last two



weeks as the battery has drained too much to activate the infrared light and record anything at night.

CAMERA SENSITIVITY SETTINGS is a subject of much debate. In a new location I will always start on high sensitivity to ensure nothing is missed. However, you can often inspect footage after 2-3 weeks and have 1000 clips of grass swaying in the wind. This brings me to the next point, which is camera sensitivity range. Only trial and error and a few hundred captures will tell you what the camera you have is capable of and its limitations. If a camera is being used for targeting large animals like deer, you would think that having a low sensitivity setting would make sense. However, for a camera to trigger on said deer at 30-plus yards it may need to be set on high sensitivity. Again, trial and error and hours spent flicking through clips will be the best way to assess what settings are required.



REVIEWING AND LOGGING TRAIL CAMERA FOOTAGE has always bought me great pleasure. The initial surprise and resultant forward planning it prompts is exciting and fulfilling. Finding a quiet corner of the house with a cold beer and snacks, I sit back and let the action unfold. I now log the clips in a note pad as I view them, detailing clip number, time-date and feral(s) present. This reduces the amount of time required to tabulate data and build a pattern of movement and in the end increases your odds.

A Case Study – Camera Positioning

I decided to place two cameras to start with on the new block. One was over a worn game trail crossing a dry creek bed at a 45-degree angle in an attempt to capture looking both down the trail and down the creek. The second was placed on a bush track that presented a lot of prints cutting between a steep ridge and a creek. This appeared to be the easiest path between two dams; my experience with dog and pig movement bore this out. When positioning a camera on a track, trail or road, it is important to position the camera looking down the trail, not across it. You will then capture animals on camera for a longer period as they walk toward or away from the camera, rather than a flash of them as they travel past it.

While positioning the second camera, I noticed a tree with fresh rub marks on it. I positioned the camera to look both at the tree and down the track. Having a camera on a track that is passable by a vehicle has the multiple advantages of tracking not only feral animal and livestock habits, but also vehicle movement. Capturing livestock greatly aids the farmer if there are any issues with stock, like injuries, but also identifies if there are animals where they should, or should not be. Tracking vehicle movements also helps both parties as it gives a fair indication what the local feral population is used to in terms of vehicle movement noise etc.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Brindle pack at cutting and location of main camera.

2 Coloured pack at cutting, Alpha male is black with white muzzle and leading the way.

3 Old solo brawler looking for his next meal.





4

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To keep costs down I mainly use 32GB SD cards which can often store up to 1000 15 sec clips.”



5

REVIEWING THE FOOTAGE. The SD card from the first camera revealed that I had hit the jackpot. It had not only captured feral pig movement but potentially some of the rarest footage I will ever see – a wild dog attacking a mob of pigs!! I was in awe ... sitting back and watching the clip on loop, fascinated by how both the dog behaved and how the sows protected their young. The older sows circled around the suckers and blocked any potential way for the dog to grab them. The 15sec clip played out the story and provided a predicted outcome where the pigs successfully protected their young. However, if

there were more than one dog, I would say it would have been a different result.

Camera two provided proof that there was a high frequency of dog movements. Over the following few months this camera provided footage of two wild dog packs, one with eight members! The rub tree showed that both livestock and ferals used it. Footage showed cattle and pigs rubbing, dogs scratching and urinating around it, along with wallabies and hares stopping and sniffing at it – fascinating.

ANALYSIS AND STRATEGY. I had by now summarised three months' footage onto a spreadsheet, which tabulated dates, time, direction of travel, moon phase and type and number of ferals present. Two main patterns emerged; packs and single wild dogs were travelling north of an afternoon and south early morning in the dark and around sunrise. The moon cycle was not providing any obvious pattern which would, from my experience, show increased movement during the day during a new moon. The afternoon behaviour was more consistent, so I planned a few runs that would have me there 3-4 hours prior to sunset.

My first targeted run had the weather turn on me and resulted in a saturated hunter and a couple of

close calls in the Hilux exiting the property.

My second run was far more successful. I arrived on site just before 2pm. I parked about 2kms from the hot zone, loaded up and began the hike in, deciding to bring the 30-06, as it is my deer rifle and with it approaching the rut, it could bring me some additional luck. My pack was semi-loaded with a bit of camera gear, a few snacks to pass the time, a rifle bipod and a low-set festival deck chair. These chairs provide a comfortable seat only 100mm off the ground, allowing a low profile, so that I can blend in with the vegetation and still have enough height to shoot over the top. I am not typically a “sit and wait” hunter as I can be impatient, but the dogs' constricted corridor made this type approach a virtual necessity. As I cautiously approached the area, I reassessed the wind and slowly made my way to large gum amongst a tree line fading away into a creek. I quietly set up in front of the large gum. Being in front of an object helps mask any movement, rather than being skylined behind or beside something. I'd been in the spot about two hours and was getting fidgety, when movement directly in front of me at about 300 yards caught my attention.

ON THIS PAGE

4 Large and lean – the Alpha male from brindle pack shot at 180 yards.

5 Tikka T3X Superlite in .30-06 - getting the job done again.



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6



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PLANNING PAYS OFF. A pair of dogs appeared through the cutting where the camera was located and had taken a sharp left and began to head up the hill along a large cattle pad. I quickly shouldered the Tikka from the seated position and rested it on my left knee, the crosshairs now levelled over the rear dog. I had previously ranged this area at just under 200 yards, which was ideal as most of my rifles are zeroed at that distance. The two canines were trotting, so I released a couple of short sharp kissing noises, which pulled the rear dog up in her tracks. I gently released the safety and as I squeezed off the first round the dog took a step.

The boom of the SuperLite cracked through the surrounding bush as the rear dog dropped out of sight, into the grass. As I chambered the second round the intense howling of the shot hound pierced the foreground as the lead dog turned back to locate his partner. As he paused, on high alert with head high and ears pricked forward the second round struck him centre mass and he dropped instantly. I instinctively collected my pack, chambered a third round and quickly headed to their location. My heart racing after what was a very quick encounter; the whole encounter from shot to shot was less than 10 seconds. As I located the second

I released a couple of short sharp kissing noises, which pulled the rear dog up in her tracks.”

animal, I ranged the tree I was sitting under at 180 yards and about 160 yards to where I thought the first dog was hit.

The second dog was a large, young, healthy male with a dark ridge and black accents and an impressive set of choppers. His length and mass was typical of the area and it was obvious that he could easily pull down a calf without any assistance. The 150gn Federal Fusion had struck him directly in the spine and he had expired instantly. As I walked to the first dog's last known location, I realised she was no longer there. I urgently began the search in every direction, hoping that I did not have an injured and suffering animal on my hands. As I picked up on the blood trail, I increased my pace, heading into some thick scrub as the blood trail flickered in front on me. After a few minutes I had located her in her resting place and was relieved she had passed. She was darker in appearance than her partner,

ON THIS PAGE

6 Brindle pack heading south on dusk to main camera location.

7 Path of least resistance – location of main camera with marker tree on left.



7

solid and healthy with a shimmering coat.

The amount of time and effort that had gone into this result had all paid off. Marking the “pattern” of a wild dog is something I had attempted many times over the last few years. Now, it was rewarding to have a sighting, let alone a result like this.

Before I returned to collect my chair and kit, I swapped out the SD card in the main camera that was located less than 50 yards from where the animals were shot. Upon viewing the clips later that evening, I found even more interesting data. The pair that I had just shot had moved together past that camera two days earlier at almost the same time of the afternoon. Even more fascinating was that there were another two hounds that had triggered the camera at the exact time I shot the first animal. They paused at the first gun shot and quickly retreated as the second shot rang out!!

These trail cameras had provided me with information that would have been near impossible to gather unless I had taken up residence on the block. Taking the time to summarise this information is as important as the time taken to position the cameras along with tuning the settings to suit the desired environment. 📍



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Letters containing questions for answering by Nick Harvey must be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope. Mail your letters to: **The Technical Editor, 3 Reef Street, Hill End, NSW 2850.**

LETTER OF THE MONTH

.22 Magnum For Pigs

QI own a CZ .22 Magnum like yours and I have read that you have accounted for a number of goats and deer with it. Have you ever used it on pigs? If so, how did it go? At present I am looking to put a scope on my rifle and know that you have a Swarovski 6x on your gun. What power of scope would you recommend?

Bill Brereton

AI did have a 6x Swarovski on my CZ .22 WMR, but recently I stalked a pair of sows and all I could see in the scope was a big blur

after I got within four metres. Although I managed to get one sow the other got away in thick cover. Most of my hunting locally is at 25 to 50 yards and only rarely reaches to 100 yds. I use Federal's 50gn load exclusively and sight it for a 100 yd. zero. After the fiasco with the sows I swapped the 6x scope for a Meopta Optika 5 2-10x42 Z-Plex and leave it set on 2x. This works fine for the close shots and I can crank it up if a longer shot offers. However, I recommend you get a more compact scope such as a 2-7x or even 1.5-4x.



This sow was downed from a distance of about 4 metres with a Federal 50gn hollow point bullet. The 6x Swarovski has since been replaced by a Meopta Optika 5 – 2-10x42.

Looking For A Lefthand Hornet

QI am lefthanded and for the last eight years, I've been looking for a left-handed bolt action in .22 Hornet. I have given up trying to buy a new rifle and decided to get one built. Can you recommend a good, trustworthy honest and reliable gunsmith? I live in the Central West of NSW so a 'smith close to home would be great. I want steel and timber, 5-shot, 23-24" medium to heavy sporter barrel, sub MOA with factory ammo. Could you suggest how much I could expect to pay for such a gun – ballpark figure. Or would it be better to buy a rifle with a mini action and have it converted to .22 Hornet? What would be the best calibre to buy. Hope to get a Sako or Tikka as this is what I have now.

Gary Charnock

AHaving a rifle built by a gunsmith to your specifications would probably cost anywhere from \$2500 upwards. For a start, you

would have to find a lefthand action made specifically for the Hornet – no easy task. Then pay \$600 for a barrel plus fitting and chambering as well as a walnut stock. You can forget that option. Contrary to popular opinion, gunsmiths don't work for peanuts and the good ones charge what they are worth. Your idea of buying a lefthand rifle in another calibre (say .222 or .223) and converting it to handle the Hornet won't work either.

Even if you got a gunsmith to cut off the chamber section and rechamber it (leaving a big gap in the stock), the magazine wouldn't feed the rimmed cartridge, and getting it to extract would also present a problem. It is really impractical. Qld Gun Exchange imports Zastava mini-Mausers rifles, but I doubt if they bring in any Hornets as that old cartridge is about as popular as Covid 19. Why bother with the Hornet? there are plenty of good, affordable rifles in both right and lefthand available in .222 and .223 – cartridges far superior



That old cartridge is about as popular as Covid 19."

to the Hornet. The only factory rifle I know of still being chambered for the Hornet is the Ruger M77 which is righthand only. Personally, I'd go for the lefthand Mini-Mausers in .222 which is a better round to reload and gives better performance.

Puzzled by .223 Velocities

QI have enjoyed your articles for over 40 years and use your reloading manual. I have been reloading for a Tikka T3X in .223 and am not sure if I can safely increase my powder charge based on the velocity displayed on my chronograph. I have been using 25gn of AR2208 behind 55gn Nosler Varmageddons and 55gn soft points, The cartridge O.A.L is exactly as per your manual. My chronograph is a

Caldwell Ballistic Precision unit. This load averages only 2880fps, whereas I thought it would be around 3100fps. I tried OSA factory loads with 55gn soft-points and they clocked 2900fps against a published 3200fps from memory. I can't complain about the accuracy both factory and handloads are grouping in 0.3 inch average 100yds., but I am curious about the difference in velocity. I know that barrel length may make a difference, but I wouldn't think that much. I have no idea of the accuracy of the Caldwell chronograph. I have read that AR2206 is better in the .223, but I have a good supply of AR2208 and unless it makes a huge difference, I prefer to keep using AR2208. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.

Neil Angwin

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A I have a Sako L461 in .223 Remington fitted with a 22 inch Ruger .223 stainless barrel. Your Tikka T3X probably has the same length barrel. I am loading 27gn of W-748 behind the 55gn Nosler Solid-Base bullet for 3196fps and 26gn of AR2208 with the Hornady 60gn V-Max for 3120fps. Your load (25gn AR2208 and 55gn Nosler Varmageddon) should be getting at least 3100fps. My Sako gives the highest velocity with the 55gn bullet and 26gn of AR2206H – 3220fps. I'd keep using AR2208 as you have a good supply of it. The only things I can suggest are: your gun either has a slow barrel or else your chronograph isn't giving a true reading. You say that the OSA factory loads clock 2900fps in your gun; in my Sako L46 they are doing 3066fps. The Geco 56gn load does 3115fps and Hornady Superformance 53gn load gets 3310fps. Every rifle is a law unto itself. Maybe you could borrow another chronograph to check if the velocities are the same?

Which Primer For The .44-40?

Q I hope this letter finds you in good health. I recall you have a very significant birthday coming up in September. All the very best with that one. I have some questions relating to the .44-40 that I hope you can help me with. My rifle is a Winchester Model 94 which my daughter Zoe uses to shoot targets. She finds it a real fun gun and it's cheap to shoot. About 40 years ago I spoke with you about loads for this rifle but now I have some further questions. Every loading manual but yours recommends large pistol primers for the .44-40, but I am aware that large pistol primers are 6 to 8 thou shallower than large rifle primers. Why do you recommend the large rifle primer? I followed your previous advice and have always loaded LR primers but in some of my cases they protrude a fraction of an inch and prevent the action locking up fully and the trigger mechanism is blocked. To

overcome this I uniform the primer pockets with an LR uniforming tool. This deepens the pockets enough to fully seat LR primers. Did you ever strike this problem? If so how did you rectify it? As per your recommendation I load Hawkesbury River 200gn round-nose flat-point bullets which have proved very accurate in my rifle, but my stock has almost run out and the remainder are the newer blue coloured projectiles. Is there any practical difference between the blue and black bullets aside from the colour? The two loads you previously gave me both work extremely well – the 200gn Black Hawke and 15gn Hercules 2400 and 240gn cast lead projectile and 12gn of 2400. I have a quantity of Unique powder that I would like to use. Can you recommend a charge for both 200 and 240gn projectiles? My son, Joseph, likes to use the .44-40 on pigs when he's not carrying his favourite .257 Ackley Improved. The .44-40 load he uses is another you suggested – Winchester 200gn Jacketed bullet over 21gn of IMR4227. Can you suggest a load with the same bullet with AR2205? My supply of Winchester bullets has run out and I can't get any more. The Winchester bullets were really explosive, but would the 200gn Hawkesbury River bullets perform as well on pigs? I have been writing to you on and off for almost 50 years. Any other suggestions in relation to the .44-40 would be greatly appreciated.

Grant Cooke

A Yes, I'll be 90 years old on September 29th – bloody ancient. You are right about the .44-40; Lyman and Hornady both list large pistol primers. Some recent manuals no longer list data for the .44-40. I've forgotten why I used large rifle primers, namely the Winchester 120 instead of the

LP primers. My loads were worked up in 1995 and I have had little to do with the .44-40 since then. The reason may have been because the L R primer has a thicker cup that withstood high pressures better? The rifle I used was a Winchester Model 94 carbine and I found it was possible to drive 240gn bullets at speeds of up to 1780fps, but the problem was that the weak .44-40 case wouldn't stand more than one or two reloads. Currently, .44-40 cases are available in a number of different brands, but in my experience Remington makes the thickest cases and Winchester the thinnest. I don't remember having a problem with LR primers protruding, but there's no reason why you can't use the LP primer. Hornady doesn't list any loads for Unique which is a helluva lot faster than 2400. But I found some early data which lists Unique – 11gn with the 200gn Jacketed bullet for 1500fps and 9gn with the 240gn jacketed bullet for 1250fps. For a plinking load, a 200gn lead bullet and 8.6gn of Unique gets 950fps. With the Winchester jacketed bullet in my Model 94 20gn of AR2205 gets 1340fps. In my experience, lead bullets are great stoppers on pigs even when they hit bone, but seeing that Winchester 200gn bullets are no longer available, why not try the Hornady 200gn XTP or the 225gn FTX? they should be more explosive. Hope this information works for you.

Feed Problem With A Browning X-Bolt

Q Can you tell me why the Browning X-Bolt in .375 H&H Magnum will not cycle 300gn factory cartridges? I have had two of these rifles with the same problem. I am loading Woodleigh 300gn Hydrostatic projectiles over 72gn of AR2209 for a buffalo hunting September.

Rod Maddox



The weak .44-40 case wouldn't take more than one or two reloads."

L to R: Factory seated bullets in the .257 Roberts and .25-06 show bullets seated out to take advantage of freebore. The .257 and .300 Weatherby chambers have 3/8" freebore, but .240 (right) has a standard throat





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“None of the big overbore Nosler cartridges are freebored, including the 27.”

Sako L461 .223 Remington may shoot different weights and shapes of bullets at higher velocities than a reader's Tikka T3X which may have a slow barrel or slow chronograph readings.

A I've never had anything to do with the Browning X-Bolt in .375 H&H, but I am surprised to hear that it won't feed factory 300gn cartridges. However, I am not surprised to hear the X-Bolt will feed your reloads with Woodleigh 300gn Hydrostatic bullets. In the early stages of their development Woodleigh did encounter some feeding problems with Hydrostatic bullets which was why they added the plastic cap which resulted in totally reliable feeding. Without actually being able to see what is happening, it is difficult for me to say what is causing the problem, but if they load easily into the rotary magazine, I'd get a gunsmith to check if there's a problem with the feed ramp. It may be easy to modify the ramp. By the way 72gn of AR2209 is light load in the .375 which gets a velocity of about 2400fps. A compressed charge of 78gn of AR2209 turns up 2600fps. I loaded 225gn Hydrostatic bullets in my .338 Win. Mag. with the same charge I use with other brands of bullets of the same weight and struck no problems. Maybe you should shovel a little more coal on the fire?

To Freebore Or Not?

Q Recently, I did some comparison homework on the 27 Nosler Versus 6.8 Western. I printed SAAMI drawings and noticed the 27 Nosler chamber has no freebore. Curiosity had me back on the website printing all my calibres only to find that the .243 and .270 Winchester are not freebored. I have my .243 at Jeff Borg's workshop to fit a barrel with a quicker twist and asked him to give it 1.5-2mm of freebore to handle longer bullets. I would have thought the 27 Nosler would have benefited from having some freebore? Is there a technical reason why freebore isn't used? The other thing noted is that you mentioned some hard to get powders – namely US 689. I managed to get a good supply of RE25 and RE26, but never managed US689. The normal response is – not allowed to import it. Have you been able to get any? I read everything you write – usually three times – as you've said, “the Editor can use words however they wish”, so reading between the lines is needed to pick the difference between marketing and the truth. That

said – love your work. I for one appreciate your efforts. Stay away from the Chinese Flu and do only what you enjoy.
Peter Samuels

A The first rifles to be freebored (long throated) were probably the Weatherby Magnums which originally had 3/4 inch throats (all except the .240) but the amount of free travel was reduced to about 3/8 inch in 1967. Seating depths and case capacities are increased by freebore, but when Weatherby reduced it to 3/8" any gain that previously could have been credited to increased case capacity was offset to some degree by the shortened freebore effect. Whether a cartridge can profit from being freebored also depends upon whether the magazine is long enough to enable bullets to be seated farther out. The majority of standard calibres are well served by a standard length of throat and generally all calibres from .17 to the big bores will perform well with free travel of .020 down to zero. I've had a few of my personal rifles which had short throats, e.g. Ruger M77 .257Roberts,

Kimber .25-06 and BSA .284 Winchester, freebored and gained a worthwhile advantage. None of the big overbore Nosler cartridges are freebored including the 27. The cases are very long and if you lengthened their throats and seated the bullets out, they wouldn't fit in the magazine. There is no technical reason why freebore isn't used with standard cartridges other than it is not needed, particularly if they are chambered in short action rifles. Freebore has been criticised, but I believe if the bullet is a snug fit in the freebore area so it is properly aligned with the bore, it leaves the case in a straight line, overcoming its inertia and reaching a higher velocity before it engraves the rifling. Accuracy is unaffected and it also helps ballistics. In my rifles I've achieved an increase of up to 100fps which is about what you can expect to gain by “improving” the case. Scarce powders often include the Alliant numbers. One gun shop in Sydney did have US689, but have no idea where they got it from. But I am not worried as my overbore cartridges thrive on AR2217 and AR2225. ☒

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Without question the humble fallow – scientific name *Dama dama* – stretching back to 1830's, they have formed an important part of

Fallow Deer

Physical Characteristics.

A **MATURE** fallow buck will stand 90-95cm high at the shoulder and can tip the scales at 90kg, especially when in good condition in late summer or in the early stages of the rut. Does are built much lighter, typically 75-80cm at the shoulder and around 40kg for a mature female.

Fallow have the interesting feature of coming in a wide range of colours. You have the melanistic (black) fallow who's coats are a rich chocolate colour and the "common" colour scheme, with coats a reddish-brown colour marked with a darker dorsal stripe and white spots and underbelly. The menil colour phase is similar, although the reddish-brown coat is a lighter creamy colour. Pure white is the other colour phase. Colours are genetic traits, so fallow populations that are geographically isolated will often have a dominant colour strain that reflects the origins of the herd potentially many generations ago. For example, the Lake George fallow herd in the ACT is predominantly black, while a hunter in the south east of South Australia is far more likely to encounter common or menil fallow.

RIGHT: Author with a lovely trophy menil - colouration fallow buck, hard won by a close-in stalk with a compound bow.



is the most prolific deer species in Australia, with a history
Australia's deer hunting culture and identity. By Tony Kamphorst





“

Work out where they are feeding and where they are bedding up during the day.”



Typically, a mature buck's antlers will have brow tines and trez tines and then the antlers flatten into a broad palm-like area with points off the back (called spellers). An exceptional buck can have antlers 30 inches long, but the majority in Australia are in the mid 20's. No two sets of fallow antlers are the same, which makes for some interesting trophies. You can get short, heavy ones with cleft palms and lots of crazy points.... or a long head with almost blade like palms. They all have character.

Habitat / distribution.

Fallow were originally released in Tasmania in the 1830's and mainland Australia in the 1880's. For many years the main fallow populations existed in Tasmania, Lake George in the ACT, the Glen Innes region in northern NSW and the Stanthorpe herd in southern Queensland. That all started to change in the 1970's, 80's and 90's when the deer farming boom took hold in Australia and pens of fallow deer sprung up everywhere to meet demand of this new industry. As inevitably happens, some of these captive deer made their way into the wild through fences going down or

were simply let go when the venison prices dropped to a point where keeping deer was uneconomical. Throw in a few subtle liberations by keen deer hunters, and fallow were well on their way to being the most widespread deer in Australia. The traditional ranges are still producing deer of course, and the newer populations are ever expanding. There has been some exceptional quality fallow hunting in the upper Hunter Valley, the Snowy-Monaro region and South-East of South Australia in recent decades.

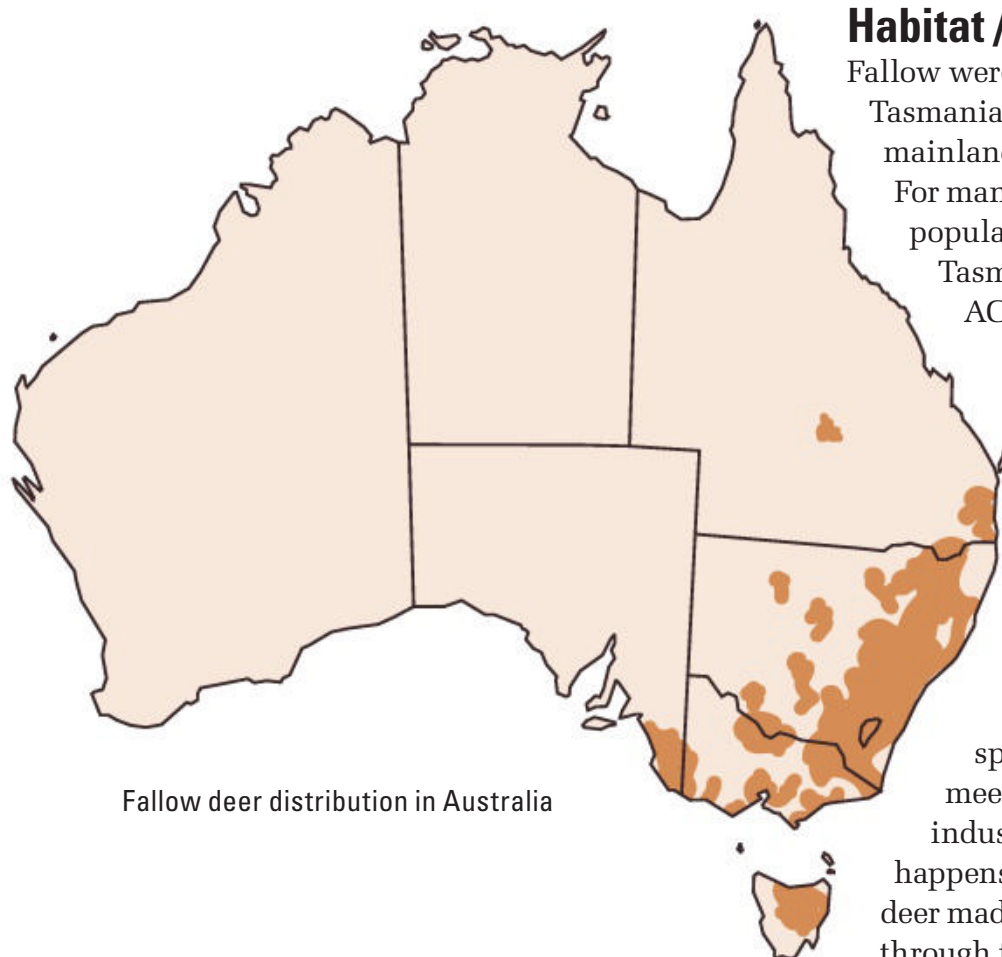
It certainly isn't a case of the good old days of yesteryear, as bigger and bigger bucks are being taken every year now, raising the bar on what is considered a good representative head of the species. I can still recall hunters of my father's generation talking about the time and effort (sometimes years) it took to successfully take a buck scoring over 200 points on the Douglas system, while hunting the Glen Innes and Stanthorpe fallow herds in the 70's and 80's. These days 200 Douglas Point heads (and much bigger) are commonplace in the upper Hunter Valley, the Snowy-Monaro region, or the exceptional fallow herds of south-east South Australia to name just a few.

Fallow are ideally suited to the semi-open farming country that dominates the fringes of the Great Diving Range from Victoria into southern Queensland. They are predominantly grazers, not browsers, and will feed out into clearings and open paddocks in the early mornings and evenings before retiring to the thicker timber or bush to bed up for the day.

Sign to look for and what it indicates.

Fallow sign outside of the rut consists of the usual hoof prints and droppings. A fallow hoof prints are like those of a sheep or goat, but generally they are a slightly longer, slender print with pointed tips. Goats and sheep or more rounded. Droppings come in the forms of pellets, around jelly-bean size, with a distinct point at one end if you look closely.

Bucks will start rubbing and



Fallow deer distribution in Australia

thrashing trees leading up to the breeding season in March and when they establish rutting territories, they will make scrapes. Scrapes can be as small as a dinner plate or bigger than your kitchen table. Bucks will work them with hoof and antler until the ground is nothing but bare powdered earth, thrash the surrounding trees and urinate in the scrape. Hunting areas with a concentration of scrapes will put you right in the zone to bump into a buck.

Typical Season Dates.

Here in Australia we have very few seasonal restrictions when it comes to deer hunting, so the question of when to hunt is largely an ethical one and up to hunters themselves to manage when they target deer. Fallow does usually give birth around November/December each year, and fawns are dependent on their mothers for at least four months. So it's good practice to only shoot does between April and October. Even though a doe might look like she hasn't got a fawn at foot over summer, chances are she has planted it in the long grass or bush somewhere nearby. If you are hard up for venison over the summer months, it's best to take a fat spiker or a 12 month old doe.

Bucks will drop their antlers around September/October each year and spend the next four months growing out, with antlers becoming hard in February. Velvet bucks are fat and tasty, but if you are after a head for the wall leave it until March when they are stripped out. From late March through to late April it's the breeding season, or the rut, the most exiting time of the year for a keen fallow hunter to be in the bush.

Hunting Methods.

The best approach to fallow hunting is to work out where they are feeding and where they are bedding up during the day. Spend the early mornings and late afternoons with the wind in your face hunting areas where you are likely to catch deer moving between their bedding and feeding areas. They love fringe



3

country and working a timbered bush edge that backs onto open grazing land is a reliable technique.

When it comes to chasing big bucks in the rut, follow your ears. Bucks get vocal and give away their position with deep guttural grunts. The rut is also a great time to try calling. The best way to do this is to find cruising bucks or set up right in a buck's rutting territory near his scrapes. Rattling antlers and doe calling work equally well and can be a great way to get bucks in close.

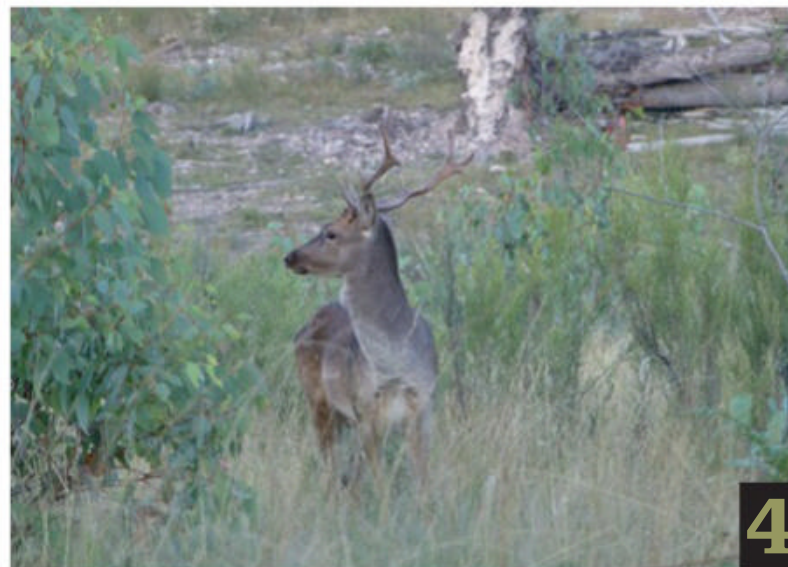
Hunting Tools.

The NSW and Victorian Game Management Authorities recommend a minimum caliber of .243 with a bullet weight of 100 grains for fallow deer hunting. This is a sensible choice and will do the job with no dramas.

For the bowhunters a draw weight of 45 pounds and above is plenty. It's all about shot placement and making sure your broadheads are razor sharp. Also try and get your bow and arrow setup to be as quiet as possible on release, as fallow are notorious string jumpers.

Conclusion.

There are a few different views on deer management but when it comes to fallow, being the prolific breeders that they are, taking females is the best thing you can do for the environment, the farmer and



4

the general health of the herd. Bucks have a high mortality rate, not helped by hunters who take multiple bucks every year and leave all the does. The best way to get a healthy herd with stable numbers and big mature bucks is to try and get that male to female ratio as close to 1:1 as possible, and as hunters we all play our part. And in my opinion the females consistently offer better eating-quality meat as well.

Fallow are excellent eating, however like all venison sometimes it's not as forgiving as beef or lamb and can require careful preparation and knowing which cuts are suited to different dishes. They also excel in sausages and smallgoods. If you do your research and make an effort with carcass care, butchery and researching different recipes the results can be outstanding. 📍

ON THIS SPREAD

1 A fresh fallow scrape indicating a rutting buck's area of operations.

2 A rub tree, which a rutting buck uses to scrape velvet from his antlers early in the rut.

3 A small mob with a mix of melanistic (dark) and menil (lighter spotted) fallow.

4 A younger melanistic buck, his protuding Adam's apple more obvious when the rut is at its height.



Patience Pays

BY GARY THIESS

I'D spied the group from the top road on my farm. Grazing on the middle to lower sections of a steep-ish gully with one tree for cover, so many eyes about will make for a tough hunt. Getting to 60 metres without being caught would be awesome.

The late afternoon meant I could wait for shadows from the hill to dampen my silhouette. The smell of the goats blew into my face, with the breeze making the scrim over my head and shoulders swing gently. Trouser piercing, dried thistles rustled against me as I descended slowly, crouching low.

After 140 metres, I gave the legs a rest. Check what else might be in the mob and what might come from a couple of spots in the gully that were obscured. 10 minutes I sat. More goats came out – from behind that tree where I couldn't see. My target billy came up from his hollow into the open.

Longer shadows and no sunlight directly on me now. Time to creep further down. Another 35 minutes pass as I get to my planned shooting position, a further 50 metres below. Gladly, no pigeons were hiding in the long grass. Time for patience.

How's it feel when you stay put, as your target gets closer? That old billy wanted to round

up the mob to head off to the forest to sleep. The mob kept feeding where they were. Up the hill he came. Range finder out, closest nanny is 47 metres. The billy was now at a distance of 84. This was it.

Round in the chamber, sling around elbow in a sitting position. Wait for a quartering away angle. The Lithgow LA102 barked. The goats all jumped. But the billy had that hunched leap that told me the shot was good. The mob started to move quickly, not sure where the threat was with the echo. The billy moved with them, then toppled.

With a big chest and heavy body, he was an ageing warrior getting past his prime. Now to get up that bloody hill. 🎯

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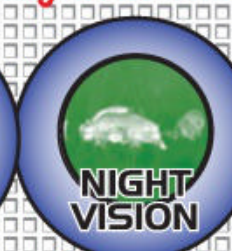


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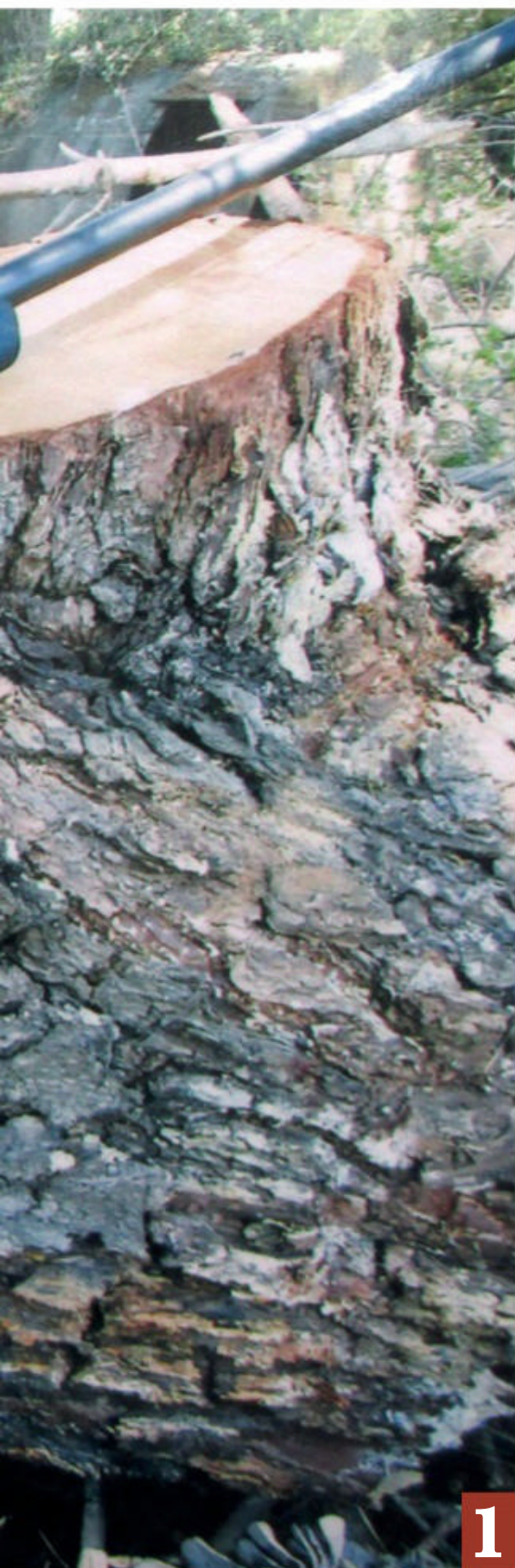




Turqua – Turkey’s First Sporting Rifle

The label “Made in Turkey” was almost exclusively found on shotguns and there are a number being imported. New rifle manufacturing by ATA Arms is fully modern, with the universal use of CAD/COM systems and CNC machinery, laser-cut checkering and injection-moulded stocks.

THE Turqua sporter is a first bolt action rifle to be manufactured in Turkey, a country which has always issued contracts and bought their military rifles. Throughout the last century, the Turks were one of Mauser’s best customers and purchased large quantities of the Model 1890, a modified form of the Belgian model in 7.65mm followed by the Model 1903 rifle and 1905 carbine – variations of the Gew 98 – prior to the first World War in



7.92x57mm. Following the War of Independence Turkey rearmed with Czech Model 98/22 rifles produced by Brno. Germany, Belgium, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and even Poland delivered rifles to Turkey after 1924. These were in either 7.65mm or 7.92mm. I had a rifle built on a Turkish M98 action marked “Ankara” which was unusual in having a large ring receiver with the small ring receiver thread.

Coming from a country with no history of making any kind



of rifles, the Turqua sporter may be seen as a departure from tradition. Certainly it's an engineering innovation from ATA, Turkey's leading firearms manufacturer who exports to over 70 countries. As such, this classic bolt-action hunting rifle will be of exceptional interest, not only to gun writers, but gun nuts and aficionados of the boltgun worldwide.

The heart of the Turqua rifle is a massively – proportioned magnum-length action – and it's really long! The slab-sided, flat-bottomed receiver has an overall length of 225mm and a width of 30mm. The receiver's walls have a thickness varying from 4.50mm at the magazine well to 5.95 at the rear of the receiver ring. The upper section of the receiver is angled and rounded on top. An integral recoil lug set back 38mm from the front of the receiver measures 28mm long, has a width of 12.75mm and depth of 7mm. The tang is an extension of the receiver – short, thick and impossible to bend. The trigger is attached to

the underside of the bridge and extends to the end of the tang; the rear action screw is located in front of the trigger housing and the front screw is threaded into the recoil lug.

The trigger has a steel housing and weight of pull is adjustable from 795 grams to 1.60 kg through a hole in the trigger guard. The 3-position safety is on the right side, just behind the bolt stem. A large knurled button, it locks both bolt and sear, but in the mid-position allows a live round to be removed from the chamber safely. When the rifle is cocked, the safety is thumbed to the rear and the bolt handle is locked down – a feature I am in favour of. The two-stage trigger on the test gun was crisp enough, but broke at 1.8kgs, I quickly lightened it to release at 1.134kgs – a safe and reliable weight – with no creep or overtravel.

Like so many other new hunting rifles, the Turqua has a minimal-sized ejection port that adds rigidity to the action, but unlike some other guns of a similar design, it's possible to top load the Turqua quickly

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Turqua rifle has good lines and is a conventional design, but some may think chambering the .308 in a magnum-length action is adds excess weight and length.

2 One-diameter, magnum length bolt has three locking lugs, a recessed bolt face and shrouded steel bolt sleeve.

3 Bolt release catch is neat and unobtrusive. It rides in a longitudinal slot in the bolt body giving precise non-binding control.

4 Release catch is in front of the magazine. Hole in guard allows the trigger to be adjusted without removing the stock.

5 Safety catch is a large knurled button and a red dot is revealed in firing mode. A second cocking indicator protrudes from the bolt sleeve.



ON THIS PAGE

7 Buttstock is adjustable for length of pull and comb height.

8 The Turqua comes with two detachable magazines – one holds three rounds, the other five.

“

It's satisfying when a new rifle shoots that well straight-out-of-the-box.”

Sako-style claw extractor. A gas port is drilled into each side of the receiver ring. Back at the bridge, a massive shrouded bolt sleeve blocks any escaping gas that might escape along the bolt body.

The breech is a simple flat-patterned type. Barrels are faced off square at the rear, and are a relatively close fit (about .015 inch breech gap to the bolt) in my sample. A small feed ramp milled into the bottom of the receiver ensures there's no exposure around the bottom of the cartridge head.

The Turqua's round bolt handle curves back and has a pear-shaped, hollowed-out, tear-shaped knob with a row of serrations around its circumference. The square-shaped root of the bolt handle turns down into a matching notch in the rear of the bridge to form a safety lug. There's four different length flutes on the bolt body which might reduce friction to some extent, but do nothing to reduce weight. The heavy steel bolt sleeve matches the contours of the receiver and a small red cocking indicator

and efficiently. The ejection port on the test gun is short, only 70mm in length as the test rifle is chambered for the .308 Winchester. Minimal-sized magazine and ejection port cutouts located toward the rear of the action result in an unusually long receiver ring. This means that if ATA decides to chamber the Turqua for longer cartridges any extension of the ejection port and magazine cutouts will be extended toward the front end of the receiver. There's certainly enough room to make the port longer to handle .375 H&H length rounds if ATA decides to chamber for longer cartridges; the receiver ring will also need shortening.

The short .308 cartridge normally has a short bolt travel. While the 3-lug bolt renders a low 60 degree lift, it

doesn't have shorter linear travel because the bolt head extends 30mm into the long receiver ring before locking up. Because the locking lugs don't protrude beyond the diameter of the bolt, no lug raceways along the inner walls of the receiver are needed; only a round hole. This makes for a close-tolerance fit between the two and smooth, wobble-free travel. The lack of raceway channels along the middle of the receiver also contributes to exceptionally thick and rigid sidewalls, making the action strong and hefty.

The Turqua's one-diameter bolt is 20mm in diameter and 183mm long to be in scale with the action and three equally-spaced locking lugs have rounded edges. The deeply counterbored bolt face houses a plunger ejector and

protrudes from the rear of the shrouded sleeve when in firing mode. The bolt stop is located in the left side of the bridge and projects inward to run in a full length longitudinal slot in the bolt body.

The 600mm button-rifled barrel is chrome moly with 1:11 twist and its length was a surprise to me at a time when many hunters prefer a 550mm barrel for a .308. Measuring 26mm in diameter at the receiver and tapering to 18.15mm at the dished muzzle, the barrel is what I'd call medium weight. ATA offers the Turqua with a sub-MOA accuracy guarantee.

The bottom metal is alloy with a magazine latch in the front end. Pulling the latch back with your forefinger pivots its upper end forward freeing the magazine for removal. The magazine doesn't just drop out but requires manual removal. The Turqua comes with two magazines – 3 and 5-shot. They are made of polymer with a low-friction polymer follower and hold the rounds in a single column.

The injection moulded, classic-style stock has a straight comb adjustable for height by simply pressing a button on the right side of the buttstock. To lock the adjustment you simply release the button and press down slightly on the comb. Contrasting with the rough textured finish on the stock, the top of the comb has a smooth surface which is kind

PERFORMANCE TURQUA .308 WINCHESTER

Load	Bullet (weight gn)	Velocity (fps)	Average (fps)	Best (group inches)
Federal American Eagle	130 JHP	3055	0.95	.75
Federal Power-Shok	150 JSP	2800	1.00	.80
Federal Fusion	150	2825	1.3	.85
Federal MatchKing	168 MHP	2650	.90	.76
Federal Premium	175 EdgeTLR	2620	.88	.67
Federal Gold Medal	185 Berger	2555	.90	.72

Accuracy figures are averages of five consecutive three-shot groups fired from a Leadsled at 100yards. Velocities are the average of fifteen shots measured by MagnetoSpeed chronograph. Ambient temperature 15C.

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to the shooter's face. The fore-end is square in cross-section, tapering in toward the upper edges. Rubbery panels inserted into the grip and fore-end replace a checkering pattern. Stock furniture consists of two sling swivel bases and a 18mm thick butt pad. Length of pull can be adjusted using two recoil pad extensions which come with the rifle – one installed and one spare. You can either remove the pre-installed spacer to shorten the length of pull, or add the spare to increase L.O.P.

The barreled action is pillar-bedded in the stock, but it is attached using two 5mm hex-head screws with removable steel bushings which act as pillars. The factory recommends that these screws be tightened with 62 ft/lbs of torque. All exterior

surfaces of the rifle are a non-reflective dull black which is sensible and serviceable.

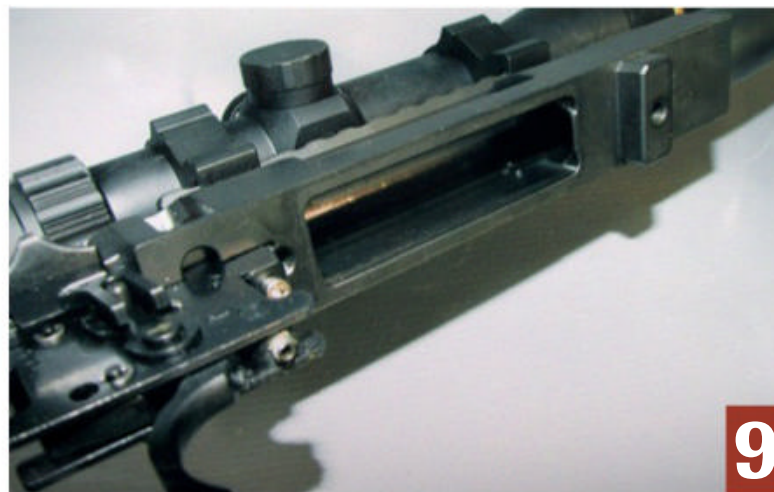
The forend is reinforced with struts making the stock very rigid and stable. The grip has a circumference of 134mm, and the fore-end is 160mm at the mid-point just in ahead of the front action screw. The Turqua's stock is just about as rigid as you can get, and there's no chance of it warping when exposed to excessive heat or cold. The barrel is free-floated from the receiver ring forward, with the gap between forend and barrel being extremely narrow and consistent.

To make attaching a scope easy, the Turqua synthetic comes with a 148mm long Picatinny rail. This is a pious idea, since the spacing of the holes in the long receiver would position standard ring mounts too far apart to accommodate the majority of short-tubed modern scopes.

For testing Nioa sent a Leupold VX-Freedom Scope and Leupold PRW2 30mm rings. This scope has a number of features such as a Custom CDS elevation dial, M1-style BDC dial and ZeroLock. The original dial is replaced by the Custom dial which is graduated out to 500 metres in 1/4 minute clicks using the furnished ammunition – Federal 150gn .308 loading rated at a velocity of 2820fps. Installed according to the instructions, it allows the shooter to hold dead-on out to 500 metres. We decided to check this out after testing the Turqua for accuracy.

The soft rubber pad soaks up recoil quite effectively, although the all-up weight of the outfit, (4.5kgs) field ready with scope, sling and four cartridges helps reduce kick.

The best 3-shot cluster from the Turqua rather surprisingly came with the 175 gn Edge TLR, which shaded the 185gn Berger with a group measuring .67 inch. It's not only extremely satisfying, but gives



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10

a good indication of what to expect when a brand-new, rifle shoots that well straight-out-of-the-box with factory ammunition. The first group was awesome but I knew it to be a good load which seated Federal's top big game bullet. The Turqua was tested with another five Federal loads, all of which showed more than acceptable accuracy as you can see from the table.

Obviously there was bound to be point-of-impact shift with bullets weighing from 130gn to 175gn and group sizes also varied, but overall the rifle shot everything really well and lived up to its sub-MOA guarantee. For testing I used the 3-shot magazine and round after round slid smoothly off the polymer follower. Feeding, extraction and ejection were flawless. The recessed magazine release (in front of the magazine well) is positive, The pear-shaped bolt knob has a good feel, the Turqua's

handling qualities are excellent, and it comes up smoothly. To me, the outfit is a bit heavy for a .308, but it's a lot of gun for the money.

The Turqua is available in two other models as well as the Synthetic tested: Walnut with classic-style Turkish walnut stock; and heavy-barrel Turqua Tactical Laminated weighing 4.5kg which has the buttstock adjustable for length, the comb for height and a threaded muzzle. All three models offer the same choice of calibres – .243 Win. 6.5 Creedmoor and .308 Win. The Turqua comes with a five year warranty. 



Turqua Synthetic

Type: turnbolt, push feed action

Calibre: .243 Win., 6.5 Creedmoor, .308 Win.(tested)

Magazine capacity: 3-shot and 5-shot magazines supplied

Barrel: 610mm. button-rifled, medium profile; 1.11 twist

Weight: 3.4kg

Overall length: 1135mm

Metal finish: matte black

Stock: black composite synthetic, adjustable L.O.P and comb height.

Sights: none: action drilled and tapped; Picatinny rail supplied

Maker: ATA Silah Sanayi A.S Turkey

R.R Price: \$995.00

Contact: Nioa.
Web: www.nioa.com.au

ON THIS PAGE

9 Receiver is very heavy and rigid. Note integral recoil lug and trigger adjustment screw.

10 The Turkish sporter lived up to claims that it's a Sub MOA performer using six different Federal factory loads.



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PERFORMANCE IN MIND

NEXT GENERATION HUNTERS



After participating in a recent duck hunt, Leon's grandson William enjoyed it that much that he has commenced studying for his WIT.



Leon Wright thinks that if hunting is to continue into the future, we need to introduce and help newcomers to hunting and the great outdoors.

Introducing Newcomers

One of the greatest disappointments associated with my hunting is that I never got to hunt with either of my grandfathers. According to my parents both of my grandfathers were keen hunters and I remember an elderly aunt telling me that one of her fondest memories was one concerning my paternal grandfather. She said she only had to close her eyes for a couple of seconds and she could see pop Wright heading off down the paddock, heading to Wright's Lagoon, going duck shooting, cigarette holder in his mouth, broken shotgun over his shoulder and Murray River Curly Coated Retriever, 'Tibby' at his heel.

WHILE I never hunted with either grandfather, I was lucky enough to be guided along the way by my father. As a child, I started out on rabbits, not shooting them, just tagging along to learn the ropes. By the time I was allowed to fire a rifle I had a sound grounding on all safety aspects of shooting, and while I started on rabbits and eventually foxes, my dad ensured I could tackle the ducks during the season.

As the years ticked by, I moved onto pigs, goats then onto deer, donkeys, camels etc. I have always had a special soft spot for the old

humble bunny and like a lot of hunters my age, never pass up an opportunity to hunt them whenever the chance pops up.

With my own grandchildren starting to show an interest in the outdoor life, I decided to make damn sure that they would not have the same disappointments regarding hunting with their grandfather. With my daughters hounding me to take the kids out hunting, I gave it a lot of thought and decided to start them off, as I had, on the humble rabbit.

It is a sad fact that if hunting is to continue all of us in the old brigade need to be teaching our youngsters to hunt and fish, otherwise the lifestyle we have all taken for granted will disappear very quickly. My personal belief is that by starting the kids off chasing rabbits they can look forward to advancing up the list of game species as they gain confidence

from hunting the lesser game.

Everyone loves going ferreting; young or old, it doesn't matter, a day out chasing rabbits with ferrets is a great day out. Just recently I took two of the grand kids out ferreting for the day. Neither had done it before and as I told them what went on while ferreting you could see the excitement in their eyes. Their job was to grab the rabbits as they hit the nets and hold them down until either Blake or I could relieve them of their charges.

Looking at my granddaughter I said as firmly as I could, 'No Pets,' that means the only rabbits going home were those destined for the freezer. The property we were to hunt belonged to Blake's uncle and we were assured there was no shortage of rabbits. With all the nets out, the ferret was placed in the warren and a short time later a rumbling could be heard. Then, with a whoosh, a rabbit hit the





ON THIS SPREAD

1 Keeping it in the family, Leon's nephew and grandson love their outings after rabbits.

2 Most of Leon's hunting mates have more good years behind them than in front, hence the need to help and encourage young hunters.

3 A great day out hunting ducks, pictured here are Blake, grandson, William, and Curlies, Missy and Cobber.

4 There is more to hunting than just shooting. Camp skills are important as well if time in the field is to be enjoyed.

5 Grandson William will no doubt go on to hunt bigger and better game, but Leon reckons he will never forget hunting rabbits with his grandfather and his .410.

nets, then another, then another. The grand kids were quick to spring into action and both had a rabbit pinned down in next to no time. I relieved them of their charges and took the rabbits away and field dressed them out of sight. I don't believe in desensitising children too early; time in the field will take care of that.

It was about this time that my middle daughter confronted me with "You wanted a grandson to take shooting? Well here he is." I don't know about you, but I worry about the kids of today, sharp as a tack with technology but I reckon if you turned the power off they would just stand there and starve to death; that is my grandson, William. I really thought I might have my work cut out here. "Do you want to come out fox shooting with me, mate?" I asked William. "Sure Pa," came the reply. I pulled out the Scotch Predator Call and showed him how it worked, while I explained the intricacies of calling in foxes.

Early next morning found us perched on a steep bank overlooking a densely filled gully, with all sorts of downed timber. The first wails from the call had instant results and the look on William's face as the fox popped out of the thick stuff, practically at his feet, was priceless. His whispering "there's a fox pa," was drowned out by the shot fired from the 20-gauge shotgun I was carrying. "Gee pa! He came close." Then I took the opportunity to instil another few important facts that help with gaining success on foxes. It is important to remember that youngsters have a fairly short attention span and can only absorb a certain amount at a time.

Then came a time when other

“

'Don't shoot unless you think the rabbit is in range,' I quietly instructed. 'The .410 is only good for around 20 metres.' ”

grandchildren wanted to go hunting with us. Obviously there had been talk amongst the cousins and they thought it was a neat thing to do. I considered it safe enough to take those who wanted to go. So, with a night after rabbits and a bit of spotlighting after foxes, coming up in the foreseeable future, permission was given for them to join us. On that night our new hunters were sat down and told the fundamentals of safety in the field when using firearms. Under no circumstances was anyone to get in front of those doing the shooting; silence was to be maintained while hunting and all had turns in carrying the rabbits, should we get lucky.

When we arrived just after dark, rabbits seemed to be everywhere, which added to the excitement of their first hunt. The was to be a learning outing, but we had the .410 along just in case the opportunity arose when the older ones could have a shot at a rabbit, under strict guidance of course. I was paying strict attention to how my granddaughter was reacting to us bowling the rabbits over as we were walking along. Any concern shown by her and we would immediately stop the hunt.

I well remember years ago when my three girls were a lot younger. At the time, my wife wanted me to get some rabbits for a friend of hers. Glad of the chance to get out the bush for a bit of a wander, my wife

then dropped the clanger, "Take the girls with you," she said. "No, they are too young to take hunting," I countered. My wife wanted a break from the kids, so I relented and with three sets of pigtailed bobbing around on the back seat we were off rabbit hunting.

I knew of a few large warrens not too far away and with a lovely fine day, I thought our chances were pretty good in surprising some rabbits out sunning themselves. As luck would have it, there were

FAST FACTS



Fast Facts

It is essential that the person mentoring young hunters be certain of the laws surrounding firearms use by minors. You can check with your state firearms registry as statutory minimum ages vary, as do conditions. Ignorance of the law may not be accepted as an excuse.



ON THIS PAGE

6 Son-in-law Robert and grandson Justin thoroughly enjoyed joining Leon for a hunt after bunnies.

7 It's important to get our youngsters away from technology whenever possible. With sport, fishing, and hunting you can't go wrong.

several rabbits out and about. If I played my cards right and started on the rabbits closest to the burrow, I could clean them up and then collar others further out as they headed for the safety of the burrow. All was going to plan as I placed the crosshairs to centre the nearest rabbit's head and was just about to touch the shot off when a couple of tiny arms wrapped around my neck from behind. "Don't kill him dad, it's not his fault he is a little rabbit," came the hysterical cry from the back seat and that was the end of the rabbit hunt. My wife's friend had to wait until another time for her rabbits.

As our hunt progressed our supply of rabbits grew and, surprisingly, no complaints came from those relegated the job of carrying the rabbits. They were taught how to field dress the rabbits and how to join the legs together, then pair them up

with another rabbit around the same size. Towards the end of the hunt the inevitable question came from the 12 year-old grandson, "Can I have a shot at a rabbit Pa?" "Well, that depends. Do you remember all that I have told you about safe handling of firearms?" I said. I was quickly assured that he did, and I remember watching him out of the corner of my eye earlier on while in the lounge-room at home. He had been on his iPad reading about safety and firearms.

Although 12 years of age, he was fairly light-framed, but I had the .410 along just in case I was confronted with this question. Sharp as a tack this grandson is; my daughter had already had a couple of phone calls from his school principal. One phone call had come after he announced to his class that his Pa shoots ducks. My daughter explained the situation and the principal laughed and said he was glad he had another interest. By that comment I realised he was referring to an earlier phone call when the principal rang to inform my daughter that her son had a girlfriend. "That's nice," replied my daughter. "Yes," said the principal. "He has given her a beautiful ring." A quick check had my daughter realising that her engagement ring was missing. Some kids take some keeping in front of.

Luckily, a young rabbit chose to hug the ground instead of bolting with the rest them, so I handed the grandson the broken .410 and a cartridge. I told him to load and close the .410, ensuring the barrel was facing forward at all times. "Don't shoot unless you think the rabbit is in range," I quietly instructed. "The .410 is only good for around 20 metres. If you are going to shoot, it is up to you to do it humanely." Thankfully it was a good shot and after breaking the .410, he handed it back to me and headed over to collect his rabbit.

He was understandably pretty excited about it and he wanted another shot. I told him one was enough and took this opportunity to explain to him to make sure he always had a genuine reason for shooting an animal. If I ever heard of any of my grandchildren shooting an animal for the fun of it, that would be the end of their hunting with me. I could see by their eyes they were taking it all in and hopefully it will stick with them if they continue to hunt.

I firmly believe that all of us older hunters should be mentoring newcomers to hunting. It is a fact of life that a lot of newcomers do not have older relatives who are interested in hunting, unlike us when we were growing up. It's pleasing to note that the duck hunting fraternity realised this long ago and most duck hunting camps have kids along to learn the ropes these days. It is also a sad fact that if we don't take on the mentoring role shooting has a very short future in this country. 🎯

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Riding High – The 6.5mms

After being ignored for several decades in western hunting circles, 6.5mm calibre cartridges have multiplied and become the favourite choice of many hunters and long range target shooters.

IN the beginning there were at least seven 6.5mm military and fifteen European sporting cartridges and the British listed four more – the 256 Gibbs Magnum, the 26 BSA .256 Fraser and .256 Swift. Most of these dated back to the late 1800s and are obsolete and long forgotten, but there's one notable survivor – no treatise on the emergence of the 6.5mm calibre would be complete without mention of the venerable 6.5x55mm Swedish Mauser. Designed as a military cartridge 127 years ago, the cartridge still sees widespread use in Scandinavian countries for hunting game up to the size of moose and is still relatively popular here and in America.

Prior to World War 1, Charles Newton a brilliant gun and cartridge designer was the first American to bring out a 6.5 which he called the .256 Newton (for the rifle's bore diameter). It was made by slightly shortening and necking down the .30-06 case. Various ammo makers made ammunition for it, but shortly before World War II it was declared obsolete and became

a wildcat cartridge. During the 1930s American wildcatters had a field day designing 6.5s – you'll find close to two dozen listed in Ackley's Handbook. They range from the improved 6.5x55 and the ICIL Boar to big belted rounds like the 6.5 Apex Magnum, 6.5 Mashburn Super Magnum and 6.5-300 Weatherby. As I've often claimed: there's really nothing new under the sun.

After languishing for a number of decades, the 6.5 calibre gradually came back into favour, regaining its former popularity, even becoming rampant. The first of the second wave was probably the 6.5 Remington Magnum, which proved abortive despite the cartridge developing higher velocity than any of the European 6.5's with the exception of the 6.5x68mm. Case capacity is about 8 percent greater than a .30-06 with the case filled with water to the base of the neck. Chambered in a standard length action this short, belted round would leave a good many of the current 6.5s floundering in its wake.

The 6.5 Rem. Mag's biggest

rival back in the late 1960s was the .264 Winchester Magnum which never achieved its full potential in the U.S. This was because the .264 was seen as being so close to the .270 Win. that most shooters simply ignored it in favour of Jack O'Connor's wildly popular round. Actually, the .264 drove bullets of similar weight (particularly heavy 140gn) with higher ballistic coefficients faster allowing for greater retained velocity and energy way out yonder. Despite its superior performance, many shooters found the increased muzzle blast and shorter barrel life of the .264 more than offset any slight ballistic advantage. The .264 is still hanging on by the skin of its teeth, but later 6.5s look like finishing it off altogether. The 6.5 calibre remained pretty static until 1997 when Remington introduced the .260 Remington. Based on the .308 Winchester case. The .260 Rem. is a very efficient and accurate little cartridge which has modest recoil. It not only became popular for long range target shooting, but also a top choice with those who wanted a very light mountain rifle. But it never developed much of a following and ended up played second fiddle to the 7mm-08.

Things took a turn for the better when Norma adopted the wildcat 6.5-284 which functioned in medium length actions and approximated 6mm-06 ballistics. Driving bullets with high BC like the 142gn ABLR at 2900 fps, it carved out quite a reputation in 1000 yd benchrest and



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match target applications and led the way for future larger-cased members of the tribe.

The pipsqueak 6.5 Grendel was introduced in 2004 with an overall cartridge length of 2.26" which suited it to the AR15 autoloading rifle. It improved the terminal ballistics of the 5.56 NATO and its designer was hopeful it would be adopted by the U.S. military. The basis of the Grendel's case is the 7.62x39, the parent case of the .22 and 6PPC, and their accuracy rubbed off on the 6.5. It was a moderately popular choice in rifles like the CZ 527 and gained enough attention that



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After languishing for decades, the 6.5 calibre gradually came back into favour.”

But all of a sudden, it took off like a house on fire and has never looked back. Although it was designed to be a competition cartridge, the Creedmoor turned out to be a versatile hunting round.

Like the .260, the Creedmoor can be compared to the 7mm-08. All three are similar performers. The 7mm-08 may have an edge in energy due to its heavier bullet, but the 6.5 Creedmoor's lighter bullet has better sectional density and recoils less. The .260 Rem. failed to catch on, but the Creedmoor has gone from strength to strength and just about every rifle maker worldwide chambers for it.

How would I rate the Creedmoor? Admittedly, it has excellent accuracy and carries the generally accepted 1000 ft/lbs of energy necessary to kill a deer out to 500 yds. which I grant you is farther than most hunters have any business shooting at deer-sized game. Over the more practical distance of 300yds. which in my book is still way out yonder, it should kill a deer without a problem if the shot is well-placed. The plain truth is, however, there's nothing the Creedmoor can do, that the 6.5x55 can't do.

Nosler ammunition for the big, belted 6.5 STW wildcat, also appeared in .2004. The second of the super 6.5s it was a top performer. When a year later the Model 48 Custom Sporter made its debut, the 6.5 STW was too long for its action, and the 26 Nosler was eventually developed. Both were low expansion ratio cartridges that burned heavy

charges of ultra-slow propellants to achieve phenomenal velocity, but the 26 Nosler was made to fit in a standard long action.

The first 6.5 super magnum was the belted 6.5-300 Weatherby magnum which appeared in 1960 and predated the 6.5 STW. Whumped up by Colonel Paul Wright, retired, it was simply the .300 Weatherby magnum case necked down with no other change. Intended for 1000 yard competition, it generated less recoil than the various .30 calibre magnums dominating the sport at the time and was an immediate winner.

Initially known as the 6.5-300 WWH (Weatherby-Wright-Hoyer) it is the exact same cartridge reintroduced by Weatherby as the 6.5 Weatherby Magnum in 2017. Unlike super 6.5s designed on the .404 Jeffery case the 6.5 Weatherby requires a true magnum length action, which is probably why Weatherby broke with tradition and brought out the 6.5 RPM.

It is my belief that it was the Creedmoor's popularity that instigated a number of new 6.5mm cartridges, starting with the 26 Nosler in 2013, the 6.5 Weatherby in 2016, the 6.5 PRC in 2018, and the 6.5

several ammomakers offered a good variety of varmint and big-game loads for it. Almost non-existent recoil made the Grendel a good choice for young hunters of both sexes, but lack of power for big game doomed it from the word go. The Grendel is barely adequate for anything larger than fallow deer. But nemesis was breathing over its shoulder.

The 6.5 Creedmoor, lauded as being “the most well-balanced cartridge to ever grace the pages of the Hornady Handbook of Cartridge Reloading” by its originator, was developed in 2007. Based on the 30TC case, it is a

shortened and improved design based loosely on the .308 Win. Its main advantage is that it was designed to be a true short-action cartridge which gives it an advantage over the .260 Rem. and 6.5-284 Norma. The body is shorter than the .260 Rem. and bullets don't need to be seated as deep which gives it more capacity, allowing bullets to be seated out farther to accommodate different length throats and still fit in short action magazines.

Despite all the advertising hype, the 6.5 Creedmoor was slow to take off which wasn't much of a surprise at the time.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The 6.5x55 still sees widespread use among moose hunters in Scandinavia.

2 The current crop of popular 6.5s. L to R: 6.5 Creedmoor, .260 Remington, 26 Nosler, 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum, 6.5 PRC and 6.5 Weatherby RPM.

Weatherby RPM in 2019.

The 26 Nosler is built for speed and it delivers it by burning more powder in a greatly overbored case. It is designed to produce the most velocity possible with today's sleek, high ballistic coefficient bullets and make hitting at long range easier. The fat, sharp-shouldered case is based on the 7mm Remington Ultra Mag shortened from 2.85" to 2.59" and the shoulder angle increased from 30 to 35 degrees. Overall cartridge length is 3.34" to fit in a standard .30-06 length action.

I bought a Browning X-Bolt Hells Canyon with 26" barrel, and to say I was impressed would be a vast understatement. With my two top loads – 130gn Barnes TSX at 3420 fps and the 142gn ABLR at 3280fps – it shoots flatter than flat and hits harder than hard while recoil is relatively mild.

The 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge) is a necked down .375 Ruger case, shortened to 2.030" and given a 30 degree shoulder. A short-action rimless magnum cartridge, it combines the best features of the 6.5 Creedmoor in a fabulous match round for ELR (extended long-range shooting) with added hunting

capabilities. Hornady describes it as "a 6.5 Creedmoor on steroids, in a very efficient package." The 6.5 PRC is not badly overbored and high velocity is achieved with less powder due to the shorter, fatter, more efficient, effective, consistent burning powder column.

Using a fast 1:8 twist, the 6.5 PRC shades standard short-action cartridges like the .260 and Creedmoor by 200-300fps, but lags about the same distance behind the 6.5 Rem., the .264 Win. and larger rounds. With a maximum cartridge overall length of 2.955" long, heavy bullets of 140 to 160gn don't require deep seating which reduces case capacity and can create in-bore yaw.

The latest arrival is the 6.5 Weatherby RPM (rebated Precision Magnum) introduced by Roy Weatherby's grandson Adam in 2019. Big surprise! It bears the distinction of not being a typical Weatherby case – the belt and trademark double-radii, venturi-shaped shoulder are missing. The 6.5 RPM has a rebated rim, half-inch-diameter case head, 30.25 degree shoulder angle, and one-calibre-neck. The 6.5 RPM is similar dimensionally



to the 6.5-284 Norma, except the Weatherby case is .400" longer. Usable case capacity is 82gn of water, just a bit less than the .264 Win. Mag. and ballistics are slightly better. Factory loads drive 140gn bullets at just over 3000fps in a 24" barrel.

Where inherent dynamics are concerned, .264-diameter projectiles are difficult to beat. Even mid-weight 130gn bullets often have a BC well in excess of .500 and some hunting bullets top .600. The ultra-sleek 129gn ABLR driven at close to 3500fps and the 140gn AccuBond at around 3350fps leaving the muzzle from 300 to 400 fps faster than bullets with A similar BC in rifles chambered

for the 7mm Rem. Mag. or .300 Win. Mag. Elevating the big 6.5s into the same trajectory and wind bucking class with such huge powerful cartridges as the .30-378 Weatherby but without the punishing recoil. Of course, the heavier, larger diameter bullets fired by bigger more powerful cartridges make them better suited for the largest big game, but for cervus up to the size of sambar, any of the big 6.5s will get the job done. These hotshots offer performance beyond commonly available medium-diameter standard cartridges, are forgiving to shoot and high velocity along with excellent accuracy gives them the potential to increase a hunter's maximum ethical range. They shoot so flat that you'll miss and wound fewer game animals resulting from range-judging errors and poor wind calls.

Because of rapid bore erosion, and the complexities of small bores combined with large capacity cases, maximum loads need to be developed with extreme care. Never reduce the starting loads or exceed the listed maximum charges. If you want a rifle that is truly unique and suitable for long range shooting at game, one of the big 6.5s will not disappoint you. I have reloaded for 6.5s of all sizes and have never had anything but full satisfaction

6.5MM CARTRIDGE BALLISTICS COMPARISON							
Cartridge (gns)	Bullet	Velocity (fps)	200 400 (yards)	Energy (ft/lbs)	200 400 (yards)		
6.5 Gren.	123	2590	2420 1948	1832	1390 1037		
6.5x55	140	2397	2084 –	2325	1786 1350		
260 Rem.	140	2750	2347 1979	2351	1712 1217		
6.5 Creed.	140	2820	2494 2190	2472	1915 1467		
6.5 PRC	147	2910	2645 2395	2764	2283 1871		
6.5-284	142	3025	2758 2507	2886	2400 1982		
6.5 Wby RPM	140	3075	2703 2361	2939	2272 1766		
6.5 Rem.Mag	120	3210	2621 2102	2745	1830 1177		
264 Win.Mag	140	3030	2548 2114	2854	2018 1389		
26 Nosler	140	3300	2943 2613	3119	2481 1955		
6.5 300 WM	142	3395	3066 2761	3634	2964 2404		

The factory ballistics are for comparison purposes only. They are intended to give hunters an indication of their performance over normal hunting ranges.

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There is two 12x6 metre sheds, 2 freestanding 6x4 metre buildings, and an American barn (13.500x10.500metres) that is currently set up as the Club house, 6X4 Chapel and a Bali Hut 3X3.



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**BETTER
PHOTOS**





MAIN: When photographing trophies, get in close and fill the frame to emphasise the trophy over the hunter.

LEFT: The headlights of a vehicle are a good way to light up a dark scene.

Photography For Hunters

Good photos of your adventures help to relive the memories for many years after the event. Here, Dylan Smith shares methods to improve and enrich your own outdoor photography.

I get as much enjoyment from photography as I do hunting. It has become a ritual for me when I return from a trip to make a coffee and sit at my laptop going over all of the images; deleting the bad ones, appreciating the good ones and editing to bring them to life. Over the years I've learned a lot about photography and I've reached a point where I feel that I can take an excellent photo in almost any situation. Here I will share some of that knowledge and experience to help you to improve your photography, so you can further enjoy sharing your images and, perhaps, even illustrating magazine articles for Sporting Shooter.



ON THIS SPREAD

1 Use a tripod to capture images of the entire hunting crew while in remote locations.

2 The hunter takes a break before the hard work begins.

3 Getting close with the camera really shows off the animal.

VISUALISATION is a conscious process of projecting the final photographic image in the mind before taking the first steps to actually photographing the subject. One of the greatest landscape photographers ever, Ansel Adams, instructed the photographer to frame the picture first with the eye and then match it through the camera viewfinder.

Composition.

It may sound obvious but it's often best to fill the frame with the subject so there is no question what the main idea of the photo is. No one wants to see a trophy picture where the trophy and subject only take up a third of the picture, unless you have done this deliberately to give a broader view of what the environment was like. This can be difficult to do well and is usually subject to other aspects of the image that might be confusing or provide a lot of contrast, and we will touch on

this in other sections of this article. At the end of the day you can always experiment, but a good place to start is to make sure most of the frame/scene is the subject, and get in the habit of running your eye around the edge of the scene to make sure you aren't cutting off things like the top of someone's head, a rifle barrel, or the nose of a game animal.

Rule Of Thirds.

A good rule of thumb to consider when placing the subject somewhere in the frame is to divide the scene into thirds – both horizontally and vertically. Put the subject somewhere on one of these lines, or even where the lines intersect. Experiment with your placement and take a few photos but it won't take long for you to get the hang of it, and you'll quickly realise placing the subject directly in the middle of the scene is a stale approach. It also puts 'room' in

other parts of the frame that you didn't have before, which could be a good place to have a supplementary point of interest in the background. Was the animal shot near a particular tree? Waterfall? Is there a piece of gear you want to show off?

Get Low.

Most often, getting low will make the trophy and subject look better. A photo taken from a high angle makes everything look smaller, and puts the trophy in an awkward spot where the head of the hunter is closer to the camera lens than the trophy. This usually puts the emphasis on the animal/subject, and comes across as more of a presentation, than an off-the-cuff photo. Good photos can sometimes happen by accident, but in most cases, wonderful photos have been given a bit of thought. Consider the presentation of the animal as well; are the legs splayed out underneath



2

it in an untidy manner? Is the tongue hanging out? Is there an unnecessary amount of blood evident?

Props.

While considering a photo, you may wish to include a prop. For most of us, this will likely be a person, a campsite, or a piece of hunting equipment. One of my favourite techniques when taking landscape-style photos in an attempt to communicate the grandeur of the scene, is to include something in the frame that paints a picture of how epic the scene is. It's amazing how much of a difference this can make. A photo of a mountain range looks much better, from a 'hunting picture' perspective, if there is a person standing on the edge of a cliff, glassing over the wilderness, maybe to one side and low. A campsite looks more interesting with someone sitting at the fire brewing a coffee. At the same time, pictures of gear (let's face it, we all love our gear) are more interesting if some scenery is included. You want to take a picture of your rifle? Place it up against a rub tree.

Light.

Where is the light coming from? If it's directly overhead, a hat may

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The best time to take photos, is the time you least feel like pulling your camera out.”

cast a shadow on the face of the hunter. If it's directly behind the photographer, there is a chance the photographer will cast a shadow on the subject. If it's behind the subject, you may run the risk of having a very bright sky and a very dark subject. At the end of the day, assess the scene and make some decisions. Don't be afraid to move the animal around so you have the light coming across the picture. This puts shadows in (usually) nicer places. It's also handy to carry a flash or two. Have one on the camera to fill in some of those harsh shadows if need be, or use to set off a slave flash that you have positioned somewhere else. This is effective when shooting in very low light situations and some of my best photos have been taken in this way at night. However, I've used this technique to fill in shadows when the sunlight is harsh. It's a small touch, but with minimal effort, you can have your photos stand head and shoulders above

what most people capture and viewers will think you're a genius.

Depth Of Field

Depth of field is a critical element in presenting photographic subjects to advantage. It refers to how much of the picture is in focus from the foreground to the background. A shallow depth of field will have an object in the foreground in focus, and all of the background out of focus or vice versa. A deep depth of field will have most aspects of a photograph in focus. The reasons for wanting to have a lot of the background out of focus may include wanting as much emphasis and attention on the subject in the foreground as possible; it can create a sense of professional photography, with an artistic flare.

On the other hand, having as much of the background in focus as possible, can add a lot of story elements to the photo, as more detail will be revealed about the terrain in which the animal was taken. Again, I refer to trophy photography, but deliberate application of a knowledge of depth of field will benefit all your photography. On camera phones there are lots of settings you can use to achieve desired results, but with a camera, set your aperture anywhere between f1.2 and f4.0 for a shallow depth of field, and



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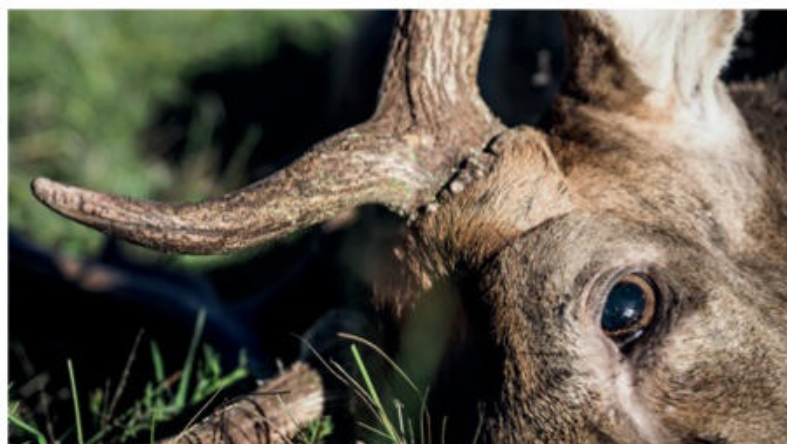
anything from f8.0 and above to get lots more in focus. This will depend on your camera and lenses you have available.

Philosophy.

The best time to take photos, is the time you least feel like pulling your camera out and making the effort. Picture it now; you're halfway through packing a sambar out of the alpine region with your mates. It's late in the afternoon, and the mercury is dropping. A bit of wind has picked up and with it comes some snow. You aren't too far from camp, but you're miserable nonetheless, and so are your mates, with backpacks loaded to the brim and legs wobbling with fatigue. It's these moments, oozing with desperation, frustration, discomfort, and a longing for it to be over, that need to be captured. Often, they're the most fun memories to look back on. Some of the best photos I've seen of time outdoors is when things are a little hairy. It's easy to capture the emotion of people when they're struggling.

Gear.

A compact camera in the pocket is worth a five lens SLR in the pack. Whatever gear you decide to use – and more importantly carry around – is entirely up to you. As with everything, there will be compromises. The quality of mobile phone cameras is now very good and they're easy to carry and more likely to be taken out when a good moment presents itself. They



“

A compact camera in the pocket is worth a five-lens SLR in the pack.”

may lack a little in zoom range, but there are gadgets that can clip onto spotting scopes which do much to address this shortcoming.

Massive zoom drawbacks.

A lot of zoom/focal length can compromise quality while often being big and cumbersome. My 50-200mm lens is by no means a very long focal length, but the quality of the lens is beautiful. But being a 'fast' lens (able to have a nice wide aperture) means it has a lot of glass in it, and it is heavy. I would never take this lens on a backpack hunt as the benefits just don't stack up against the pain it would cause me. Sometimes it's worth asking yourself the question or whether you want to hunt with the rifle, bow, or camera?

ABOVE:
Sometimes the little details are easily overlooked or forgotten.

Steady Images.

I never leave home without a tripod of some sort. If you're always hunting with a mate, you can get away with not having one, but if you want to both be in a photo together it's nearly impossible to make it happen without something that can support the camera. A tripod doesn't have to be big either; there are many smaller options available that are flexible and able to be placed on a wide variety of surfaces such as tree branches or fence posts. There are also attachments you can buy to clip a mobile phone on top of these, so taking self-timed pictures without assistance is now a breeze.

Final thoughts.

I hope this has spurred your interest in improving your images, because photography is something that should make you happy due to its deeply personal nature. Filling your home with photos you took on some of your most memorable trips is a beautiful thing to do, and guests in your home will be sure to ask questions about those situations. I find it's another way to tell a story about a big trophy you have on display, as the best things about the trophies is the stories that accompany them. With a simple photograph and the brief re-telling of a story, imagination can run wild and a longing to experience hardship while achieving personal goals can be ignited. This all contributes to living a wilder life. ☒

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NMD415



ZEISS LRP S5 Riflescopes

Zeiss introduces two all-new riflescopes in the first focal plane to help you dominate the competition and win the match. The Zeiss LRP S5 3-18 x 5mm and the 5-25 x 56mm models represent the pinnacle of precision riflescopes available today. They provide an image that is bright, with excellent colour contrast and razor sharp resolution, as well as a truly daylight visible illuminated reticle and more than 40 MRAD of total elevation adjustment.

A massive total elevation travel of 40.7 MRAD or 140 MOA allows the Zeiss LRP S5 to be more capable than your ammunition and engage targets up to 1,500 yards and beyond out of the box. Premium optical design with

fluoride lens elements, SCHOTT glass and "T" coatings allows for optimal target or game identification, resolution of target and maximum light transmission of 90%.

Next, digitally controlled diffractive reticle illumination technology delivers an exceptionally bright point of aim, regardless of the amount of light coming in. Final validation of the design proves the Zeiss LRP S5 riflescopes withstand multiple shock tests of an enormous 1,500 g-force. Design requirements also include initial shock testing of over 800 impact cycles at 1,000 g-force.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit

www.osaaustralia.com.au



BOG Carbon Fibre Tripod

The new BOG Death Grip Sherpa Arcaswiss Carbon Fibre Tripod is a close cousin to the DeathGrip Infinity series. The Death Grip Sherpa is the ultimate high-country tripod. Designed as a multi-functional tripod platform, the DeathGrip Sherpa weighs in at just over 1.8kg and utilises a quick-change system on top of a glass smooth ball-head mount.

Couple this with proprietary hybrid foot, twist lock legs, proprietary Death Grip clamping system and a removable centre post and the Sherpa provides the most versatile tripod at the fraction of the price of its competitors.

Features include premium carbon fibre lightweight legs, fine tuning height adjustment via removeable centre pole, prone to standing height adjustment and quick-release Arca-Swiss mounting system.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit www.nioa.com.au for more information.

FRANKFORD ARSENAL F-1 Press

The Frankford Arsenal F-1 Single Stage Press is packed with innovative features to help you reload precisely and quickly, so you spend less time reloading and more time out hunting or at the range. At its core, the F-1 features a linear ball bearing system for smooth operation and is precision machined out of solid steel construction. Add to this it also features an integrated LED light and a fully contained primer catch system.

Features include solid steel rod frame pillars, selectable cam-over or stop operation, no-mess primer catch, uses bottle or hose barb, accommodates standard shell holders, compatible with standard 7/8" x 14 Dies and will load up to 338 Lapua length cartridges.

Ask to see the full range at your local gun shop or for more information visit www.nioa.com.au





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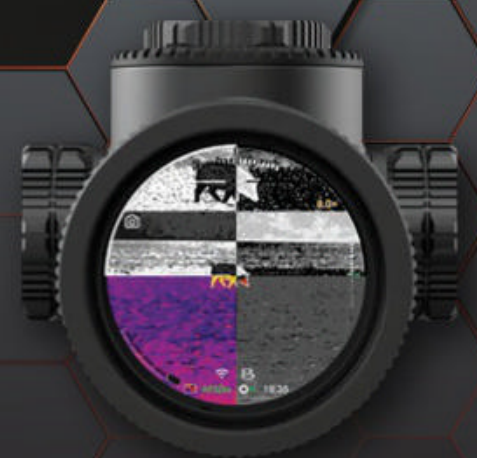
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LIEMKE KEILER 36 Pro

The all-rounder of premium thermal optics, the Keiler-36 is ideal for open or forested country. With its 640 x 512 ceramic Vox thermal detector with a 12 um pixel pitch and the new LCOS 1,280 x 960 display in QVGA format, this compact thermal monocular in pocket format offers an unsurpassed image sharpness and extraordinary visual experience.

Next, the 35mm objective lens offers a field of view of 22m at 100 meters and a detection range of up to 1818 meters. This hand-held thermal monocular provides you with a sharply detailed image while hunting at almost any distance. Heat sources can be displayed in various colour modes which can be digitally magnified up to 4x to identify distant game more precisely. The 36-Pro also offers an integrated Wi-Fi function allowing you to transfer image data from the thermal scope to your Android or Apple device via livestream at a distance of up to 50 meters. Battery life of the Keiler-36 is around six hours, but it can also be operated via an external USB power source.

Find your local dealer at www.osaaustralia.com.au

InfiRay Thermal Imaging Scopes & Sights



InfiRay offer a variety of thermal imaging riflescopes, monoculars and finders. For example their TL35 traditional tube scope has been designed for extreme use in both weather and temperature and implementing cutting edge thermal imaging with vivid colours and contrast, one-shot zeroing and 3-12 magnification in a low profile look. Then there's the InfiRay TH35 traditional riflescope that inherits the classic streamlined scope look from the TL35, but offers a 3-12 x magnification that is also Wifi compatible and offers an 1816m

detection range.

Both these models offer a removable rechargeable lithium battery with 8hr + extended battery life and both are WiFi compatible. These two models retail for \$4,395.00 and \$4,950.00 respectively and offer a 35mm lens diameter and of aluminium tube construction.

Also available is the InfiRay GL35R Geni Thermal Sight. This model features a huge range of functions including Ultra-Clear mode, WiFi Real time and laser range finding capability. Offering a 35mm lens and a built-in 10-1000m range finding module, the new Geni thermal sight offers improved image uniformity, detail and contrast. The GL35R also features 32GB internal storage, 7hr battery life 2x-11x magnification and lots more. This unit retails for \$4,950.00.

For more information ask at your local gun shop or visit www.spika.com.au



BERETTA-BRX-1 Straight Pull

At the time of writing well known firearms manufacturer Beretta were about to release their new straight-pull rifle system referred to as the BRX-1. Although I haven't had the opportunity to physically see one first hand, I'm told the BRX-1 is fast, accurate and very reliable. Features include 3-position manual safety on the back of the action, fast and instinctive linear reloading system (straight-pull), interchangeable barrel system and polymer composite stock. Other features include adjustable 3-position trigger and a

5-shot capacity detachable magazine that sits flush to the bottom of the stock.

I'm also told the BRX-1 is available in calibres .300 Win. Mag., .30-06 Sprg., .308 Win. and 6.5 Creedmoor and all with M14 barrels threaded for muzzle break or sound moderator. Riflescopes are attached via three options, Picatinny, Tikka 17mm dove tail or Beretta Quick-Detachable. Another great feature of the Beretta BRX-1 is the fact it offers an ambidextrous bolt handle which is fast and easy to swap from left to right

with no tools required. You can even select right or left hand ejection by simply disassembling and turning the bolt head 180 degrees. Note, however, ejection side is independent from the bolt handle position. Last but not least, the BRX-1 locking system offers an 8-lug bolt head and action for standard calibres and a 16-lug bolt head and action for magnum calibres.

For further details ask at your local gun shop or visit www.berettaaustralia.com.au



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VORTEX Razor HD LHT Rifle scope

An excellent choice for long range shooting, the new Razor HD LHT 4.5-22 X 50mm delivers a stunning HD optical system and rugged build, in a first focal plane riflescope. Ideal for long range shots and open country hunting, it features an XLR-2 reticle system, illuminated and built to get the most out of this FFP reticle.

Featuring a 30mm main tube it is among the lightest in its class yet very rugged and solidly built. Other features include locking elevation turrets to prevent accidental adjustment, RevStop – fast and reliable return to zero system, sun shade, CR3022 battery for illumination and lens covers. The Razor HD LHT riflescope by Vortex is also available in 3-15 x 42 and 3-15 x 50mm. All are available in MOA or MRAD.

For more information or details of your nearest stockist visit www.extravision.com.au

SPIKA Maintenance Box

The Spika Maintenance Box is the ultimate all-in-one firearm maintenance station. Designed for storage and portability, it allows you to service your firearms, while storing all your cleaning gear in one durable hard case. Fix your firearm to the unit using the two adjustable gun forks and service your gear mess-free while keeping all your cleaning essentials in one convenient place.

Featuring several storage compartments, the Spika's Maintenance Box is of two-piece design and made of a strong, durable material. Great for the field, at the range or at home, the Spika Maintenance Box is now available through most gun shops Australia wide.

See the full range of Spika gun care products at your local or visit www.spika.com.au

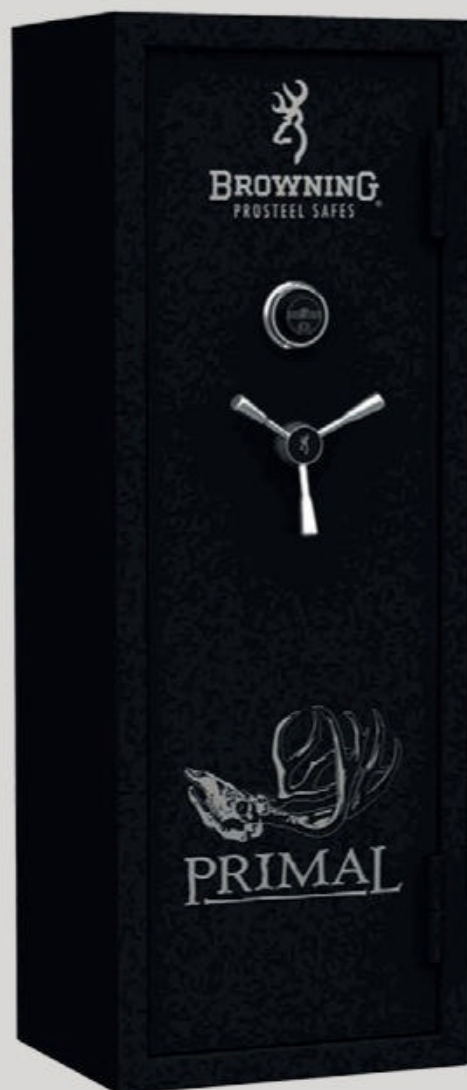


BROWNING Gun Safes

Well known firearm distributors Winchester Australia offer a range of Browning safes now available through your local gun shop. Referred to as the Browning-Primal range, they are available in a 12, 23 or 49 gun safe. These quality safes are well made and extremely well finished. Firstly, the 12 gun safe weighs 134kg and features a fully reinforced door frame, 3-spoke handle and heavy duty exterior hinges. Internal features include carpeted shelves and beige fabric.

Next is the Primal 23 gun safe that weighs 193kg with similar features to the 12 gun safe. And finally, the 49 gun safe that weighs 259kg and the ultimate in space and security. All three models offer a fire rating of 760degreeC /30 minute fire protection and textured black finish with 3-spoke handle and heavy duty hinges.

To find out more about the Browning safe range ask at your local gun shop or visit www.winchesteraustralia.com.au



MEOPTA Optika LR Binoculars

In 2021 Meopta introduced the new Meopta Optika LR binoculars in 10 x 42 HD here in Australia. These premium European optics feature a magnesium body with rubber armour and HD optical system. The big news however, is the fact these binoculars offer range finding capability with a 2380 meter reach and a battery life of some 1200 measures.

The new Meopta Optika series is nitrogen purged and fully sealed for fog and waterproof performance. Featuring twist-up eye cups and a very sleek look, they are guaranteed to deliver a crisp, sharp picture via HD glass with Hydrophobic coatings.

To find out more about the full range of Meopta optics ask at your local gun shop or visit www.winchesteraustralia.com.au



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more precision and fast handling



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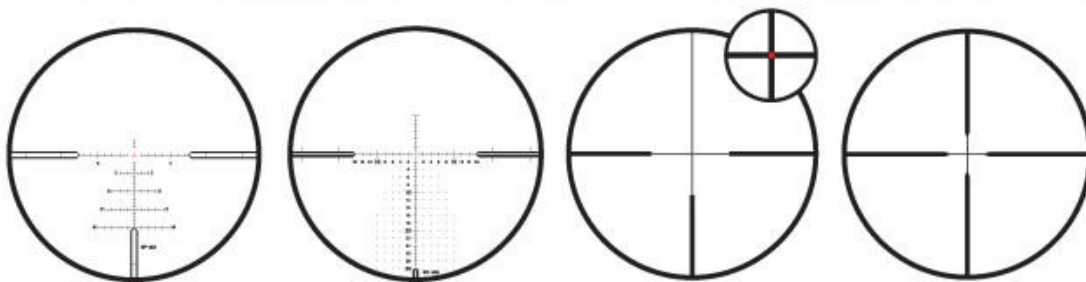
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The Zeiss Conquest V4 models are packed with features well above their price class, and deliver exceptional performance in a lighter-weight package. The new configurations support the long-range hunter and shooter more than ever. Regardless of just how challenging that shot is, the new riflescopes will help you deliver precise and accurate hits on the most challenging of targets.

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My Mates Outdoors	Melton	VIC
Smiths Outdoors	Bendigo	VIC
Belmont Guns & Ammo	Belmont	WA



A person wearing camouflage clothing is shown from the side, with their hand resting on the back of a dead wallaby. The wallaby is lying on the ground, which is covered with dry leaves and twigs. The background consists of a dense forest with many trees and branches. The overall scene is set in a natural, outdoor environment.

NORTH QUEENSLAND BIG GAME

For Stewart Skerrett, the idea started, like so many other great endeavours, around a fire when hunting with a few mates – “We should go on a Cape trip”.

Cape York Trifecta



Some handy hooks on this warrior. This boar took off and had to be chased and put down, a story to remember for sure!



Being new to the bow hunting scene and having never been so far north, I started asking a few mates about how to go about it. Needless to say I was pleasantly surprised when a friend of mine mentioned that his brother runs guided hunts “up The Cape” and we should get in touch with him.

GET in touch I did, and before long we (Stuart, Marcus, Jason and myself) had a week booked in with Scott (Noddy) at Mitchell Cape York Adventures in October 2021.

Brenton Mitchell from Primal Hunting and Outdoors hooked me up with some deadly 125gn RAD Madman 3 blade broadheads when I first started bow hunting and they have proven to be extremely accurate once my bow was tuned correctly. I also took some 125gn RAD Rival broadheads for this trip.

After a relatively uneventful travel day we got to the camp around 8:30 PM and started getting our gear organised for a week of hunting some of Australia's best boars and scrub bulls. In fact, while we were there, Scott (Noddy) our main guide told us of a pig that he took with a recurve bow on the

property - which just so happened to be the biggest set of hooks claimed that year in Australia!

After a couple of days getting used to the heat and effort required to get around in this amazing part of the world, Jason and I had both put some boars on the ground (me with my bow and he with his .223) and we were feeling confident.

On the third day of our trip Marcus and I were with Noddy on a pair of quads checking out a few soaks and dry creeks. The wind was never coming from the same direction for long, which seemed to be the rule for most of our time up there. Being in between two coast lines makes for some pretty erratic wind patterns, as it turns out.

Noddy was not particularly impressed as there was a lot less activity than he had anticipated. It



“80 yards further down and we saw what had been causing the local bird population fits...A DOG!”

already chewing something (a wallaby carcass as it turned out). With my attention focused on the stationary dog a third one came creeping along the edge of the creek to our left.

Noddy saw it before I did, which is probably a good thing as I didn't have time to over think things. I drew my bow as it passed behind a small tree just as we'd planned. However even with his head behind cover that was enough movement to alert him to my presence and he took two more steps and froze. Unfortunately for him, he paused in the open and there was enough time for me to settle the pin behind his shoulder and let 570gn of RAD Madman tipped carbon fly! Upon retrieving the carcass for a photo Marcus let us know that the single yelp from the struck dog was enough to send his boar flying. As much as I wish it were otherwise, a dog takes priority over a pig any day of the week and I'd never dreamed of bagging one with my bow! This was almost certainly the reason that the pigs were so scarce as not many would bed down with dogs close by.

After lunch we went looking at a few different areas trying to play the wind as best we could. Noddy really knew his stuff and put us in some great positions but the wind was simply not playing the game. An hour or so later we took the quads to another location. We pulled up in a hurry as our intrepid guide quietly pointed out a boar that was playing possum under a tree.

Although it was still Marcus' "turn" he did not have a shot due to the angle and so lady luck was with me again. By the time I'd knocked an arrow the boar had left his bed and stopped for a quick look before departing for good. I put a RAD Rival and 33" of arrow through him but must have only hit a single lung, as he was off and

running and we had to put in a good chase (losing another couple of arrows in the process) to follow up and humanely dispatch him.

After these photos were done Marcus jumped on with Scott, in case we flushed another boar and I followed on the second quad at a leisurely pace, seeing that I was down to one usable arrow and was very happy with my tally already. The terrain didn't suit my quiver too well and I had to stop a couple of times to prevent broadheads

was Marcus's turn to take the point and it was a decent hike before we came onto a bedded boar. As Marcus was making a game plan for his approach we were alerted to some more action further down the dry creek, so Noddy and I left Marcus to deal with the grunter while we investigated.

Sure enough, around 80 yards further down and we saw what had been causing the local bird population fits...A DOG! Noddy came up with a game plan and had me prepare while the K9 was not looking, then moved away slightly to begin calling it in with a wounded bird noise. I saw movement to the right and assumed the calf killer had moved away but then another head popped up dead ahead. It wasn't coming to the call as he was

The Author and Scott Mitchell are all smiles as after the third trophy of the day. Now the work begins.



FAST FACTS




HELIX TURBO

350
FPS (ATA)

31"
Axle to axle

5 7/8"
Brace height

4.4
Pounds

26-30"
Draw length

30-70#
Draw weight

BOWHUNTING GEAR

Hoyt Helix Ultra @ 60lb with 32" draw length and the Rad MadMan 570gn arrowhead used in the story.

NORTH QUEENSLAND
BIG GAME

dancing around my hands. On one such occasion I noticed the other quad had gone off the reservation and then I saw why – cattle. A scrub bull had been high on the priority list for both Marcus and myself and he looked like he was going to be first off that rank, good on him!

I crept closer so that they'd be able to see me more easily on their return. Unfortunately, this might have contributed to the bulls vacating and causing another follow up.

With everyone back together and the bulls in sight, the boys started waving me up like mad. When I got close Noddy asked, "Do you want to shoot a bull?" What kind of question was this! Of course I wanted a bull, but Marcus was in poll position! It was then Marcus showed me that his sight had rattled completely off his bow. I was the only one with a functioning bow, so it was my duty to take up the hunt. I only had one arrow left, but with two animals down already I was very confident with my gear and off I went.



This wild dog was a definite bonus on the safari due their elusiveness and intelligence.

The bruiser didn't want to run, but a smaller mickey bull that he was with kept taking off and the old bull decided that being outnumbered wasn't his idea of a fair fight. Eventually we managed to get within 30 yards and I slipped a deadly piece of steel tipped carbon through both lungs. A short dash and thrash and it was all over bar the shouting. The big ole Penny Red had only managed about 70 yards before piling up. What a beast! he was a

very old boy and his teeth were worn down to the gums, he hadn't had much time left before shuffling off this mortal coil anyway.

After the best photo shoot of my life it was back to camp to knock the froth off a few cold ones and start telling people about my trifecta. I tell you, that story never got old. The boys kept asking me to tell them over and over about it (or at least, that's my story and I'm sticking to it).

A worthy footnote for the trip is that each of us bagged either our first animals or personal best boars with a bow and, after ironing out a few bugs with his gear, Marcus managed his PB boar and his first scrub bull!

The guys at Mitchell Cape York Adventures are almost as accommodating as they are knowledgeable and that is saying something! Dock makes up a mean stew and his spaghetti bolognaise was almost as good as my wife's. As with most hunts, we were already planning a return trip while we were on the road back home. 🎯

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- Take-down case



5
YEAR
WARRANTY



Churchill XM12

The XM12 is a tactical style O/U for those shooters who love their accessories. With top mount and dual side mount picatinny rails, there's ample room for reflex sights, red dots, torches, lasers, you name it. The versatility of the 20" Churchill has just been cranked up a notch.

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- Black synthetic stock & forend
- 20" Chrome lined barrels
- 5 extended chokes
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Akkar Churchill XM12
20" Ejector





Leupold VX Freedom

When buying a new hunting scope a lot of shooters weigh the merits of dialling in corrections and whether they should get a scope with a BDC turret in preference for a simple Duplex reticle.



IT might appear to be a straightforward question, but there is no simple answer. Like most questions to do with optics designed for hunting, the right scope for the keen hunter looking to make a 400 yard shot on a fallow buck is vastly different to the appropriate scope for shooting 1,000 yard steel targets.

The nimrod who takes pride in stalking his quarry and shoots big game inside 300 yards has no need of a big expensive scope equipped with all the bells and whistles like electronic gimmickry, or a mil-dot reticle. He is adequately catered for with a 3-9x40 scope having Duplex reticle.

Scopes always seem to increase in size. However, Leupold's new VX-Freedom 4-12x40mm is relatively compact. It weighs 15.7 oz (445 grams) and measures a short 12.4 inches (315mm). The

mounting area on the body tube is 5-1/2 inches (140mm) long which allows plenty of latitude to mount the scope on a rifle with a long action. With the serious hunter in mind, this optic is an excellent instrument for hunting at all ranges. It features a 30mm tube for increased strength and the larger tube diameter gives it a generous elevation-adjustment range – 80 MOA of elevation and windage. Despite much being written to the contrary, 30mm tubes don't allow more light to pass through the scope. If they did, the exit pupil would be larger. The Leupold's exit pupil is only 3.3mm when the scope is set on 12x, but cranked back to 8x enlarges it to a respectable 5mm. A bigger objective lens does make the scope brighter – but only at magnifications above 6x to 7x.

The objective lens diameter



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For big game hunting, most of us are well served by a 40mm objective.”

is a modest 40mm, but lenses are all multi-coated for superior light transmission and a sharp image. For big game hunting, most of us are well served by a 40mm objective which transmits all the light needed for shooting late and early, even in timber and on a cloudy day.

Windage and elevation adjustments are made via standard size turrets with precise 1/4 minute clicks which are easily adjusted, and are clearly marked for easy reading. A full rotation of 15 MOA (for both turrets) is easily kept track of by Leupold's simple marking system so you don't accidentally end up one

full rotation off.

On the left of the mechanism block is a knob which allows the shooter to quickly and easily focus the scope's image and eliminate parallax. The parallax free distance is 35 yds. This side location is more convenient than a conventional adjustable objective and it also reduces size and weight.

Ten different reticles including fine Duplex, Duplex and Huntplex and illuminated Firedot Hunter are available for nineteen different models but are limited to one or two for each model in the VX-Freedom series. With the exception of the 3-9x50 and 4-12x40mm



CDS (tested) and 6-18x40 CDS, all sixteen of the other Freedom scopes have 1 inch tubes. The reticle is located in the second plane and does not change its size as power is increased. My scope came with a matte finish and had European-style eyepiece focusing.

Normally, reticles are divided into several classes: simple crosswires, ballistic drop compensating (BDC), and graduated. Examples for each include a dot or duplex for simple reticles; ballistic drop reticles like the Zeiss Rapid-Z, Meopta 4C, Trijicon's MOA, Leupold's TMR and various other grid drop-down reticles. Leupold's Tri-MOA is calibre specific and achieves its purpose of landing bullets on target exactly where they are aimed.

The Tri-MOA reticle in the VX-Freedom scope has hash marks spaced at one minute

intervals to alter the impact point 10 MOA in each direction – left, right and up). Longer hashmarks indicate a shift of 5 MOA. The top half of the reticle is left open to allow spotting and observation.

For a hunter shooting big game inside 300 yards there really is no reason for using anything except a simple reticle. Even with standard calibres in the .270 – .30-06 class, a 200 yard zero will allow the shooter to hold on even a smallish fallow and still land the bullet in the vital chest cavity. However, Tri-MOA BDC reticle in the Leupold VX-Freedom under test offers hunters and shooters a way to quickly make shots at distant targets. In the past, the problem with BDC reticles was that they couldn't adapt to changing conditions or a new set of ballistic parameters. And to complicate matters even



more, game animals don't come in a standard sizes. With the older BDC reticles hunters were told that if they sighted in for 200yds. the hashmarks would fall at approximately 100yd. intervals. This is a gross approximation which does not serve the hunter much better than zeroing 2 inches high at 100yd. Furthermore, many hashmark reticles are supposed to be designed for a specific cartridge and bullet design. While this may work reasonably well for shots to 300yd., its approximation does not serve the hunter well for anything beyond that. However, Leupold's VX-Freedom scope offers you a choice of dial or hold.

The Tri-MOA BDC reticle furnished with in Leupold's Freedom scope, gets around this disadvantage; the original elevation dial can be removed and replaced with a custom elevation dial that is calibrated for each individual cartridge and load. The dial on the VX-Freedom series scope which accompanied a test Turqua .308 Winchester was specifically calibrated to synchronise with Federal's 150gn Power-Shok load which has a muzzle velocity of 2820fps. It was also marked "500M" which I took to be the maximum distance it would be trouble free at.

Both turrets have revolution

of 15 MOA. When dialling for elevation, it's not uncommon for a shooter to lose track of both his zero and the position of his turret – especially when a turret can turn multiple revolutions as this one does. The Tri-MOA dial provides solutions for both these potential problems. The first is an adjustable zero stop that prevents the user from dialling below "0" when the turret is installed correctly. When in doubt dial clockwise until the turret stops. On this optic, the turret utilises a graduated visual indicator that shows the turret's position so that it's useful in any lighting condition. There's also a re-zero-type set screw.

For a scope to be truly useful for long-range shooting, its

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The BDC reticle compensates for bullet drop and provides the ability to engage a target at various ranges simply by turning the elevation knob.

2 The VX-Freedom 4-12x40mm is almost as light as an average 3-9x40 scope with a one-inch tube, yet full of features which allow hunters to stretch the range of their rifles.

3 Turrets are repeatable and easy to use. Windage turret can be replaced with a BDC turret if required, and parallax can be adjusted via a side focus knob.



4



adjustments must be both reliable and repeatable. To properly evaluate the capabilities of the custom target turret we used the Turqua rifle in .308 Win. which had already proved to be capable of consistent sub-MOA accuracy. With a 100-yd. zero established we fired a test group to set a baseline for the rifle, scope and ammunition. After sighting in, the zero mark on the elevation dial was aligned with the witness mark on the main tube. With a confirmed zero, we then “shot the square” by firing a shot and then dialling the correct number of clicks to move the point-of-impact from square to square on my sighting-in target before returning to centre. The scope’s internal mechanism tracked accurately and repeatedly with the bullet holes on the target landing in a perfect box shape.

The scope passed that test with flying colours so we progressed to an elevation test to prove how well the scope performs at longer ranges out to 500yd. The Leupold passed

this test as well. The scope returned to a precise zero no matter what adjustments were made – a feature that is not as common as one might assume.

The long-range expert hunter is going to be very happy with Leupold’s simple, rugged Tri-MOA reticle, which is etched into glass, since there’s nothing to move or break. It has all the capabilities and none of the limitations of previous BDC designs because the reticle is made for a specific ballistic coefficient, velocity and trajectory.

It is not until you extend the range farther out to 600 or 800 yards that you may strike a problem. The reticle is made for one ballistic coefficient, velocity, and air density. If any of that changes significantly, the reticle doesn’t work well.

This new generation Leupold scope has lockable turrets, zero stop, and tactile rotation indicators – refinements usually limited to only the most expensive units.

On the range the VX-Freedom proved impressive. The magnification ring rotated smoothly throughout its range and required little effort. Eye relief did reduce from 5.2 inches set on 4x to 3.8 inches on 12x, but both distances are adequate, particularly with the mild recoiling .308 Win. Tracking proved accurate, whatever I dialled in for elevation was what I got. Repeatability was also excellent – something that

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“

The scope’s mechanism tracked accurately and repeatedly ”

separates really good scopes from the rest of the pack.

Optically the Freedom provided a very bright image, and I was impressed by its excellent and neutral colour rendition. Image was very sharp and clear with excellent rendition and contrast. No curvature of field, pincushion, barrel distortion or rolling distortion was observed. The acuity of this scope was most impressive. Minute details were readily apparent while looking at tree bark and leaves 200-plus yards away. Low light performance was also extremely good. A field of view at 100yd. of 19.9 ft at 4x shrinking to 11.2 ft at 12x is par for the course.

A good many BDC reticles only work at one power setting unless they are located in the first focal plane, which until fairly recently, few were. The Leupold Tri-MOA reticle works on all magnifications. It is subtended in increments of one MOA, but how often do you spot a deer at exactly 400 yards? It may appear at 376 or 465 yards, and how exactly do you find that on a simple BDC reticle? The Tri-MOA takes care of this out to 500yd. which is farther than conscientious hunters care to shoot at game.

The majority of shooters

would prefer twisting the elevation turret with a reticle based on minute-of-angle to compensate for bullet drop at various distances. The Tri-MOA and its elevation dial can match the ballistics of any bullet with some shooting practice at various distances. Full instructions of how to install the Custom turret to aim right on from 100 to 500 yd. or metres are supplied in the box the scope comes in. There’s also a custom windage dial available which is installed in the same manner as the standard windage dial if the shooter wants to get more technical. But the windage turret doesn’t have the stop ball.

The VX-Freedom 4-12x40mm is Leupold’s answer to the hunters wish for a long-range precision optic and is lighter and sleeker than the competition. This is a serious scope for the open country hunter who finds he cannot stalk any closer to a trophy animal. Its 40mm diameter objective lens housing allows mounting the scope fairly low, and it adds little to the all-up weight of an outfit that gets carried far more than it is shot. All-in-all the VX-Freedom tested as high as any scope selling for under a grand. It looks like a good all-around choice. 

ON THIS PAGE

4 The length of tube between ocular and objective housing allows plenty of latitude for mounting the Leupold scope on a long action.

5 The magnification ring turns smoothly and is clearly marked with large white figures. Eyepiece has fast Continental-style focusing.



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BILLY GOATS

The white billy which was thankfully
stopped before reaching the bottom.

A person is perched high in a gnarled tree, holding a long-barreled rifle. The person's arm and part of their torso are visible on the left. In the background, a white goat is seen in a field of dry grass and shrubs. The scene is set in a wooded area with sunlight filtering through the trees.

Gus Plank's had to make hay while the sun shone as his goat block was going on the auction block.

Lost Property Goats

The property where I usually chase a few goats was regrettably up for sale. It was a crying shame as it was not far from home and it also carried a few red deer from time to time. Unfortunately, I could not do too much about it other than do a few more hunts to hopefully bag a couple of billies before it sold.



LEFT: The last billy taken on the Lost Property.

I PREFER chasing goats in the early afternoon as they seem to be more active at that time of day. Conversely, when after fallow deer, I religiously chase them in the early morning. Another good reason I hunt the fallow early is that you don't run out of light. When you find a deer in the afternoon and you do finally commence a stalk, you often run out of shooting light.

Thursday afternoon saw me heading out to see if I could find any billies. Ah, the joys of being retired. I usually find a few goats behind a vacant house on the property. When I say behind the house, I really mean up an extremely steep hill not far from the back door. This hill is criss-crossed with numerous goat tracks weaving their way up and over the hill.

You can see the empty house from the front gate and I was surprised to see a couple of nannies and kids directly behind the house. I quickly pulled the rifle out from behind the seat and loaded up. Using the house as cover I quickly ran across the front verandahs and up the southern side. Unfortunately, after getting to the corner of the house the mob decided to start moving up the steep incline. Because there was no suitable cover behind the house, I had to wait for the mob to move further up the hill. As they were climbing up the hill, I noticed there was a reasonably good billy in the

“

I was surprised to see a few nannies and kids right behind the house.”

small mob. I did not get a good look at him before they were swallowed up by some heavy tea tree, but he definitely merited a closer look. I used the time they were in cover to race up the next ridge line to hopefully get a better look at him.

They were moving more quickly than I thought, so I picked the pace up a little. When I say a little, I mean a little as it was so bloody steep. Luckily, they started to slow down and I managed to make up a bit of ground. I finally pulled level with the mob on a ridge line straight across from them at a range of about 100 yards. As I was sitting there catching my breath, they started to file out of the tea tree. A check with the binoculars revealed a good-looking white billy.

Replacing the binoculars with the .270 I estimated him to be still around the 100-yard mark, they were still a little low so I let them walk higher, which put them straight across from my position. I took the shot, which flattened him and he then started rolling down the steep hill. I did not think he would stop until he hit the bottom, but thankfully a small sapling pulled him up.

I don't know about anyone else but there is nothing wrong with a good set of goat horns and there was nothing wrong with this set. They look good cleaned up to put on a nice shield, or just hung up in the shed to remind you of the hunt. Happy with my effort I took his horns and set off for the truck. Back at the truck I looked further along the hill and spotted another mob of goats with another good-looking billy amongst them. As I was running out of light, I decided to return the next afternoon.

Coming through the gate the following afternoon, it was unfortunate that the mob I had seen the previous day seemed not to be there. I had no option but to yet again climb that bloody steep hill. After a good hour climbing, I found a good vantage point and began glassing for the mob. I looked high and low but came up empty so I decided to move along further and come down another ridge line. Half way down the ridge I spotted a couple of goats running around a small patch of tea tree. Crouching low and continuing downhill to hopefully find a better position to shoot from if a good billy presented himself. Finding that position, I waited to see if there were any more goats with the original two I spied first up.

It was a reasonably large patch of tea tree which the goats were hanging around and I was sure there were more goats in that patch of scrub. It did not take long to prove me right. A couple of goats started to wander out of cover. They were mainly nannies and kids but there was a couple of immature billies following. Eventually a better-than-average billy stepped out. He looked good, with a beautiful skin and heavy horns. As the shot echoed away, he took a couple of steps and collapsed. I was definitely happier walking down to him than walking up that bloody steep hill. He was an impressive animal and I was more than happy with the hunt.

Unfortunately, the property changed hands not too long after. Drat! ☹



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Finding The Competitive Side

I like to think that I'm a competitive person, but only when it comes to myself.

WHEN playing representative sport, I've always given it my all but was perfectly happy to lose a game if I felt I'd given my best. In a way, striving for your best and dealing with failure leads to grit. How else do you excel at something if you don't push yourself? While pondering these thoughts I considered lifting my game with some of my hunting skills.

I looked within myself and decided I don't think I'm a good shot with my bows. I'd go as far as to say I'm less than mediocre. Above all else I shoot my bows because I enjoy it and I try to not get so caught up in things that I get annoyed if I make a bad shot, but at what cost? No one has ever been a worse hunter for working on their shot process or marksmanship. I realised I'd been going through the motions because it was comfortable. Fair, and no harm done, but if I wanted to take myself to the next level, I would need to make a bigger investment in time and commitment. A missed shot at a good boar in the field was further motivation to work on things.



Shooting a traditional bow at 48 metres makes the shots inside 30 metres seem easy

While going to shoots at my local club over the last several months, I never kept score. If I made a bad shot, I just decided on some corrections and made another one. While good fun and helping me get familiar with the range setup, this did nothing for my distance estimating skills, nor did it do anything for me trying to make my first shot count. You could describe it as careless in that I



A missed shot at a good boar in the field was further motivation to work on things.”

wasn't driven to be the best; I was just having some fun. So, I decided to start recording scores. How else would I know if I was making progress?

This soon saw me travelling to an ABA Branch Invitational shoot. Again, not one to be too competitive I thought I'd just turn up, meet some interesting people, loose my arrows and be off. Keeping score at my last local shoot however gave me a number to work towards beating, and that made all the difference. Trying to beat my scores on an unfamiliar range with the added pressure of competition was a hell of a lot of fun and now I'm starting to

think about a few different divisions to enter in the future. After all, it can be an excuse to buy some more bows to use purely as competition rigs!

Going in some competitions is the latest part of my archery journey, which I still feel is in the very early stages in general. Whether it be shooting bows, rifles, shotguns, or something else, raising the stakes slightly and trying to better yourself may lead to you unleashing your true potential. Until next time, enjoy living your wilderlife.

Follow Dylan on Instagram at [‘_wilderlife_’](#)



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WINNER



From Luke Jones. I took one of my boys to a friend's property for a mid morning hunt to see what was around as its starting to heat up, we seen these two in the dry creek in the shade of the paperbark trees. We got within 100m of them and I dropped the bigger one first and the smaller one ran about 10 metres, stopped and looked around. That was its mistake, no match for the .223.



From Sean Niemeyer. While glassing on another cold winter's day in the mountains we spotted a mob of eight grazing on a hillside. Swirling winds made the successful stalk a great challenge.

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THREE MONTHLY RUNNERS UP WILL WIN A CAP AND STUBBY HOLDER!





The Orphaned 6.5 Remington Magnum

Of late, not a single mention has been made of a cartridge that Remington introduced in 1966 for its Model 600 carbine.

THE 6.5 Remington Magnum was one of a pair of original belted short magnums, made by simply necking down its sibling .350 Remington Magnum to get a companion calibre for the short, handy Model 600 carbine. Designed to deliver performance similar to the .270 Winchester, it wasn't explained how that could be achieved in a 18-1/2 inch barrel.

The two reasons for choosing the 6.5mm calibre; first Remington didn't want to duplicate a calibre already chambered for in their standard Model 700 rifles and, secondly, 6.5mm was the smallest diameter bullet that could be used efficiently in that size case.

The concept was sound enough, but the cartridge was before its time, and the rifle limited its performance so that it never achieved wider popularity. Maybe the

published ballistics of a 120gn bullet at 3030fps from a 470mm barrel didn't raise much excitement.

Later, when Remington chambered the 6.5 Rem. mag. in the Model 700 with 600mm barrel, increasing the muzzle velocity of a 120gn bullet to 3220fps and adding a 100gn bullet at 3450 fps, the round aroused little interest. Then, it seems that American hunters were no more keen on the 6.5 Rem. Mag. than they were on the more powerful .264 Win. Mag. which preceded it by about seven years.

It's amazing how shooter's attitudes have changed! One of the most popular cartridges today is the 6.5 Creedmoor – a pipsqueak compared to the 6.5 Rem. Mag. By 1971, only Remington Model 700s and 40XB target rifles were available in the 6.5 Rem. mag. Ruger offered it in the Model 77 for a short time, but



1

demand was so poor that Remington eventually stopped chambering rifles for it altogether. This was sad because the 6.5 Mag. has greater case capacity and develops higher velocity than any of the European 6.5s and more recent short action rounds like the .260 Rem. and 6.5 Creedmoor but lags behind the .264 Win. Mag. and beltless 6.5 magnums.

With allowable cartridge OAL of 2.80" and a case length of 2.17", subtraction tells us that no more than .63" of a 120gn bullet's length protrudes from the neck of the 6.5 Rem. mag. case. The

remainder must be inside the case and the heavier and longer the bullet, the farther it must extend down into the case.

This situation is worsened by the short .25" case neck. Adding this dimension to the .63" of bullet length outside the case gives a total of .88". So, any bullet more than .88" long has to be seated so deeply that its base will be below the junction of case neck and shoulder. For example the 140gn Nosler, 1.290" long will intrude no less than 0.410" into the case body, even lower than the case shoulder. This means that the bullet takes up way too much



2

ON THIS PAGE

1 Remington's Model 600 carbine in 6.5 Rem. mag with 100gn bullet at 3550fps was deadly medicine for predators.

2 Chambered in a standard length Mauser action with freebored chamber, the 6.5 Rem. mag allows bullets to be seated out to increase powder space.



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.300 Winchester Magnum (11" MRR twist)

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Sabatti Sapphire ER



24" BARREL

.308 Winchester (11" MRR twist)
.300 Winchester Magnum (11" MRR twist)

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1

ON THIS PAGE

1 Short, handy and light to carry in the hills, the Remington 6.5 Rem. Mag has taken its fair share of deer.

2 The 6.5 Rem. Mag. and L to R: Hornady 100gn Interlock, Rem. 120gn Core-Lokt, Barnes 120gn XTR, RWS 127gn Cone-Point, Speer 140gn spitzer, Woodleigh 140gn PPSP, Nosler 142gn ABLR, Lapua 155gn Mega and RWS 159gn R NSP.



powder space. Back in 1977 I was curious to find out what kind of improvement would take place if the 6.5 Rem. mag. were to be chambered in a standard length action with bullets seated out to be level with the base of the neck. I estimated that velocity would be increased by about 25 percent without exceeding safe pressures.

Bill Marden built me a rifle on an ex-military FN Mauser 98 action and 600mm Douglas Premium barrel with 1:9 twist. He long-throated the chamber for an overall cartridge length of 76mm, allowing 140gn bullets to be seated to the base of the neck, but still adequately seat the 120gn bullets. Add-ons were a Canjar trigger and Jantz wing-type safety. A classic-style walnut stock was obtained from Keith Tyack and fitted by Heimo Petzl. A Leupold Vari-X III 2-1/2-8x scope was cradled in a Burris bridge mount.

Good friend Fred Huntington sent me a RCBS 3-die set and I was ready to start reloading. I managed to obtain 80 factory rounds loaded with 120gn RSPCL bullets. Despite necessary deep seating, accuracy was

good, with 5-shot groups from 1.25 to 1.50 inches.

Unfired factory cases length was 57mm (2.260"), but my fired cases measured 58mm (2.270"). Water capacity of the 6.5 Remington is 69.7 grains - about 2-1/2 grains more than most .270 and .30-06 cases. Actual usable powder space can be as much as four grains less, depending on seating depth. Experience I'd had with different military and European 6.5s together with the 6.5-06 RCBS and 6.5-284, led me to believe the best choice is a standard length rimless case like the 6.5mm-06. More about this later.

In the process of developing the 6.5 Mag., Remington designer Wayne Leek experimented with many bullet weights to see what weight bullet would work best. He loaded 120, 130 and 140gn weights in the 6.5 mag. and shot them at game during several hunts on Les Bowman's Cody, Wyoming ranch.

Both Wayne and Les found that the 6.5 Rem. mag didn't perform so well with heavy 140gn bullets; 130gn bullets were better, but the 120gn, if it didn't blow up, provided the best killing power of all. They

concluded that if the 130gn bullet provided such a nice balance in the .270 Winchester, then there was no need for a heavier bullet in the smaller 6.5 calibre. To gain the desired performance, Wayne Leek designed a special 120gn Core-Lokt PSP bullet 1.060" long with a small lead tip, cannelure and rebated rim that would handle game up to the size of elk. I still have 400 of these tough bullets which I hope will hold together driven at 3400fps from my 26 Nosler.

With Hodgdon's original H4831 I found that 63.5gn sent the 100gn Speer HP bullet along at 3466fps. The 100gn Speer was disappointing, too explosive even for medium game. On goats it blew up on their coarse, matted hair, barely penetrating the hide. It failed on large boars too; their mud-encrusted hides causing the thin-jacket 100gn Speers to fragment on contact. That light, fast bullet, however, was not only a spectacular killer on crop raiding wallabies in Qld, but also on dingoes and varmints, delivering spectacular kills as far out as I could hit 'em.

The bullet that was used on feral pigs and goats was the

Hornady 129gn Interlock. Over 6000fps of H-4831 it was goosed out of the muzzle at 3100fps, rivalling the .270 Winchester. It proved deadly on fallow deer and accounted for three red stags. The first two standing side-on, were dropped with high lung shots and never moved off the spot. The range was 137 and 180 metres. Then I took a shot at another stag standing on a hillside above me; I hit him in the neck. He went down, but struggled back up and required a finisher. A post mortem found the bullet had hit the spine and broken into pieces against the heavy bone. That convinced me that the 129gn Hornady was too lightly constructed for big game.

Next I tried both the 140gn Interlock and Sierra boattail over 57-1/2gn of H4831 at 3000fps. While good on medium sized deer, both lacked enough penetration for bigger game. That Interlock proved no better in this respect than the 129 grainer. Only two bullets provided the performance I wanted on red stags. These were the 120gn Remington Core-Lokt and the 125gn Nosler Partition. But only the Core-Lokt could be relied upon for sambar because of the way it holds together,

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penetrates deeply and smashes large bones. It was designed to handle game in the mule deer (70 to 150kg) class up to elk weighing from 204-370kg. And that calls for a tough bullet.

All bullets were seated to the base of the case neck and all charges weighed. Some of the velocities attained with the short, fat 6.5 Rem. Mag were truly surprising. The 100gn Speer turned up 3550fps, which is actually faster than a 100gn load I chronographed in a .264 Win. Mag. Instead of the advertised 3700fps it barely managed 3450fps in the same 600mm barrel length.

Again by comparison with the .264, I clocked the 6.5 Rem. Mag. with 140gn bullet and 58gn of H-4831 at 3000fps – only 100fps less than the .264 factory load. While the .264 has approximately 12 percent larger boiler room, my long-throated barrel had the shorter round treading close on its heels.

Back then I wanted to see how Winchester's slow 785 Ball powder would go in the fat, stubby belted case. In all the other calibres I'd tried it in 785 duplicated the charge weights of H4831 while delivering slightly less velocity. It worked well with 120 and 140gn bullets. The handloader can choose lighter bullet weights, but it's really a high velocity cartridge and there's no advantage to using bullets lighter or heavier than 120 grains in it, like the Barnes TSX.

I struck a problem in the way this short, fat case behaved in my rifle's chamber. It is not unusual for case necks to stretch due to high pressure loads, but even after being trimmed and full length sized my 6.5 mag cases were still reluctant to chamber.

The problem was case bodies lengthening between head and shoulder. Occasionally this happens with belted magnum cases where headspace is

The 120gn Core-Lokt designed especially for the 6.5 Rem. Mag. was built tough to handle game the size of elk.

controlled by the belt and the chamber has been reamed with slightly more length from bolt face to shoulder. This condition can be fixed by first fireforming cases to fit the over-long chamber and then neck-resizing only, to avoid the risk of setting the shoulders back. I've done this successfully and, in fact, it became standard procedure with a number of wildcat cartridges.

To my annoyance this didn't work in my rifle. Brass just kept on flowing even though the cases have a rather steep 25 degree shoulder angle. Despite frequent trimming of necks and full length sizing of cases after three firings, the cases had grown so much in length that they wouldn't fit in the chamber.

Considering possibilities as to what may be causing the problem, I was inclined to place the blame on a combination of soft brass and those deep seated bullets, but to confirm my theory, I sent a number of cases once-fired and three-times fired to gunsmith Bill Marden. He confirmed that case bodies were lengthening rather than the necks. Since neither neck sizing or full length sizing could correct the problem, Bill made me up a custom full-length sizing die dimensioned from my fired cases. Fired cases resized in this die entered the chamber easily – problem solved. Evidently, the problem stemmed from a too-long chamber. Another solution would have been to



remove the barrel, cut off a few threads and cut a new minimum spec chamber. But this would make a gap in the inletting of the stock's forend.

Brass movement like this is rare in the 6.5 Rem. mag., but when chambered in a short action there is a problem common to deep-seated bullets and short case necks. Long tapered bullets with short diameter shanks make it hard to obtain a tight friction fit in cases, but this can also be a problem with full length cases having short necks like the .264 and .300 Win. mags. To gain the dumpy rounds full potential, the 6.5 Rem. mag. needs a standard length action and long-throated chamber which allows bullets to be seated out.

Propellants that work best are all relatively slow burning numbers even with light 100gn bullets. AR2209, AR2213sc, RE-19 and RE-22 all work well. I have a hunch that RE-25, RE-26 AR2217 and AR2225 might boost long, heavy 140gn bullets to 3000 fps. To replace the 120gn Core-Lokt for deer I'd nominate the 120gn Barnes or 120gn E-Tip. Nosler lists 62-1/2gn of RE-22 with the 120gn E-Tip for 3326 fps and 2948 ft/lb of muzzle energy from a 24" barrel. For bigger game there's the 140gn Partition at around 3000fps.

Standard rifling specs for the 6.5 Rem. mag. are listed as : 6 grooves, 1:9 R/H twist; bore diameter .2565, grooves .2645 across. .264 diameter bullets are indicated. They should be strongly structured with jackets heavy enough to withstand the high rotational torque imparted by the fast twist rifling. Examples are Nosler's ABLRs and Hornady's GMX made to withstand the ultra high-velocities from the likes of the 26 Nosler, 6.5 Weatherby and Hornady 6.5 PRC.

Handloaders must keep a close eye on case length. Do not exceed 2.175". Factory cases measure 2.164, and 2.170" is considered maximum. If they exceed this they should be trimmed back to 2.160. I recommend all hunting loads should be full-length sized so that they can be relied upon to chamber easily.

For hunting big game, the 6.5 Rem. Mag in a standard length action allowing long bullets to be seated out. Then the 6.5 Rem. Mag. is superior to the .25-06 and .270 Win. factory loads for use on deer-size game. If you want something different, you could do a lot worse than a custom rifle for the 6.5 Remington Magnum. 

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ANOTHER couple thousand kilometres on the odometer, countless phone calls on the log, I can seriously tell you no other job is better than being a sales rep in the hunting and firearm industry.

I have met so many new people and have gotten in contact with so many inspiring hunters around Australia. Even going to ARB Inverell to get new suspension put on the lux, I ended up talking to Jason, who, like everyone else, enjoys reading *Sporting Shooter*.

Back in November, I had the opportunity of jumping onto The Hunters Campfire Podcast to have a good chat with Mark and Ian about all things hunting and how I turned my passion into a career.

It is exciting going to work every day knowing I get to talk to people about hunting; they do say if your job is truly your passion then it isn’t work – I can vouch for the truth in that. With a few big trips planned this year and even more



Chloe is looking forward to an energetic and rewarding deer season spliced into her busy schedule.



I will definitely be taking advantage of traveling the country with the hunting pack ready.”

improve on previous years’ fallow, whether I hit up some of the local state forests or head north into Queensland and catch up with the team at Wild Country Adventures. In all honesty, I’ll probably do both! Either way, I will definitely be taking advantage of traveling the country with the hunting pack ready.

This season’s set up will be a bit different as I just purchased myself a new Howa .270, which I am planning on pairing with a Nikko Stirling Scope. I will also be putting Ridgeline’s Women’s performance range to the ultimate test (I mean if someone’s going to get tangled up in blackberry bushes, it will most definitely be me!)

Fingers crossed this season fills the freezer. Fingers and toes crossed it’s as fun as ever.

Happy hunting! 🎯



kilometres to put on the Lux, I’m excited to get up to the territory, taking on a new market for Ridgeline.

But the big priority at the moment is that deer season 2022 is right around the corner!

Last season’s hunt was, I believe, well deserved. With all the early, wet and cold mornings and afternoons and watching the deer waiting for an opportunity, the one-day Dad and I joined forces it all came together. I finally had the opportunity to pull the trigger, dropping my fallow.

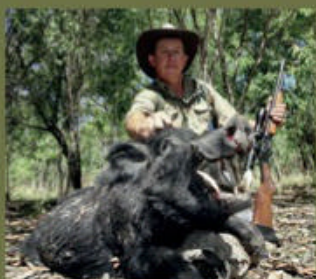
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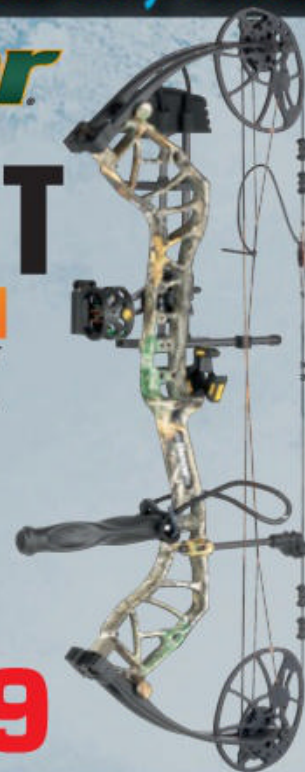
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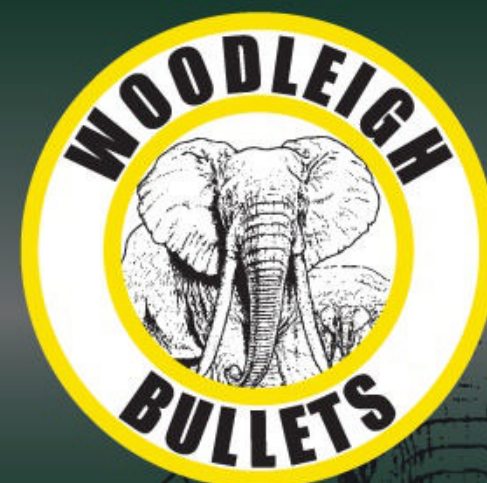
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