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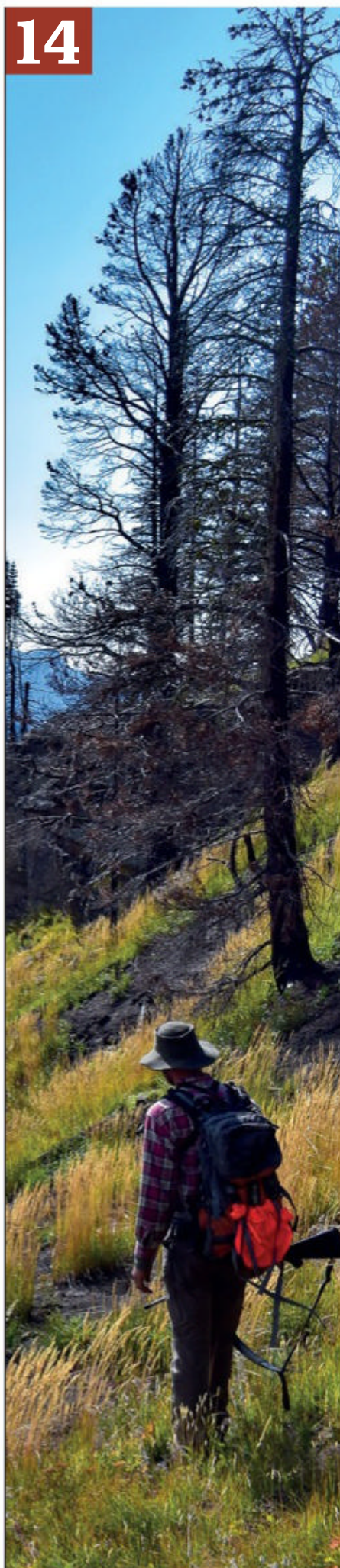


**.75 MOA  
GUARANTEE**





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## ON THE COVER

If this issue's cover makes you feel like you're being stared down by Billy the Kid, you've probably got your Wild West mixed up with your wild goats!





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# Putting a value on us

The gun industry's own umbrella group adds to our ability to fight back.

**BACK** in 2018 we discovered the shooting industry in Australia was worth about \$2.4 billion to the economy, and that's something we've been crowing about ever since. But what has happened since? Not much in the way of measuring our ongoing value to society, that's for sure.

It's nice to know what we're worth for all sorts of reasons. It helps us get some positive attention (a pleasant change). It also helps us ensure the support of other industries comes our way, such as after TNT unceremoniously dumped all dealings with firearms, ammunition and related products.

The Shooting Industry Foundation Australia (SIFA), as one of the bodies that worked hard to re-establish courier services for the gun trade, was asked how much we spent on freight each year. Good question; no one really knew.

Whatever the figure, it's big. Working at what's now

Shorty's Hunting and Outdoors, a medium-sized country gun dealership, I unpacked pallet-loads of stuff coming in every week.

"Our sector lacks essential industry data, statistics and insights which, in a modern and professional industry, are vitally important to ensure growth and prosperity," SIFA executive officer James Walsh said.

And so SIFA is running a survey of the firearms industry — every organisation from small dealers through importers and wholesalers to manufacturers. Called Insight, it'll be an annual survey, so we'll have ever-current figures to bandy about. It's an excellent initiative.

At the same time, SIFA is expanding to embrace the industry broadly, after starting out with the support of some of the major players.

Admittedly, SIFA seems a long way from the average hunter traipsing through the long grass up the back paddock,



Keeping an eye on the industry: SIFA's newly established annual survey aims to measure our success.

but if I understand it correctly it was largely SIFA that ensured the newly developed lever-release shotguns were not banned from importation by the powers that purport to protect us.

So it's obvious that SIFA's presence is a boon for hunters.

SIFA is focusing heavily on regulatory reform for the firearms industry. Frankly, the level of what you might call punitive red tape is ludicrous for the average firearms dealer, something I've experienced directly, and everywhere you go in the trade it's the same story. There is a faceless bureaucracy behind it, too, which maintains an opaque facade to avoid scrutiny and accountability. SIFA is successfully finding

ways to deal with this.

Having such a professional organisation working at that level on behalf of the shooting industry gives our sport one more cartridge in the magazine. At another level we have bodies such as the Shooters Union working directly on behalf of shooters, both professional and recreational, to push back against the constant whittling away of our ability to enjoy what we love.

Keep an eye on SIFA (sifa.net.au; its social media presence is also pretty good) because I think we'll see some very good results.

**MICK MATHESON**  
*Editor*

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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

## Making a heart shot

**Q** When they shoot a deer behind the shoulder most of my mates call it a heart shot, yet when the animal is dressed, the heart is undamaged. How do you account for this? Also, what is your opinion of the shoulder shot?

*Walter Craig*

**A** A lot of hunters don't know much about the vital areas of deer. When asked the location of the heart, the greenest of them will locate the heart somewhere near the middle of the lungs. And they also think the lungs run the full length of the upper half of the

deer, from just behind the shoulder to just ahead of the paunch.

Finally, the most inexperienced of these tyros think a shoulder shot beats all others.

It's true that the shoulder shot, high, low or in the middle, will rapidly immobilise game. If that shot is very low in the shoulder area it may hit the heart, as well as breaking one or both lower legs. If the shot hits high in the shoulder it may break both upper leg bones and, if high enough, may even sever the spinal column.

But that shot isn't going to



A rough indication of where the lungs are (pink area) and the ideal aiming point. The heart is below the lungs.

hit either heart or lungs. It will certainly wreck a helluva lot of edible venison, because modern high-velocity bullets make mincemeat out of the flesh and bone areas.

Few experienced hunters

actually aim low on the deer's brisket trying for a heart shot, preferring instead the high lung shot which usually drops the deer dead on the spot and spoils very little eating meat.

### Fusion bullets are tough

**Q** I bought a box of Federal ammunition loaded with 165gn Fusion bonded bullets. I was intrigued to read that they are made by using electroplating to form the jacket. Can you tell me how this is done? I find Fusion bullets hold together to penetrate well and retain a high percentage of their original weight.

*Andy Johns*

**A** The Fusion bullet starts with a compression-formed lead core that is then electroplated using a patented process that attaches the jacket to the core, molecule by molecule. This creates a very uniform coating of jacket material and has the effect of making one solid piece from two very different metals.

The bullet is also pre-expanded, and formed back into shape in a series of dies to create a pointed, boat-tail



Fusion projectiles use a thorough process of bonding jacket to core for superior performance on impact.



## The .22-250 is one of the best .22 varmint cartridges of all time."

bullet. Fusion takes bonding to a whole new level since it does not have the core and jacket as two separate pieces 'soldered' together by heat after they are assembled.

Federal claims the bullet achieved up to 250 per cent expansion diameter and retained 90 per cent of its weight when tested in 10 per cent ballistic gelatine.

### Morris Tube cartridge

**Q** I have a number of bottleneck .22 centrefire cartridges about .9" long. The rear end of the case is about .3" in diameter for a distance of 3/8" from the head. Can you identify these cartridges for me? If so, can you give me the ballistics?

*Robert Morgan*

**A** The dimensions you list lead me to believe that the cartridges you have are the .297/.230 Short, so named because the bullet is .230 in diameter and the case has a diameter of .297". This cartridge was made for the Morris Tube, invented by Richard Morris and patented in England in 1881. This device was a rifled tube which fitted inside the bore of the .577/.450 Martini-Henry military rifle to allow cheap, short-range marksmanship practice. It was used for training on indoor ranges in Great Britain before World War I.

It had a 32gn bullet loaded with 3 1/4gn of black powder or 1 3/4gn of smokeless for indoor





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use. For outdoor ranges up to 100yd there was the .297/.230 Long with a 37gn bullet and charge of 5½gn of black powder or 2½gn of smokeless. There was also an Extra Long version with a 1⅞" long case. These cartridges were made by Eley-Kynoch as late as 1962. BSA made Martini Cadet rifles for them.

## Measuring the centre of impact

**Q**What is the simplest method of determining the centre of impact of a given number of bullet holes?

*Mal Green*

**A**If your group is a tight one, then it is easy to estimate the centre of impact and the height above the line of aim. With a larger group, draw a vertical line on the target through the lefthand hole in the group. Measure the distance of each shot from this line and divide by the total number of shots, including the one the line goes through. This will give you the centre of impact from the line you just drew.

Next, draw a horizontal line through the bottom hole and measure the height of all the bullet holes above it. Add up all these measurements and divide by the total number of holes and, again, that will give you the height of the centre of impact above the bottom line.

After determining the centre of impact and marking it, you can get what is called the 'mean radius' of the group by measuring from this point to the centre of each of the bullet holes, adding up all these measurements and dividing by the total number of shots.

Is this what I do? Nope.

## Springfield .30-03?

**Q**In a story I read about Arizona rangers during the early 1900s, the main



The editor's T3 Lite still performs perfectly after thousands of rounds. You can't doubt the Tikka's quality.

**character was using a Winchester Model 1895 chambered for the Springfield M1903 cartridge. Evidently, this was different from the Springfield M1906 cartridge. I have never heard of any cartridge used in the 1903 Springfield rifle except the M1906 (.30-06) and its later forms such as the M1 and M2, which have the same outward dimensions. Was there really a cartridge named the Springfield 1903?**

*Percy Gardner*

**A**There were indeed two different cartridges for the Springfield Model 1903 rifle and the Winchester Model 1895 was at one time available chambered for either. The '03 Springfield was standardised with ammunition of the same designation, firing a long 220gn round-nose bullet at about 2200fps.

In 1905, however, the German army changed its 8mm Mauser from a bullet of similar shape, weight and velocity to a pointed spitzer weighing only 154gn with a muzzle velocity of about 2880fps. The resulting flatter trajectory completely outclassed the heavier, slower round-nose bullets for military purposes. The US found itself compelled to follow suit and designed a pointed spitzer of 150gn.

A problem arose when the bullet was loaded in the cartridge case far enough out of the case mouth to be reasonably close to the origin of the rifling, which was throated for the long 220gn bullet, so that its heel was barely held in the case mouth. There was no alternative except to recall all the '03 Springfield rifles and shorten the barrels at the breech to bring the origin of the rifling back closer to the ogive of the new bullet. At the same time the neck of the cartridge case was shortened to correspond with the shorter cylindrical portion of the new bullet.

The result was the Model 1906 cartridge, the famous .30-06. The .30-06 can be fired in the .30-03 chamber, but the .30-03 won't chamber in the .30-06.

## Tikka T3 is first class

**Q**I have been given a Tikka T3 Hunter in .300 Winchester Magnum. It was bought by my brother, who couldn't handle the recoil. He claimed it kicked too hard, but I find it is manageable and can put three shots into 1.25" at 100yd. What can you tell me about this rifle, which appears to be well made and accurate into the bargain? Could you recommend a load with a good 180gn bullet?

*Shane Warren*

**A**The Tikka T3 – and its successor, the T3x – is one of the most technically advanced and finest factory bolt-action rifles produced anywhere in the world. There are no compromises in materials or performance.

The one-piece bolt has dual-opposed locking lugs with a 70-degree lift instead of the usual 90-degree lift on most bolt guns. And instead of locking at six and 12 o'clock, they lock at about four and 10 o'clock. The 0.39" wide lugs taper in height from 0.89" at the rear to 0.11" at the front and there's a radius cut on each side of both lugs, which lock into the receiver itself, not into a barrel extension.

The extractor is a spring-tensioned pivoting hook and the ejector is a plunger type. The bolt sleeve is polymer. Bolt travel is unusually smooth and fast.

The receiver is dovetailed to accept Tikka's proprietary mounts and drilled and tapped for Weaver-style bases. The barrel is cold-hammer forged by Sako, since both brands are made in the same factory in Finland.

In my opinion, for all-round use, the .30 magnum is best served with a good 180gn bullet. With your choice of a 180gn bullet I recommend you work up from 77gn of AR2217 toward a likely maximum of about 80gn for 3000fps. With an all-copper bullet, start 2gn lower.





The new CZ 515 is a bolt action lever release rimfire rifle designed for hunters and target shooters.

The CZ 515 is a lever release rifle meaning it is fitted with an automatic bolt stop in the rear position and an ergonomically designed lever for releasing the bolt.

The CZ 515 rifle is supplied in two models, a stylish Hunter with an American style beechwood stock and a modern Tactical model with pistol grip, adjustable stock and picatinny rail as standard.

Both models will be supplied with a 10 round polymer magazine.

CZ 515 TACTICAL

RRP **\$1650**

CZ 515 AMERICAN

RRP **\$1325**

**CZ 515**

.22 LR | 10    22 WMR | 10





Mauser 98 actions are extremely strong and lend themselves to custom rifle projects.

## Long-range load for 6.5 Creedmoor

**Q**I own a Bergara Premier Ridgeback with heavy 650mm barrel topped with a Burris Eliminator III scope with built-in 1000-metre LRF. This outfit is capable of making accurate long-range shots in competition, but so far I haven't shot any targets beyond 600 metres on the range. I believe the cartridge is an efficient design, one capable of driving high ballistic coefficient bullets at decent velocities using modest powder charges.

I know you have had experience of a number of 6.5-calibre cartridges so can you suggest a good long-range load for my rifle that will extend its range?

*Anton Da Silva*

**A**The Hornady 143gn ELD-X bullet I am using in my 26 Nosler for hunting gives impressive long-range performance. I suggest you try seating the streamlined 147gn ELD-M Match bullet and try to work up to 42gn of AR2209 or 45gn of Re-26 for a muzzle velocity of about 2700fps.

I don't have an Eliminator III scope to check with, but I have heard good things about them.

The 147gn ELD-M bullet has a BC of .697 and when zeroed at 300 metres drops 233cm and 349cm at 700 and 800 metres respectively. Wind deflection in a 16km/h wind is 70cm at 700m and 94cm at 800. That's pretty impressive performance for such a modest-sized, mild-mannered cartridge.

Other match bullets you may want to try are the 139gn Lapua Scenar and Bergers.

Most shooting clubs have Bergers or you can try BRT Shooter's Supplies.

## Identifying a Mauser action

**Q**I have a German Model 98 Mauser in 7.92x57mm and want to know if the action is safe to build a sporter on. On the underside of the barrel are the numbers 7.91. On top of the receiver ring is the symbol S/42 and just behind it the number 1937. If this is the year of manufacture, then what does S/42 indicate? Can this action be safely rebarrelled to 7mm Rem Mag? The rifle is in excellent condition with all matching part numbers.

*Jack Metcalfe*

**A**Your rifle sounds like a good one for a custom build. The 1937 refers to the year of manufacture; S/42 is a German military code and refers to the Mauser Werke plant at Oberndorf. Your action may be rebarrelled to almost any standard-length cartridge including the 7mm Rem Mag. The action is basically strong enough to handle even the .375 H&H, but would require many action alterations for so long a cartridge.

Mausers made prior to 1942 are generally of higher quality than later ones. Yours is a good action.

## Laminated stocks and the .22-250

**Q**What do you think of laminated stocks? Do they give the kind of consistent accuracy that's claimed for them? I am thinking of buying a Howa

Varmint blue barrelled action in .22-250 and a Howa laminated stock. What's your opinion of the .22-250 as a varmint cartridge and also in the Howa combo I'd like?

*Frank Lawson*

**A**Laminated stocks are useful in instances where stability is of the greatest importance. Laminate stocks usually do not give trouble by changing the impact point due to changes in humidity, unlike some wooden stocks which will dry and shrink or swell when exposed to dampness.

The .22-250 is one of the best .22 varmint cartridges of all time and if you are interested in a varmint rifle, you won't go wrong in choosing a Howa. Of course, there are other makes of rifles that are satisfactory, but it is largely a matter of personal choice. In my book the Howa is reliable and a really good gun.

## Compressed charges

**Q**I've been loading my .270 Winchester cases with heavily compressed charges of slow-burning powder. When I go to the range, I find that the bullets in my reloads have been pushed farther out of the case and won't enter the chamber. I have read that high density loading is best, so how come I am having this problem?

*Harold Eddy*

**A**I've had the same thing happen to me. In loading any cartridge it is not good procedure to crush the powder with the base of the bullet. The powder charge should not be heavily compressed, but correctly the charge should

fill the case so that there is little or no air space. Air space means the powder does not fill the case and velocity will vary when the gun is pointed up, down or horizontally. This will have an effect upon accuracy to some minor degree. Ideally, the charge should fill the case to the base of the bullet and be only lightly compressed.

## Breaking in your barrel

**Q**Out at the range last week, I watched a guy breaking in a new barrel — at least that's what he told me was doing. It looked like a lot of hard work to me. He'd fire a shot and then run a brush dipped in solvent through the barrel followed by a couple of dry patches. Then he'd fire a shot and repeat the process over and over again. Is it worthwhile going to all this trouble?

*Joe Barnes*

**A**Hell no! These guys may think they're breaking in their new rifle barrel, but all they are really doing is wasting time, powder and bullets. The notion that a rifle barrel needs breaking in started with fanatical benchresters who hold to a theory that each bullet's passage will polish any roughness out of the bore.

In my book, it is a worthless exercise and purely a waste of time. Rifle loonies are definitely true believers, but very few of them are silly enough to believe that breaking in a barrel will make their .300 Win Mag sporter shoot like a .22-250 varmint. And those who do are full of the stuff that makes roses grow. ☒



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# Rocky Mountain high

**Tony Kamphorst discovers the affordable way to go on the hunt of a lifetime in the heart of Montana's backcountry.**

**A**s a kid I read of hunting in the North American wilderness. They were stories of packhorse strings heading deep into the Rocky Mountains in pursuit of moose, elk and deer, of living in canvas-wall tents beside a mountain stream with the smell of fresh trout being grilled in a skillet over a crackling fire of pine boughs. Of grizzly bears and the sound of wolves howling on distant ridges.



The Bob Marshall, 1.5 million acres of wilderness.  
INSET: Tony's mule deer buck taken up high.









1



2



3

**FOR** a kid with a single-shot Lithgow .22, hunting rabbits in the dry sheep paddocks of northern NSW, it was just a dream. And it stayed that way for years.

In 2019 Taylah and I quit our jobs and set off on an epic journey around Africa, Australia, North America and New Zealand. Our hard-earned savings had to get us through 18 months of backpacking and I knew that if I dropped \$15,000 on a guided elk hunt I'd be back on the job site much sooner than I wanted. And potentially single again.

I didn't like either outcome so I looked for a budget-conscious elk

hunt to tie into our North American road trip.

Four states — Idaho, Montana, Colorado and Utah — offer over-the-counter elk and deer licenses to non-resident hunters, and they don't require a guide for international hunters. Montana has the most public land and the longest season, so it looked like the best option.

Poring over maps of public land and open hunting areas I noticed a huge patch of National Forest in the north-west of the state, unbroken by roads or towns. The Bob Marshall Wilderness complex is 1.5 million acres of wild land on

the continental divide of the Rocky Mountains. It's home to elk, moose, deer, bears, wolves and all those things I dreamed about as a kid. It could also be hunted on a general license and had an early rifle season. Bingo!

I roped in my good mates, Ross and Steve, without too much convincing. I found an outfitter which had a mule string, could rent us some gear and would pack us into the backcountry, drop us off for a couple of weeks and pull us out at the end. We would be on our own, hunting un-guided. Best of all, it was affordable.

We set off from the rolling ranch

## ON THIS SPREAD

**1** The crew enjoyed plenty of trout fishing between hunts. From left: Tony, Taylah, Steve and Ross

**2** Fly-fishing for trout in the beaver ponds below camp.

**3** Crossing the Continental Divide of the Rocky Mountain.





“

**At the sound of the shot the clump of pines erupted and four bucks bolted down the mountain.”**

lands in the foothills of the Rocky Mountain Front, the string of mules and horses winding its way up a river valley that drained from the craggy mountain peaks of the Continental Divide. In the early afternoon we crossed a high mountain pass and caught the first glimpse of the catchment we would hunt. It was breathtaking.

A creek snaked along the valley floor, interspersed with grassy meadows and beaver ponds. The slopes were clad in pine, some areas thick and green and others nothing but the stark burnt skeletons of trees after a forest fire. Higher, the forest gave out to bare,

gravelly ridges and rocky peaks on the skyline. This tangle of mountains and valleys went as far as the eye could see.

A storm hit us as we crossed the pass and the horses wouldn't go down the other side into the driving sleet. We had to hop off and lead them down the steep scree slopes on foot. Soon we were back in the forest cover of the lower slopes and a finally we made our camp on a creek meadow in the valley floor, soaking wet and tired but stoked.

Our camp was an old canvas tent with wood stove and chimney for heating and cooking. It was plenty





“

**Mule deer are an iconic game animal in the western states and I was stoked to take this buck on my own.”**

big enough and felt like home after a few days. The wranglers and horses disappeared and we spent the first afternoon cutting wood and getting ready for the opening day of the hunting season the following morning.

Taylah and I headed off in the early morning light up a leading ridge near camp. It wasn't long after sun-up and I spotted a big bull moose in the timber on the valley floor below us. It was a surprise as moose are quite rare in this area. Anyway, I didn't have a moose tag but it was great to see one of these animals in the wild. We continued on up the ridge and spent the morning glassing the country.

We cut a few deer and elk tracks that day but didn't lay eyes on any animals. It was disappointing, but I had mentally prepared myself for a tough hunt. The odds of success on an elk hunt on public land are only 10-20 percent in Montana and other western states that offer unlimited over-the-counter tags. Youtube and Instagram lead you to believe that every high mountain basin is full of bugling bull elk, but it isn't the case. I saw far more hunters than deer or elk over the next 12 days, despite being a full day's ride into the backcountry.

There wouldn't be many valleys without a horse-camp of elk



hunters in the Bob Marshall in September.

We worked hard over the next days but didn't turn up any elk, despite finding sign. Ross saw mule deer on a ridge behind camp, so on the third day I set off early by myself to get up high and look for some bucks. In September the mule deer bucks are still in their bachelor mobs at high elevation, before the winter snows push them down. I set my sights on the alpine zone of the mountain, with its bare gravelly slopes and rocky peaks.

By mid-morning I was standing on the Continental Divide. To the east, the mountains fell away to the prairies and the headwaters of the Missouri river. To the west, the water flowed towards the Pacific Ocean. Pretty cool.

## ON THIS PAGE

**4** Packing in on horseback is the only feasible way to get four people and two weeks' worth of gear into this territory.

**5** All the comforts of home! Taylah turns up the stove to boil a billy.

Just before midday I was scrambling across a steep scree slope about two hundred metres above the tree line when I looked up and saw something that didn't quite fit in a small clump of stunted alpine pines about 60m ahead of me. It took a few seconds for my brain to click but I realised it was the head of a mule buck peering out of the branches at me. The buck took a step forward, exposing his chest and with that look of a deer that's just about to bolt. I raised my rifle and took a shot I probably shouldn't have. With my unstable footing and gasping for breath I pulled the shot two feet over him.

At the sound of the shot the clump of pines erupted and four bucks bolted down the mountain into the tree line, where they stopped and looked back. Throwing down my pack among the rocks I got a steady rest in the prone position and picked up the bucks in the scope, about 250m below me. Only one offered a clear shot through the trees. I didn't bother looking at his antlers and squeezed off the shot as the crosshairs settled on his shoulder. He dropped on the spot.

Mule deer are an iconic game animal in the western states and I was stoked to take this buck on my



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**SIFA**







“

The wild mountain scenery was breathtaking, and we spent our spare time fly-fishing for cutthroat trout.”

## ON THIS PAGE

**6** Taylah stands above a burnt-out landscape on a balmy Rockies day.

**7** Our home for two weeks.

own, high in the Rocky Mountains. I staggered off that mountain with knees buckling under the weight of an entire mule deer buck, boned out in my backpack, and couldn't stop smiling.

With my deer tag punched, I turned my focus to elk but, try as I might, I couldn't lay eyes on one. Despite covering miles of country from daylight till dusk we turned up nothing except tracks and the only bugling we heard was from other hunters. After talking to a couple of them we found out that the elk population in northern Montana was declining due to an increasing wolf population, and they can quickly go nocturnal under hunting pressure. And there is plenty of that.

The wild mountain scenery was breathtaking, and we spent our spare time fly-fishing for cutthroat trout in the creek and beaver ponds below camp. Steve made the wranglers put on an extra mule for our beer supply on the way in, so it was nice to kick back by the stove after a long day on the mountain and swap stories over a can of Budweiser chilled in a mountain stream.

On the final morning I headed on a last-ditch effort to find an elk. Earlier, I'd found a basin full of fresh rubs so went in to find the bull who'd made them. But the weather packed it in and as I sat on a ridge trying to glass into the

basin clouds of mist and rain rolled in, reducing the visibility to a mere 50 metres.

Suddenly a big black bear appeared walking up the ridge towards me out of the fog. We all had black bear tags, so I picked up the rifle as the bear drew closer. As I lined it up and waited for it to stop I caught movement behind and moments later two cubs came bumbling over the rise behind the adult bear. I breathed a sigh of relief as I knew I had been only seconds away from making an honest but unfortunate mistake. The bears wandered past 20 metres below me and disappeared into the mist.

The next day we broke camp and the pack string arrived to take us back out to the real world. Two weeks had passed too quickly and all of us were sad to leave. But we were taking home plenty of memories and a great bull elk and mule deer. Ross and Steve had flights to catch back to Australia, but Taylah and I still had two months left on our North American road trip. With an un-filled elk tag still burning a hole in my pocket and millions of acres of publicly accessible elk country scattered across the state I was far from finished.

Four weeks later on a snow-covered mountain, 300 miles away in southern Montana, it all came together. But that's another story. 

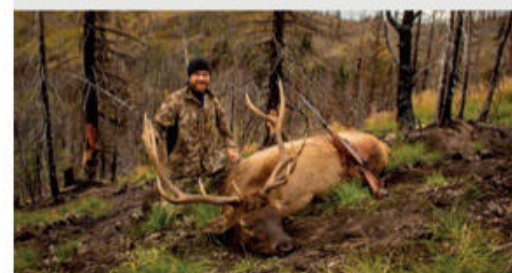
## Ross's bull elk

On day six I was hunting a heavily timbered basin down the valley when I heard two distant shots from a high ridge across the valley. I knew Ross had headed that way, so I turned back to camp to await the news.

At about mid-afternoon we heard a voice outside the tent and pulled back the flap to see Ross standing there, grinning ear to ear, with the rack of a big 5x5 bull elk over his shoulders. He had intercepted the bull that morning as he crossed an open ridgeline from one basin to another and had taken him with two quick shots. It was a well-earned bull after some tough hunting.

All four of us loaded up packs and headed up the ridge that evening to retrieve the meat, rather than risk leaving it overnight for the grizzly bears. A bull elk is a large animal, and by law in Montana you must retrieve all the meat, so it's a big effort. Many hands make light work and we were back at camp that night, with the meat safely strung up on a pole out of reach of bears. Fresh elk steaks sizzled in the pan.

BELOW: Ross's hard earned bull elk.







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# Perfect balance

Combining legacy and modernity, Mauser's cost-conscious M18 chambered for Hornady's hot 6.5 PRC delivers fantastic downrange performance out of a short action.

**THE** Mauser M18 is a high-quality yet affordable rifle that is an entirely different design to the world famous Model 1898. The first time I laid eyes on one, I was reminded of the Model 66, which was a spin-off from the Gehmann short-action that Mauser licensed in 1965. The 66 was the company's first new design

alternative locking systems which were a departure from the traditional M98 system.

The next innovative design from Mauser was the Thousand Series with three models, the 2000, 3000 and 4000, starting in 1968. Except for the short action of the 4000, the three models were similar — a simple, straightforward, push-feed design which retained few of the basic features of the M98.

They had a recessed bolt face, short extractor, plunger ejector and recoil lug welded to the bottom of the receiver ring, which made them cheaper to manufacture than original Mauser 98-type rifles. This was Mauser's first attempt to produce an economically priced high-quality rifle and they sold about 30,000 of them between 1968 and 1974.

Mauser lowered the cost of rifle-making even more by refining the process of making inexpensive, accurate, cold hammer forged barrels. Then, in 1987, when they bought Voere-Voetter & Co they obtained a suitable action — a three-lug affair that locked into a Stellite insert in the receiver ring. Stellite is a super-hard, cobalt-chromium alloy that exhibits great strength and high wear resistance, and is capable of withstanding high pressures.

Mauser immediately realised they now had all the necessary ingredients to



**Mauser had all the necessary ingredients to produce a high-quality economy-class rifle.”**

in over 60 years. The action is almost half as short as the standard M98 and was one of the first to have the bolt locking lugs seat into an extension of the barrel instead of the receiver. The Mauser 66 was a complex and expensive design with a telescoping bolt and switch-barrel capability, but it paved the way for

**LEFT:** The M18 in 6.5 PRC is accurate and deadly, with more impressive features than its price would suggest.



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produce a high-quality economy-class rifle, one that would not only be affordable, but accurate into the bargain. Mauser took the alternative lock-up methods from the Gehmann short action, refined the use of a barrel extension and combined features from the Gehmann and Voere action to produce the M18 action.

The result was an entirely new rifle engineered by a leader in the world of European rifle manufacturing. Unlike many other modern rifles, however, the M18 adheres to more traditional design principles.

The Polymer 2 stock is black in colour and classic in style with a high, straight comb. It has ambidextrous palm swells on the open radius grip, sweeping downward with a slight flare at the end near the grip cap. The solid rubber recoil pad can be removed by





pressing a catch on each side of the butt to reveal storage space for a bottle of gun oil and cleaning gear.

The rounded, hollow fore-end has strengthening struts and a soft-touch finish. Panels of texturing within bilateral rubberised panels in the rifle's grip and forend afford a secure grasp. Detachable sling-swivel studs are installed fore and aft.

The receiver is round-bottomed and drilled and tapped to take Remington Model 700-pattern scope bases. The ejection port is minimal, making the action stiffer so that it vibrates very little but does so consistently. The port is large enough to allow one to thumb a cartridge into the detachable magazine if the necessity occurs.

A steel recoil lug slips into a groove in the bottom of the receiver ring, just behind the front action screw. The rear action screw threads into the action tang through the back of the trigger housing, and an identical nut in front of the trigger guard/magazine assembly holds the receiver to the stock. The bolt cycles smoothly, and the rifle handles, shoulders and balances well.

The short action features a carbon-steel bolt with a body only slightly larger in diameter

than that of its three locking lugs, eliminating the need for machining raceways inside the receiver. The super-hard, full-diameter bolt has three lugs that lock into a hardened steel breech ring inside the receiver. The ring sits between the bolt face and the breech face of the barrel. Its function is to provide the correct depth for the barrel when it's screwed into the receiver, while simultaneously ensuring precise positioning of the locking lugs and bolt face to ensure correct headspace.

The cold hammer forged barrel has an 11-degree crown which ensures accuracy continues as the bullet exits the muzzle.

The bolt release on the receiver's left side engages a longitudinal slot machined into the bolt to provide stability and guidance during travel. The bolt face is deeply counterbored with its wall interrupted only enough to allow passage of a Sako-style sliding plate extractor. Twin spring-loaded, plunger-type ejectors positioned at one o'clock and seven o'clock consistently throw fired cases in a low trajectory, thereby avoiding dings to the finish of a scope mounted low over the receiver.

One bolt lug rides low in the ejection port as the action

## ON THIS SPREAD

**1** The Mauser as it comes, complete with stickers. It's a classic sporter size and style.

**2** The M18's unique cocking cam design on cocking sleeve and bolt sleeve makes bolt lift smooth and easy despite low 60 degree lift.

**3** Two studs in the underside of the round-bottomed receiver are threaded for two nuts which are tensioned to secure the stock.

**4** The trigger is adjustable from 1.0-1.8kg (2.2-4.0lb).

**5** The double-stack, five-round magazine has an internal length of 76.7mm, enough to accommodate the 6.5 PRC cartridge with about 1.6mm to spare.

**6** The three position safety is handily located behind the bolt handle and is silent to operate. It is shown in firing mode.

**7** Bolt sleeve has a large flange to block and divert any gases that might escape along the bolt body in the event of a blown primer.

## 6.5 PRC: faster, flatter than 6.5 Creedmoor

Initial sighting-in and accuracy testing was carried out using Hornady's Precision Hunter 143gn ELD-X ammunition, which clocked 2898fps from the M18's 24" barrel, giving it a 250fps edge over the 6.5 Creedmoor. For long-range matches where targets are shot out to 1000 metres or yards, the 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge) 147gn ELD-Match offers a major advantage over its smaller sibling.

Zeroed for 300yd (275m), the ELD-Match from the Creedmoor will drop 30.36" (77cm) at 500yd and drift 13.41" (34cm) in a 10mph (16km/h) wind. Energy is 1424ft-lb. At this distance the 6.5 PRC still has 1689ft-lb remaining, drops 25.44" (65cm) and drifts 12.9" (33cm). At 1000yd (914m), the PRC still has 1728fps and 975ft-lb left against 1574fps and 809ft-lb for the Creedmoor.

Over normal game ranges, out to say 400yd (365m), hunters will benefit more by using the 143gn ELD-X in the PRC. Zeroed for 275yd (250m), the 143gn ELD-X is 2.8" (7cm) high at 100yd (91m), 3" (7.5cm) high 200yd (182m), drops 1.65" (4cm) at 300yd (275m) and 11.75" (30cm) at 400yd (365m), at which distance it is still packing a 1800ft-lb punch.





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The bolt cycles smoothly, and the rifle handles, shoulders and balances well.”



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## ✓ SPECS

### Mauser M18

**Manufacturer:** Mauser, Isny, Germany

**Type:** Push-feed bolt action

**Calibre tested:** 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge)

**Capacity:** 5 standard, 4 magnum rounds

**Barrel:** 24" (61cm) cold-hammer forged; 1:8" twist

**Overall length:** 43.75 inches (111cm)

**Weight:** 6lb 8oz (2.95kg)

**Stock:** Injection molded, black polymer with Soft Touch grip

**Length of pull:** 14.25 inches

**Finish:** Stainless steel

**Trigger:** Adjustable 2.2-4lb (1.0-1.8kg)

**Sights:** None

**Price:** \$1090 (RRP)

**Contact:** Outdoor Sporting Agencies. **Web:** [www.osaaustralia.com.au](http://www.osaaustralia.com.au)

opens, and the dual ejectors yield a very controlled and precise case trajectory away from the receiver. A red cocking indicator protrudes from the bolt's rear. The straight bolt handle is threaded for a round polymer knob.

Bolt rotation is 60 degrees. Shortening of the cocking cam ramp is an inherent necessity for a three-lug bolt, which normally requires more effort when lifting and rotating the bolt. But the M18's cocking sleeve, into which the bolt handle is pegged, has an integral cocking notch between the bolt body and sleeve at the rear of the bolt. Trapped linearly by the notch in the sleeve, which carries the corresponding cocking cam

upon which it journals, it is indexed to turn with the bolt by a stud which fits in the bottom of the bolt sleeve. A gentler angled cam surface in the cocking sleeve drives the stud into the holding notch as the bolt handle is lifted, making the bolt easy to operate without lowering the rifle from the shoulder.

Mauser engineers obviously went to a great deal of trouble to make the rifle as safe as possible. Pulling a three-position lever located at the right side of the M18's receiver tang to its rearmost position blocks both sear and trigger movement, and bolt rotation as well. Moving it to its middle position allows the bolt to be opened for loading or unloading the chamber with the safety engaged.

There's more. Should the safety be disengaged while the bolt is in its unlocked position, the firing pin remains blocked from forward travel until the bolt is rotated to full lock-up. I've tested this system and it works to prevent a related accidental discharge.

A bolt lug riding at the six o'clock position has an added advantage, since it gets plenty of purchase with rounds loaded in the double-stack

## ON THIS PAGE

**8** The blued M18 is nicely finished with a stock and metalwork that look good together.

**9** The butt pad can be removed to reveal storage space for gun oil and cleaning brushes etc.





## MEOPTA OPTIKA 5

MeoPro Optika 5 riflescopes were developed to provide hunters and shooters with a combination of quality optics, a one-inch tube and a 5x zoom. Version 4-20x50 RD has an illuminated reticle. The riflescope's W/E adjustment with correction in MOA has a zero-reset function. On model 3-15x44 and up, MeoPro Optika 5 riflescopes have parallax correction from 10 yards to infinity. Of course, excellent quality is a given and goes hand in hand with a great price.

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OPTIKA5 4-20X44



OPTIKA5 4-20X50



OPTIKA5 4-20X50 RD



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## The 6.5 PRC is one helluva accurate cartridge, even in a sporter-weight rifl like the Mauser M18.”

magazine, no matter whether they are stripped from the right or left side. The magazine is made of high-impact glass-filled nylon and holds four rounds in magnum calibres, as opposed to the usual three. Capacity in standard calibres is five.

The magazine latch is metal and is housed in a metal bottom and recessed flush with the bottom of the stock to minimise the potential of inadvertent magazine ejection. The magazine in the test rifle dropped out easily when the release was pressed.

The test rifle arrived along with three new Crimson Trace scopes. The more compact 3-9x40 BDC was installed using Nikko Stirling Zero-Lok rings. This is a practical ultra-light mounting system that is strong and withstands heavy recoil well. I found this scope had repeatable adjustments and superb optics that gave a sharp, clear sight picture throughout testing.

Accuracy with two boxes of

factory loads we had was pretty impressive. The Hornady ELD-Match load averaged .72” for three five-shot groups at 100yd. The tightest cluster of bullet holes measured .55”. The Precision Hunter 143gn ELD-X load was no slouch either. The average for 15 shots was .82” with only one group barely larger than one MOA at 1.15”. We burned up the remaining ten cartridges by firing two

five-shot groups at 200yd. The group with the match ammo measured 1.35” while the ELD-X went into 1.75”. The verdict was that the 6.5 PRC is one helluva accurate cartridge, even in a sporter-weight rifle like the Mauser M18.

New cartridges often pose problems for handloaders, especially when there’s little or no data available for them, and loads have to be developed virtually from scratch. Fortunately, the 6.5 PRC has been around for over three years and most loading manuals list data for it. There’s a variety of dies and component bullets in different weights, shapes and designs. Hornady manufactures PRC brass and has sufficient recipes in its *Handbook of Cartridge Reloading* 11th edition for bullets weighing from 120 to 153 grains.

During testing I had difficulty in obtaining a supply of unprimed brass and .264 projectiles, which were unobtainable anywhere, but I

did manage to get a Hornady die set. Luckily, I had over a dozen different .264 hunting bullets in stock as well as slow powders. The results with handloads can be read in my Practical Reloading column in next month’s issue.

Finally, we must submit that a sub-MOA, German-made sporter with utilitarian features, which sells for the affordable price of \$1090, offers not only fine design, but performance way beyond what anyone could ever hope for. 🎯

### ON THIS PAGE

**10** The recoil lug is housed in a recess in the stock and enters a slot on the underside of the receiver ring.

**11** Black polymer stock has soft-touch rubber inlays on grip and forend which make the rifle very comfortable to grasp.

**12** The 3-9x40 Crimson Trace scope was well suited on the Mauser M18 in 6.5 PRC over normal hunting ranges.





1775

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# Conquering zero

**With ASV turrets, Zeiss's new V6 in 3-18x50 is just about the perfect do-it-all scope, according to Nick Harvey.**

CARL Zeiss is one of the oldest optics manufacturers and has been highly respected for over 170 years. During this time, Zeiss has been at the forefront of improving the quality and performance of high-grade optical equipment.

Zeiss scopes aimed at American and Australian hunters — the Conquest line — cost quite a bit less than the company's top-of-the-range Victory and Diarange models. And therein hangs a tale, which starts with the previous V4 series.

first Conquest line, the V4.

The V4 paved the way for the new Conquest V6, which was developed with long-range shooters in mind and is made in Germany. These belly-whopper experts are a fussy lot, with distinct likes and dislikes. They hold strong opinions about what a scope should be like.

The new V6 is based on a 6x zoom ratio and built on a 30mm main tube. Length is 338mm, and it weighs 630 grams.

The optional ASV turret system reviewed here is available in only two models, a 3-18x50 (under test), and a 5-30x50. Each scope delivers 92 percent light transmission. In the centre of the tube, the mechanism sports well-designed and compact target turrets. These are readily adjusted and feature coarse, audible clicks, and are clearly marked for ¼MOA with a total of 60MOA available.

Full turret rotations are easily kept track of by Zeiss's clear marking system, so you don't accidentally end up one full rotation off. On the left side of the mechanism block is a knob for adjusting parallax from 50m to infinity. In addition to being within easy reach, this feature reduces both size and weight compared to a scope with a focusing objective.

Magnification runs from 3-18x which provides a field of view shrinking inversely from



**ASV is simple to use: Simply dial to the correct mark and shoot."**

Building affordable riflescopes to Zeiss's exacting standards wasn't possible in Germany for a number of reasons, including the inflated wages demanded by strong trade unions. So Zeiss commissioned Meopta in the Czech Republic to build the

LEFT: Eye relief of 90mm is adequate for the hardest kicking rifle.



1



12.4m on 3x to 2.1m at 100 metres. Directly behind the power changing ring at the rear of the ocular is a European fast-focus eyepiece capped with a thick buffer rubber. With an eye relief of 90mm (3.25"), there's no chance of copping a Weatherby eyebrow from this Zeiss scope.

In addition, the V6's constant eye relief is a good feature, especially on a hard-kicking rifle. Usually on a scope in this magnification range, eye relief can shrink up to an inch simply by cranking the scope up to a higher power. With the Conquest, though, you are not forced to crawl the stock as you zoom the image in and out.

For superior light transmission, the Conquest sports a large 50mm-diameter objective lens of Schott HT glass, which has Zeiss's T\* proprietary multi-coating.

The ability to quickly zoom from 3x to 18x offers a very

dynamic and usable range of magnification. This is particularly true for the hunter who may not want to shoot

extreme long range but takes shots at game in both wooded country and open country. He can leave the scope set on 3x as he stalks about and be ready when he jumps game at a close distance. He only needs to increase the power if a long shot offers.

The very first thing I noticed when I looked through the V6 was how clear and sharp the image was. Looking across the flat in front of my house, at buildings at different distances under low light conditions in the evening,

I was able to pick out contrasting target points throughout the zoom range.

Zeiss claims 92 percent to-the-eye light transmission, and I don't doubt this since the high-definition lenses have a six-layer T\* multi-coating, with proprietary LotuTec exterior coating that sheds dust and water for clearer imaging in the kind of harsh conditions hunters experience on a regular basis.

After I mounted the V6 on a Sauer 100 XTA in .308 Winchester using Nikko Stirling Zero-Lok rings, I set about checking the Conquest's tracking. When put to the test, many scopes have adjustment, tracking or repeatability issues. Looking through the

## ON THIS PAGE

**1** For testing, the Conquest was mounted on a very accurate Sauer 100 XTA in .308 Win.

**2** The Zeiss has a fast-focus European-style focusing eyepiece with thick rubber buffer for protection.

**3** Turrets of the Conquest V6 are nicely compact, and feature ¼MOA adjustments. The parallax is easily adjusted from behind the rifle using the left turret.

2



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# INTRODUCING THE **ALL-NEW** **SAVAGE IMPULSE** RANGE OF STRAIGHT-PULL CENTREFIRE RIFLES



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## « Impulse Big Game

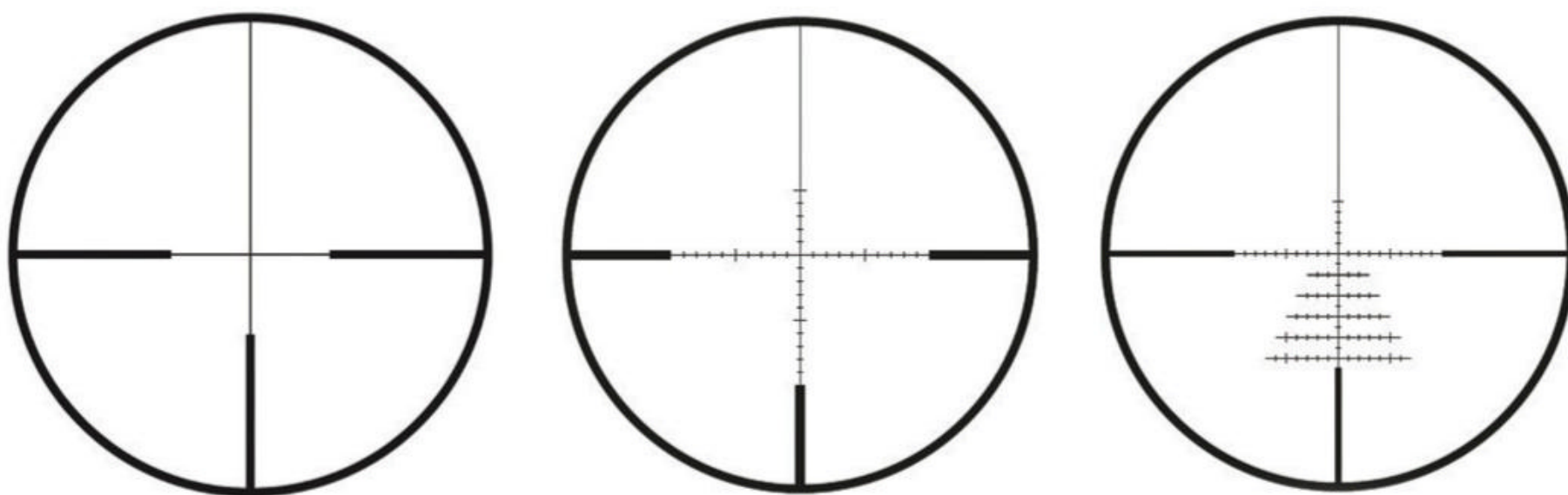
Straight Pull Action // AccuTrigger™ // Hazel Green Cerakote Receiver and Barrel  
KUIU Verde 2.0 Camo AccuStock with AccuFit™ // Fluted Barrel // Flush Fit Detachable Box  
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V6 I was very impressed by the image quality and colour fidelity. However, it doesn't matter how good the optics are if the scope doesn't track reliably.

To check this feature I shot the square by firing two shots at the centre, then the four corner aiming marks, before returning to centre. Each time I adjusted the windage and elevation, the Conquest came through with flying colours. Every bullet hole was inside the one-inch aiming mark.

You are probably tired of hearing about my preference for a standard plex-type reticle over most of the ballistic reticles that have become so popular in recent years. I'm not a sniper, but rather a hunter who prefers to pit his stalking skills against those of his quarry. Having said that, however, I do agree that a ballistic reticle can help other hunters make more precise bullet placement on game, especially at long distances.

The glass-etched #6 reticle allows range adjustment via the V6's ASV bullet-drop-compensating system. The system uses a ballistic turret which is based on a 100m zero and the bullet's trajectory in MOA at farther distances. To find the proper setting you'll have to find the amount of drop in MOA at each distance, preferably by shooting or else



**The grindings and coatings on Zeiss lenses are still some of the finest in the world."**

referring to a ballistic table for your chosen cartridge and load. Then you can adjust the sightline of the turret to correspond to each range.

Each click of the rotary knob corresponds to ¼MOA. Each fourth graduation is labelled with a number which signifies one MOA up to a total of 20 MOA per full rotation. If the ballistic values for accurate aiming at 100m are known, the number of required clicks can be directly calculated and noted for various distances.

Once you've worked it out, ASV is easy to use: Simply dial to the correct mark and shoot. It works most effectively if, after getting your rifle zeroed at 100yd (or 100m), you actually shoot it all the way out to the maximum distance at which you will attempt to

shoot game and make a note of where the bullet hits at each range so that you can dial it in.

The V6 Conquest can also be had with two ballistic-drop compensating reticles instead of the simple 06 reticle. The non-illuminated ZBR-2 and ZMOA-2 reticles have different graduations that you can use as visual ranging guides, rather than dialling the turret.

The Conquest V6 employs only top-quality glass, material and manufacturing. It is fully multi-coated on all air-to-glass surfaces and fully waterproof. The V6 was temperature tested at the factory by subjecting the scope to a deep freeze from -25°C to 50°C; shock testing for 90 minutes at 15 times G-force, which corresponds to the recoil of a .460 Weatherby Magnum; and for resistance to erosion by subjecting it to a salt spray for 24 hours.

The grindings and coatings on Zeiss lenses are still some of the finest in the world. They are among the most aberration-free lenses money can buy. If you're looking for a top quality scope in this magnification range for your long range hunting or varmint outfit, the Zeiss Conquest V6 is one to consider.

It's a rugged and reliable riflescope with optics befitting the venerable name of Carl Zeiss. 

ABOVE: Three reticles are available in the V6 3-18x50: the #6 (as tested), ZMOA-2 (centre) and ZBR-2.



## **Zeiss Conquest V6 ASV 3-18x50mm**

**Magnification:** 3-18x

**Tube diameter:** 30mm

**Objective lens:** 50mm

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(1.8in)

**Eye relief:** 90mm (3.5in)

**Field of View:** 12.4-2.1m at 100m  
(37-6ft at 100yd)

**Elevation adjustment:** 60MOA

**Windage adjustment:** 50MOA

**Twilight factor:** 8.5-30.0

**Exit pupil diameter:** 9.5-2.8mm

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**Reticles:** 06, ZBR-2, ZMOA-2

**Price (RRP):** \$2850





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### FEATURES

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**Barrel:** Cold hammer forged barrel,

**Stock:** Polymer w/Soft grip inlays. Removable recoil pad w/storage compartment

**Barrel Length:** 56cm/22" Standard Calibres - 62cm/24" Magnum Calibres

**Bolt:** 3 locking-lug action

**Trigger:** Single Stage adjustable

**Magazine :** 5 shot flush fitting double stack magazine 5+1 (4+1 Magnum)

**Surface Finish:** Stainless



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# Spotty fish in sweet water

**Hunting or fishing, they're both excuses to get out into the wild.**



**1**

**NOW** and then I leave my rifles and bows at home and take to wild places with a fishing rod. I have just as much fun fishing as I do hunting, but the rhythm of a river or stream is what I need when I'm stressed. My dad and I spent some time chasing trout in skinny water recently and it was just the reset I needed.

Trout occupy an interesting space in my mind. Much like many animals I chase, they are an introduced species that only exists here to be enjoyed by us. It's an interesting concept when you consider it. They've become part of our culture in the same ways sambar deer and wild boar have, albeit with notably less controversy surrounding them. I've always been conscious of the wonderful opportunities that trout provide us, and at the same time I've maintained staunch enthusiasm for our home-grown natives.

What draws me to trout more recently is the country they are found in.

I'm lucky that I can take a short drive and find myself in

the middle of wild New England gorge country, where the water seems to always be fast and crystal clear. The sound of the water surging over rocks, combined with the height of the mountains, reminds us that there are things far more powerful and important in the universe than us. It almost seems impossible that a fish can sit effortlessly in such rapids until you see a silver flash dart across the river and give your lure a whack.

Besides one or two isolated attempts a couple of decades ago, fishing for trout with my dad is a new experience. I always jump at the opportunity to take him with me as I feel it is returning the favour for all the time he invested in my brothers and I when we were kids. Of course,

he would never expect to be repaid in an obligatory manner, but I like to think he enjoys being able to sit back now while we do the hard work; scouting, driving, organising the food, etc.

We like to talk about trout and how interesting they are but deep down we'll always be die-hard cod fishos.

As we walk up the river and take it in turns having the first crack at each hole, I consider just how lucky we are to have access to so many wild places

in our country. With a little bit of knowledge and equipment, we can enjoy an afternoon chasing fish that were brought here from Europe and North America and enjoy the interesting sparks of imagination that they summon.

We seldom see anybody when we are out and about, and I'm in two minds about

**“**

**I consider just how lucky we are to have access to so many wild places in our country.”**

that. On one hand, it's nice to have the place to yourself, and on the other, it'd be nice to give a nod to a like-minded person who is after the same wild experience as us.

Until next time, enjoy living your wilderlife. 📍

Follow Dylan on Instagram at *'\_wilderlife\_'*

## ON THIS PAGE

**1** Often, the country we find ourselves in is rewarding enough.

**2** Dylan's dad with a beautiful brown trout.



**2**





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- First Shot Auto Zero





# The trouble with majorities

Pushing for public land hunting against governments that won't listen.



IF you've been watching your grocery bill steadily rise despite not buying any more each week, the subject of hunting to put food on the table without breaking the bank may have crossed your mind. If you're in a state with accessible public land hunting – such as Victoria, NSW or South Australia – then a hunting trip can (in the appropriate seasons) represent a sustainable, ethically sourced and rewarding way to fill the freezer and feed your family with free-range meat.

Sadly, too many of Australia's shooters are denied that opportunity due to a “lock it up” approach to managing Crown Land, and shooters and their families are missing out as a result.

Queensland's state forests, for example, occupy the same land size as Belgium yet are closed to recreational shooters and most volunteer pest controllers. A petition a couple of years ago to trial state forest hunting in Queensland received enormous popular support but was undermined by vested interests and rejected out of hand by the government.

The sparsely populated Northern Territory (which has a population of less than 250,000, and literally half of them live in Darwin) only has two very small blocks (both near Darwin) set aside for hunting, and WA does not have public land hunting at all.

WA is so famously anti-gun their opposition to anyone

hunting on Crown Land is unsurprising, but it still doesn't make sense, considering most of the state's population lives near Perth and more than 500,000 square kilometres of the state is desert, with much of the rest barely inhabited.

Shooters Union firmly believes Crown Land (including state forests) which is not actively being used, regardless of which state or territory it is in, should be available for recreational hunting.



**Crown Land which is not actively being used should be available for recreational hunting.”**

It's been proven that hunting contributes vast sums of money to the economies of regional Australia each year, leads to better health outcomes, and provides a stronger connection between the city and the bush. And that's without getting into the environmental benefits that come from having thousands of skilled volunteers not only eliminating invasive pests, but paying the government fees to do so.

We're constantly being told we should all get out there and see more of Australia, and as shooters we'd all love to — if only the government would stop putting obstacles in our way, and let us do our part for the environment, for regional areas, for our families and for Australia as a whole.

On another note, the federal election is an opportune time to share a cautionary tale of what happens when shooters don't take any interest in their political well-being. It's all about Western Australia.

Western Australia is the poster child for what happens when shooters do not vote for pro-gun politicians. The Firearms Amendment Bill 2021 was (at time of writing) likely to sail through its third and final reading.

The Hansard record of proceedings on 22 February makes for sobering reading on what can only be described as naked contempt for, and outright hostility to, WA's 80,000-plus licensed shooters from some of the government MPs.

Burns Beach MP Mark Folkard, a former police officer, explicitly said during the debate, “Any firearm that we can remove from the community is a good thing.”

Not any *illegal* firearm. Not any *unregistered* firearm. Any firearm, full stop.

Worse, when North West Central MP Vincent Catania stood up to represent his constituents and air the

ABOVE: New state flag? Western Australia is notoriously anti-gun and a super-majority government does not help our cause.

concerns of law-abiding firearms users, he was abused and derided for his trouble, with Cockburn MP David Scaife in particular referring to Mr Catania's representations as “shameful” and “despicable”.

Swan Hills MP Jessica Shaw also raised the vital point — one we have expressed ourselves, too — asking whether or not schematics (such as those in old shooting magazines or reference books) would fall foul of the Bill. Her questions were not given the dignity of an acknowledgement, much less a response.

The McGowan government has made its contempt — actually, no, its hatred — of shooters abundantly clear and while it's too late for our sandgroping friends, the rest of the country's shooters now have a crystal-clear demonstration of what happens when you give gun-haters a super-majority in parliament.

The next time you vote, ask yourself: “Do I want where I live to end up like WA, with a government that hates me personally and thinks I am scum for enjoying a legitimate activity?” Assuming the answer is no, then vote accordingly — and make sure the gun-haters are down the bottom of your ballot. ☹

*Graham Park is the president of Shooters Union Australia.*





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# WEATHERBY/FIOCCHI PHOTO COMPETITION

**WINNER**



“I think I shot the Fiocchi fox,” says Dillon Conroy, who set up this neat photo of a fox he shot with his .223 under the light. “The long grass hid everything but this one strolled past only 30m away in one of the few open areas. It wasn’t worried at all even though it knew I was there. I didn’t give it time to get worried.”



Ben Hurley shot this fox while doing the evening rounds on some early autumn lambing ewes. He also shot its mate in the same session but he says the result was less than presentable for a photo. “I suppose you’ve got to expect that when using 100-grain .243 Fiocchi bullets!” he reckons.

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"He was a tricky 150m shot after about a 300m stalk and I had to shoot him on the run," says Doug Bryson. That's bloody good shooting, Doug! "Anyway, the cattle property owner and I were happy," he says.



Georgia Howell fired in another pic from her schoolies trip, where she gave her .223 a thorough workout using Fiocchi ammo. Naturally, rabbits were on the card in addition to the goats, foxes and pigs.



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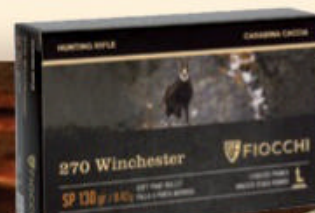
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**PLEASE NOTE:** this competition is not a game of chance. To achieve entry, photos must be submitted to the satisfaction of the Sporting Shooter editorial team. All entrants must be over 18 years of age and need to be suitably licensed as per individual state firearm regulations and requirements. The firearms will be issued to winners through licensed firearm dealers upon sighting a permit to purchase. Firearm industry staff, paid shooting publication contributors and staff are not eligible to enter this competition. For full terms and conditions please visit [sportingshooter.com.au/wfphotocomp](http://sportingshooter.com.au/wfphotocomp)



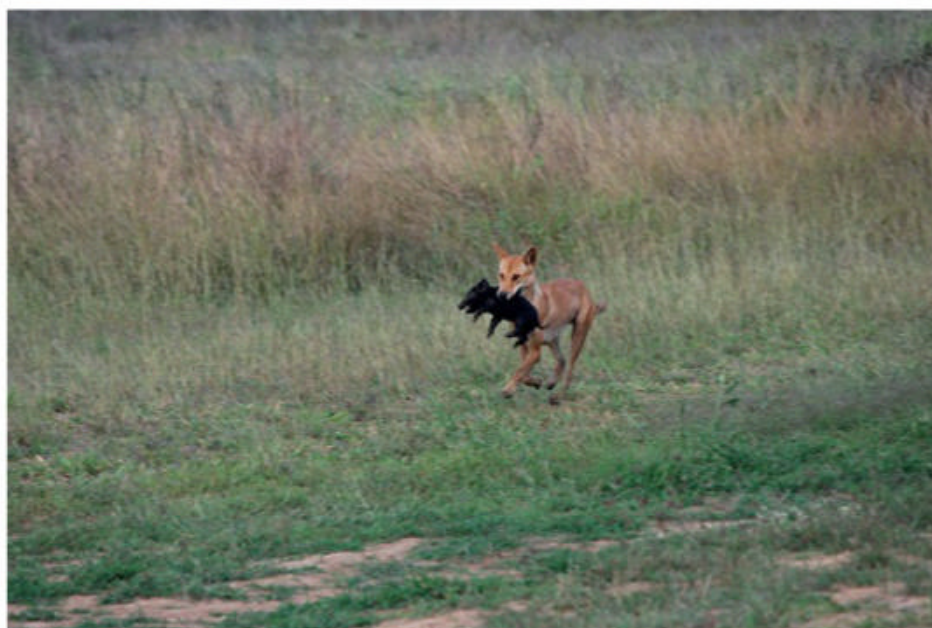
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# House of straw

Chris Cameron lets a dingo take the first shot.



I HAD grown up in sheep country where dingoes were an ever-present threat, to be hunted down at almost any cost. I moved to sugar-cane country in tropical North Queensland, where feral pigs are a hugely destructive problem, destroying both the standing crop and the structure of the flood-irrigated, kilometre-square fields. Once the cane grew over waist high it became nearly impossible to get to the pigs in the blocks.

Having plenty of water and food all around them, they had little reason to come out, though they occasionally did, giving me a bit of a chance to cull. Ranges varied enormously so I mostly used my flat shooting .257 Weatherby. If I could see

them clearly, I could get them! I was soon given the job of pig control on the huge property, as well as my regular work – very welcome, if challenging. I shot almost 400 there.

One afternoon I went out along an irrigation channel where there was a bit of headland, and saw three big sows and a dozen or so piglets. Just as I was about to start down, wearing my very effective home-made yowie suit, a movement caught my eye. It was a big dog trotting towards the pigs, head up and alert, but making no effort to stalk.

Intrigued to watch, I stopped and readied camera.

The dog came across the remains of one of my previous kills and paused for a bit of a

LEFT: The dingoes do their bit for feral animal control in cane country.

chew. There wasn't much left, so he continued on, still trotting steadily on the short, recently slashed headland. When he was well within 50m of them, one of the sows spotted him, turned quickly with the rest and trotted (not galloped) around the corner of the cane block – out of my sight, sadly.

The dog simply kept trotting and went around after them.

I waited a few moments, thinking that the show was over, when suddenly the dog raced back around the corner with his throttle jammed open, carrying something and heading straight towards me! No sign of mum pig.

At flat gallop it took only moments till he was back to me, noticing me when less than 20m away. He didn't waver, going straight past carrying a very-much-alive and protesting piglet who had a dinner date he really could not refuse!

The dog deviated slightly before disappearing into the next block.

Pig grieving time is obviously short. Within 15 minutes the mob was back out feeding and it was my turn, quickly rolling the three sows. The dogs would quickly tidy up! 📷

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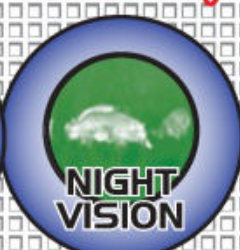
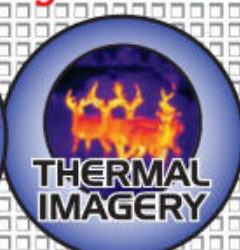
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# 6mm vs .25-cal on deer

A quarter of an inch is barely more than 6mm, but it can make a big difference to a cartridge's performance.

**THE** effectiveness of dual-purpose varmint/big-game combination cartridges on deer depends almost entirely on a handload with a heavy-for-calibre controlled-expansion bullet driven as fast as safe chamber pressures will allow. At least this was what we used to be told. The reason being that if the bullet met more resistance than the thin rib cage, it must hold together and penetrate deeply enough to reach the vitals.

The problem is, deer don't always stand around posing nicely side-on. They can be quartering one way or the other. A bullet aimed to hit the heart-lung area may land too far back and have to plough through the forward part of the paunch, or if it lands too far forward, it may strike the shoulder.

With either placement, the bullet is going to meet some measure of resistance; in the

latter case, more often than not, heavy muscle and bone will prevent the bullet from driving deep enough to reach the animal's vital organs.

When a conventional soft-point with a thin, tapered jacket and a soft lead core lands in the chest of a deer standing broadside it usually gets into the lungs before it breaks apart and causes a spectacular drop-in-its-tracks kill. But on the angling shots it is more likely this kind of bullet wouldn't get through bone, let alone break it, and the deer might be knocked down, but then get up and run off. He'd suffer a wound, but seldom leave a blood trail to follow.

Every serious hunter would know that standard bullets of the cup-and-core variety are not the best choice for shooting deer in the majority of different situations encountered in the field. This applies not only to dual-purpose cartridges like the 6mm and .25s, but to any cartridge which sees use on deer.

The .250 Savage was used for hunting white-tailed deer in the USA in early days, but

its 87gn and 100gn bullets often came apart at close range. The later .257 Roberts, which was capable of driving 117 and 120gn bullets at about 2800fps, was better but most deer hunters preferred larger calibres like the .270 Winchester.

The scenario changed when the .243 Winchester and .244 Remington appeared in 1955. Ammo makers loaded the .243 with a 100gn bullet particularly for deer, but things only started to get interesting after the .240 Weatherby came along in 1968 and Remington legitimised the .25-06 a year later.



2





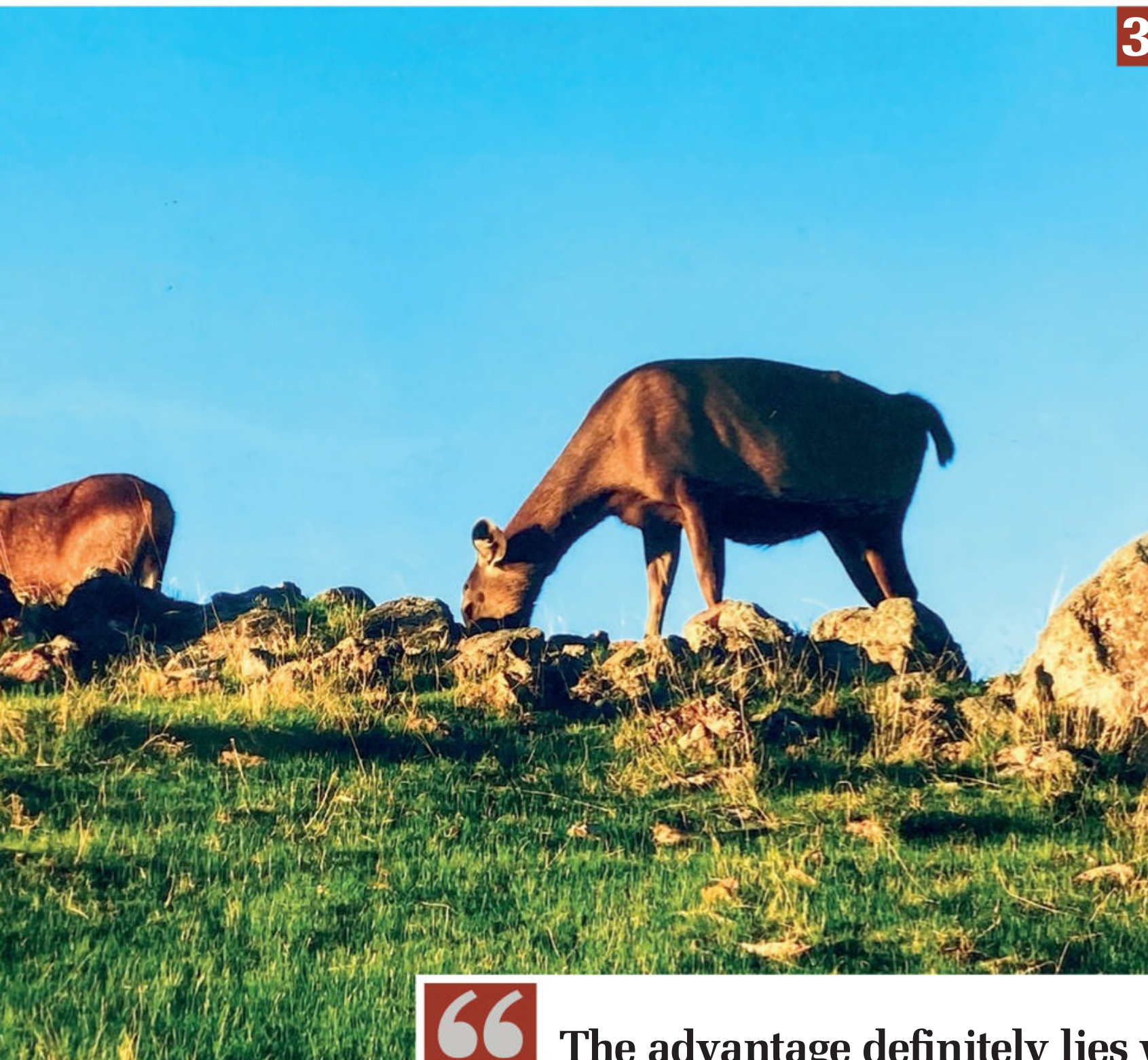
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## ON THIS SPREAD

**1** From left: The .243 Win, 6mm Rem and .240 Weatherby with Barnes 85gn TSX BT, Nosler 95gn Silvertip and Nosler 100gn Partition; then the .257 Roberts, .25-06 and .257 Weatherby with Barnes 100gn TSX BT, Hornady 110gn ELD-X and Remington 120gn Core-Lokt.

**2** Caribou are not hard to kill. A good 110gn bullet from the .25-06 has all the power needed to put a bull down.

**3** It should be easy to land a 100gn .25-cal bullet in the heart-lung area of a sambar stag standing side-on and drop him on the spot.



**The advantage definitely lies with the .25s, not only from the standpoint of bullet diameter but sectional density and ballistic coefficient.”**

### Performance of 6mm bullets

When the 6mm cartridges came along the advertising hype was overwhelming and the .25s were relegated to second place. While the sixes may have had an edge for varminting, somehow they were also credited with being more potent on deer and other big game. Obviously this was untrue; the sixes are nowhere near as effective on big game and the advantage definitely lies with the .25s, not only from the standpoint of bullet diameter but sectional density and ballistic coefficient. This is true despite the fact that

construction of bullets in both calibres was beefed up.

I've killed a number of deer with various 6mm rifles, but my favourite cartridge, one that accounted for about 30 deer up to the size of red stag, was the .257 Roberts, which was long-throated to push the Barnes 100gn TSX along at 3250fps. Performance was hard to fault, but I always picked my shots carefully and, more importantly, chose the right bullet for the job.

It was only recently that I changed over to the .25-06, not for the slight increase in power it offers, but because the Kimber Classic was lighter for a guy of my advanced years to carry over hill and dale for hours at a time.

The label “mountain rifle” has been applied to any lighter-than-usual bolt action chambered for a cartridge suited to deer and other medium game. While the style is attractive to me, I question

the general utility of super-light muskets that scale less than 6lb (2.7kg) field ready. While I am an admirer of light rifles, I will admit that my 7lb (3.2kg) minimum weight is purely personal and if anyone prefers an anorexic outfit that scales 5.5lb all-up and is difficult to hold steady enough to shoot accurately, then best of luck to 'em.

Over the years I've accounted for a number of deer with the .243, 6mm Remington and .240



Weatherby, as well as a good many large boars. Most of them were killed with Barnes 85gn TSX BT, the Hornady 85gn InterBond or 90gn Speer, but my personal favourite for deer is Hornady's 90gn GMX. Stronger construction wins out over a higher BC which, coupled with the fact that it can be loaded to higher velocity, gives it a little flatter trajectory, making it easier to place the bullet exactly where you want it to go over longer ranges.

The only possible reason for choosing say, the 105gn Speer or Hornady 103gn ELD-X over the 95gn would be for use in wooded country where ranges are not likely to be overly long. Still, after using heavy 6mm bullets like the 105gn Speer a good deal under a variety of hunting conditions and different size deer, I doubt if there is any advantage to be gained from the heaviest 6mm bullets.

Nearly everyone who makes bullets in .243 calibre lists a good 90-95gn bullet that will do quite well on most deer and some will score faster kills on the long shots than will the heavier bullets because they expand to form a larger mushroom and tear up more tissue. If shots must be taken from the rear or front angles, on the larger deer, they often lack penetration. There is little doubt that the Barnes 85gn TSX BT and some controlled expansion designs usually give deeper penetration than standard 100gn cup-and-core bullets. Excellent examples are Hornady's 85gn InterBond and 90gn GMX, Nosler's 90gn Expansion Tip and 90gn AccuBond, but I've always found monolithic designs more reliable in this regard than controlled expansion bullets.

## **.25 is more effective**

When the 6mm cartridges were introduced in 1955 some gunwriters got carried away and claimed they were more effective on deer than the .25s.

Anyone who has done much hunting and has studied the ballistics of both calibres will know that this is not so. The advantage lies with the .25s, both from the standpoint of bullet diameter and sectional density of the heaviest bullets for both calibres. Sure, the 6mm may offer a slight advantage for varmint shooting, but the .25s are superior for shooting deer of all sizes under all conditions. Today, with the profusion of better bullets in both diameters, the quarter-inch calibre shows even more of an edge.

The .257 Roberts was stifled at birth by being badly underloaded and put out in rifles with short actions, short throats and short magazines. To gain the .257's full potential it must be chambered in a long action with a long throat, and handloaded with a stoutly structured bullet. In the past, hunters favoured 120gn bullets like the Remington Core-Lokt that had an SD of .260 as compared to .242 for 100gn .243 bullets. Not a major difference, but in spitzer shape the 120gn .25 had a BC of .410 to .450 against an average .375 for the 100gn .243.

Conventional cup-and-core bullets will handle the largest deer in the .25-06, but only when the distance is no longer than 200yd or so; at very close range they are likely to break up if they hit heavy bone. I have not used the Speer 120gn BTSP but it has a BC of .480 and, leaving the muzzle at 3000fps, delivers 1500ft-lb of energy at 300yd. It is not listed as being a Hot Cor or Grand Slam design so I am unable to comment on its performance.

Over the years bullets have undergone terrific improvement, both in form and construction, and there's no longer any need to load heavy .25 bullets for deer and other big game. Today, there are many alternatives including the Barnes 100gn



On fallow buck running straight away, a stout .25 calibre bullet aimed at the base of his neck will break his spine.

“

## **My personal favourite for deer is Hornady's 90gn GMX. Stronger construction wins out over a higher BC.”**

TSX BT which has an SD of .216 and BC of .370. There's also a 115gn TSX FB with the higher SD of .249 but lower BC of .335. The 120gn Speer has a higher BC of .480 but barely manages a velocity of 3000fps in the .25-06, whereas a nicely pointed 110gn bullet like the Hornady Interbond leaves the muzzle over 300fps faster.

This 110gn is perhaps the best weight for general deer hunting with the .257 and .25-06. The Interbond has a BC (.390) nearly equal to 117 and 120gn spitzers, and its SD is only slightly less at .238. Having a thick, tough jacket and bonded core, it retains 85-90 percent of its weight, forms a large mushroom and penetrates deeply.

For smaller deer the 110gn ELD-X is also a good bet,

showing the best extended range terminal performance of almost any other bullet in its class. The 110gn bullets leave the muzzle only 60fps slower than 100gn bullets in my .25-06, but energy at 400yd is higher — 1550ft-lb against 1250ft-lb. Good bullet performance can be relied upon to beat the energy factor every time.

Case capacity of the .25-06 is 16 percent greater than the .257 Roberts and although it is not classified as being a magnum cartridge, it offers magnum-level velocity and striking power, a flat trajectory and low wind drift. The king-size .257 Weatherby Magnum drives 100-110gn bullets barely 100fps faster than the .25-06 and barrel life is 50 percent shorter.

There is no doubt that the .257 and .25-06 will do a much better job than the 6mm on game larger than deer, even when the best 6mm bullets are used. But this is assuming that the rifle is in the hands of a steady marksman who takes care to place his bullet where it will do the most good. The late Bob Milek once told me he regularly used his .257 Roberts to shoot elk for the larder. The .25s are capable of handling caribou in open country, but I'd choose a larger calibre for game the size of elk and moose every time. 





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# HUNTING HARES







# Hare cut

**Leon Wright and his mate Blake were told they were welcome to the pigs, but to take the hares as well.**

**“I** know you men are more interested in chasing the pigs while you are here, but could you do something about our hare problem as well?” asked Wendy, my son’s sister-in-law. Pigs were our main aim during our week-long stay but her request got our attention. The hare hunting held as much appeal as the pig hunting, for me anyway.

Stubble made it hard to see the hares sometimes but it didn’t save them every time.





1



2

“

We picked up the first hare in the glare of the harsh light and, as expected, it wasn't happy.”

**WENDY** said all of the hard work they had done planting trees was being jeopardised by hares, which were nipping the tops off the newly planted trees and not even eating them, just destroying the trees. Closer inspection of the trees showed the substantial damage the hares had done.

With the coming of nightfall, we loaded up the 4x4 and headed off, looking forward to what the coming hours of hunting held for us. While Blake was using his Howa .22-250 for any fox or pig we came across, I had the Savage .17 HMR. Suspecting the hare population had been getting a bit of a tickle from the annoyed property owners, and might therefore be a bit nervous under our powerful spotlight, I had the .17 HMR topped with a Z-Vision light. I also had a Nitecore MT40GT as a backup.

Hares have the annoying habit of being continually on the move. Our plan was to find them with the aid of the big spotlight, then switch it off and change to the Z-Vision's green light. I prefer the green glow over its white or red. I have found the green light shows up any hare for safe shooting out to around 100 metres, with the added bonus of the hares being far less skittish.

We had only just started our run along the newly planted tree line when we picked up the first hare in the glare of the harsh light and, as expected, it wasn't happy with our appearance. Switching to the green light seemed to have a more calming effect on the hare. Looking through the Leupold variable set on nine power it looked like an easy shot.

However, the projectile zipped harmlessly by the hare, which started moving off. The miss could

have been attributed to a number of causes, but I suspect it was my lousy shooting. Not fazed by my poor effort, I quickly reloaded and made sure I didn't miss with the next shot, and we had our first hare in the bag — and a big one it was.

As we continued along the tree line I could see why Wendy was concerned about the hares. We were encountering them every 50 metres or so. There seemed to be no end of them. If they weren't among the new trees, they were heading

## ON THIS PAGE

**1** Blake with a couple of hares taken with the .17 HMR during a run along the newly planted tree plantation.

**2** The two rifles Leon used on the hunting trip: a Tikka T3 in .22-250 (top) and a Savage in .17 HMR.

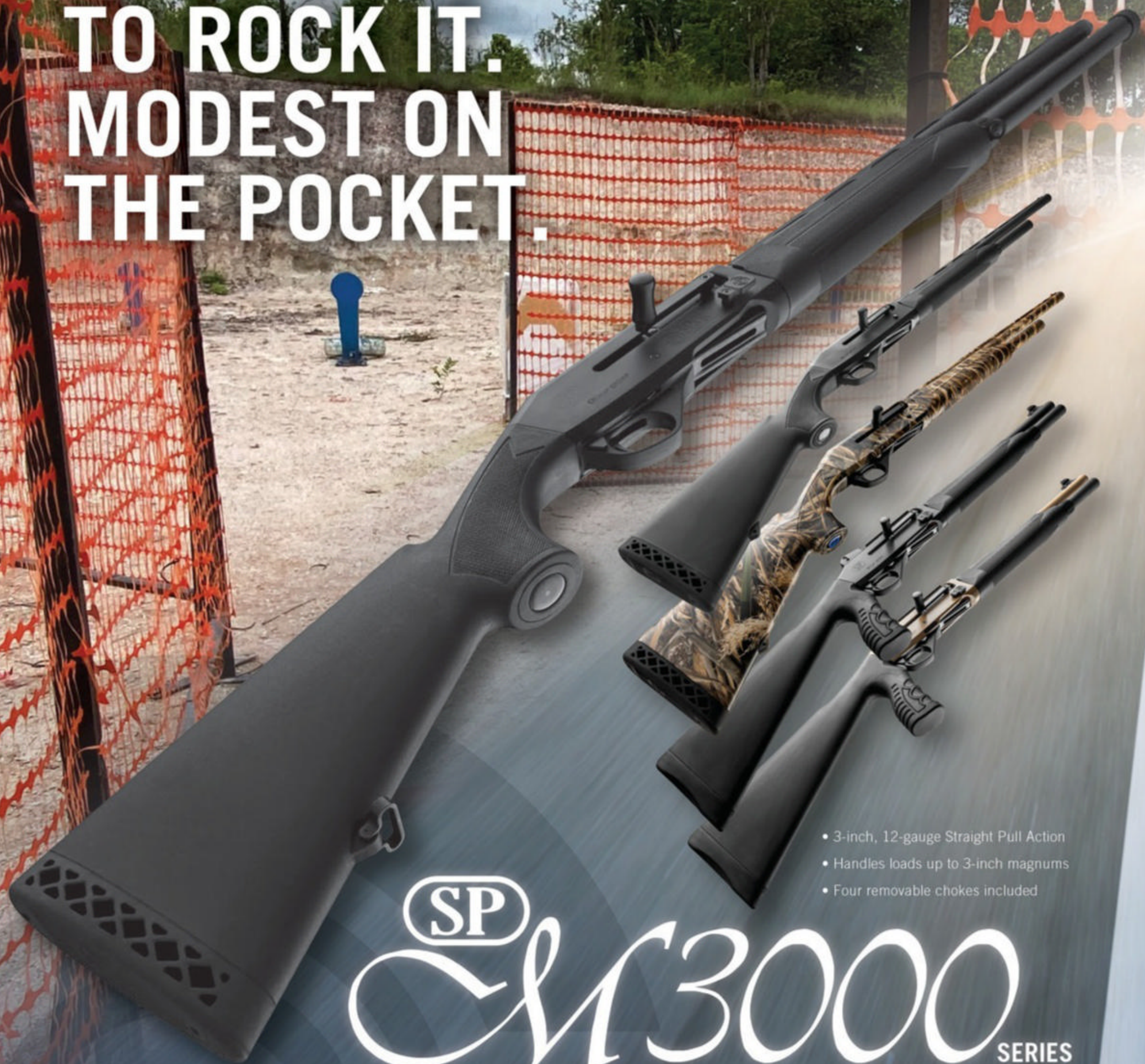
**3** Still mornings are perfect for the .17 HMR. Hares were taken at well over 100 metres.



3



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“

**By the time we were ready to call it a night we had taken around 20 hares and a fox.”**

for them. Most shots were around 50 metres but the odd one presented itself further out in the wheat stubble.

As usual when hunting out this way during the dry weather, the dust was playing havoc with us, no matter how slow we were driving, and we had to waste valuable seconds waiting for the dust to settle or drift away before we could even attempt to line up a hare. With no wind present, which was surprising, the dust hung heavily in the air, which in turn made taking shots over 75 metres, even with the aid of the green beam, quite difficult. The hare's eyes were easy to pick up in the green beam, but I like to know what else is near the hare before shooting.

Most shots were relatively easy, except when we came upon a pair

of hares feeding together. In these cases, it was a matter of follow the leader, for as soon as one hare started moving the other would follow. Needless to say, the trick here was to take out the lead hare first, hoping that the hare following would hesitate long enough for us to get off another shot. In most cases this idea worked but occasionally it didn't.

The freshly planted wind break was less than a kilometre long, so it didn't take us long to complete the first run. We turned around and drove back, on the lookout for any hares we had missed. We picked up a few strays.

Satisfied with our efforts we headed off over to the recently stripped stubble in search of a fox or two. The foxes were light on for some reason. We found hares

everywhere we went, and we knocked over all we could. By the time we were ready to call it a night we had taken around 20 hares and a fox that had foolishly held in the spotlight long enough for Blake to line it up with the .22-250.

Early next morning, during our run to put some yabby nets into a dam, the potential of the .17 HMR really showed. We spotted a pair of hares 120 metres away in the stubble. With not a breath of wind present, the first hare fell to the 17-grain projectile, then the second followed, cementing our belief in the tiny cartridge when conditions were perfect.

However, the following night was a monumental flop for the wind had really picked up during the day and looked like it had no intention of calming down with the setting of the sun. I seriously toyed with the idea of retiring the .17 HMR in favour of my Tikka T3 in .22-250, a calibre which I thought would fare better in the gale-force winds. Foolishly,

## ON THIS PAGE

**4** Sabina and Emma joined the crew on a number of outings.

**5** The boys had plenty of success against hares under a spotlight, with an extra advantage under a coloured light

**6** The selection of ammunition that Leon used during the hunting trip.



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Inflex recoil pad technology which softens recoil  
forces and pulls the comb away from your face.





“

**We found hares everywhere we went, and we knocked over all we could.”**

## ON THIS PAGE

**7**The hares were doing a huge amount of damage to the new plantation, chopping the saplings off at the top.

**8**A pig and numerous hares fell to Leon's Beretta 12-gauge Classic, proving the versatility of the shotgun.

I decided to stick with the .17 HMR. With the wind and dust at an extreme level for the .17 HMR, I had to give up on it. It was practically impossible to hit a hare over what I would call normal ranges.

I used my Tikka for the rest of the night. We were yet to see a pig. We had seen their wallows in the dams but the sign was all old, except for one dam way out on the property's boundary. We opted to concentrate our efforts in this area.

A late afternoon hunt almost delivered the goods. Blake put a pig up out of its bed, opposite the dam. The pig was quick to get on its way and gained the safety of the thick scrub before Blake could collar it.

The following afternoon Bruce came and got us as the workers were on the last run of the canola crop and if the pigs they had seen earlier on were still in the crop they were bound to be flushed out during the last run. Alas, such was not the case.

As far as Blake and I were concerned this was starting to get personal. It hardened our resolve to score a pig before our trip ended. With another big night planned on hares and foxes after dinner we thought we would go all out and try for a pig just before dark, back near the dam. It was a safe bet the

pigs were holed up in the opposite paddock, which was full of burrs and high grass.

Arriving half an hour before dark we split up, with Blake following the fence line and me bush-bashing through the wall of thistles. If I put them up I knew the shooting was going to be close so I opted for my Beretta under-and-over loaded with 00 buckshot.

As I gingerly waded through the thistles, I was surprised at all the pathways; they seemed to be everywhere. Nearing the end of the paddock I spotted movement under a tree about 50 metres away. It was a pig and if it stuck to its course, it would run into me. Then it was swallowed up in the high grass. Not to be deterred, I continued on my path and as I rounded a clump of thistles, I ran slap bang into the pig. A rather large brindle sow stood there, rooting away in the thistles, no more than four metres away, and it didn't even sense my presence.

In response to my soft whistle the pig raised its head in time to stop a load of buckshot. It was only one pig but it gave me a great deal of satisfaction. I have worked less for a lot more pigs.

Buoyed by our little success, we still had a good night on the hares and foxes to look forward to. 

## .17 HMR, for better and worse

I consider my Savage .17 HMR ideal for hunting hares. I have a bit of a love-hate relationship with the .17 HMR. The dynamic little 17-grain projectile is an emphatic killer of small game such as rabbits and hares and, in the hands of an experienced hunter, can be stretched to take even larger game at a pinch. Its low recoil is popular with those who are recoil intolerant, and its accuracy has to be seen to be believed when the conditions are right.

But ideal conditions aren't always available. The wind is usually blowing, and it is not often you encounter a dead still night while out spotlighting.

Early morning is the best time to hunt over the stubble paddocks as conditions are usually calm, with little or no wind and under these conditions the diminutive 17gn projectile can put down hares at impressive ranges — out to 150 metres — dropping them with little fuss providing you avoid the thick wheat stubble and stalks from canola plants that are thick enough to deflect the tiny projectile.

So, you can see it is not always smooth sailing when hunting with the .17 HMR.





7



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# SAMBAR HUNTING

David with the  
sambar calf.







# A prize for perseverance

**Years of reconnaissance and accumulated knowledge finally deliver results for David Hughes.**

**O**ver 15 years I'd made reconnaissance trips to a state forest north-west of the big smoke. I'd seen rub trees, found many hoof prints, and even had a couple of fleeting glimpses. Once I was startled when one honked at me, but I had never yet grassed a sambar.





**I HAD** also learnt heaps about the habits of sambar from hunting around Dartmouth with some very experienced hunters.

Now, with a day trip into the forest planned, the chance came to put it all together.

I had a particular creek system in mind, because it was always pretty wet and adjoined open pasture properties on the eastern boundary of the forest. The drought of 2019 had pushed the deer out of many ephemeral creeks, but this one I thought would have kept a few deer in it. I also figured the nearby national park would likely have seeded new deer into the state forest as well. A couple of good seasons since the drought meant lush growth in the cattle pastures to supplement the natural browsing.

I planned to be in the right zone – where the forest bordered the open grazing country – by dawn. This meant I was up and out of bed by 4:15am, a highly unusual event for a retired gent with habits made lazy by COVID! I'd packed the old Prado the night before, so hit the deserted streets half an hour later with half a cup of tea and my second slice of marmalade on toast to fortify my exit from suburbia.

I departed in high spirits, very much looking forward to the feel of a rifle slung over my shoulder and the whiff of sambar in the air. The northerly breeze suggested a particular line of stalk which would not be too arduous for my aging body.

In the half light, I nosed the Prado into a spur track blocked by a locked forestry gate. Some scallywags had pushed a new track around one gatepost. Regardless, it was my intention to walk the ridgeline track nice and quietly over the last kilometre, rather than disturb the area with the noise of the vehicle. I extracted my Winchester Model 70 in .30-06 from its case, took some ammo from its locked box and shouldered my pack.

It was an absolute pleasure to be alone in the bush, tuning in to the sounds of the awakening birds as I scoured the earth for spoor. A honeyeater chirruped overhead; still too dark to see it. It had rained heavily a couple of days before, so any sign was fresh. I saw where a wombat had been scratching and had left its fresh droppings. I heard a wallaby bounding off loudly to my right; thankfully headed downwind and away



## ON THIS SPREAD

**1** A rub tree found on an exploratory visit years before.

**2** Scouting the forest's edge.

**3** Fresh sign gets the heart pumping.

from my target watershed. The breeze was very faint and hitting my left cheek. Overhead, a thick cloud bank delayed the appearance of the sun. Perfect!

I soon reached the fence, which ran north-south on the perimeter of the farm, stretching away toward Glenburn. I had not seen any deer sign along the ridge. This was no surprise as there was no forage and no reason for sambar to be there, other than traversing to another watershed or perhaps thinking about a bedding spot for the daylight hours ahead.

A rough old vehicle track turned left and ran steeply downhill. I took it, negotiating heavily eroded sections and whopping big fallen





“

**It was an absolute pleasure to be alone in the bush, tuning in to the sounds of the awakening birds.”**

trees that intermittently blocked it.

About halfway down the hill, I found a nice fresh hoof print of a medium-sized sambar where a game trail crossed my track in the direction of the grazing lands. Like a fisherman getting a few nibbles, my blood began pumping with a bit more vigour. At the next game trail I sidled to my right along the faint pad, where I found further spoor, both new and old.

My attention was now on high alert as I eased to the very edge of

the forest and took in the expansive view of the pastures on the other side of the boundary fence.

I saw nothing when I scanned the territory with my binoculars, so I retraced my steps and resumed my downhill course. Intrepid motorcyclists had conveniently forged new trails through the thick brush around a massive fallen gum. More sign was appearing, so I elected once again to poke my way along the next game trail, leading to a viewing







“

**I was sort of taken aback to be actually seeing sambar under the exact conditions that I had imagined for so long!”**

spot overlooking the verdant, undulating pastures which I thought would be irresistible to any self-respecting deer.

I was literally leaning on a star picket of the fence, screened from view by perimeter timber, when my brain suddenly registered deer! After all my fruitless sorties in the area I was sort of taken aback to be actually seeing sambar under the exact conditions that I had imagined for so long!

A fine looking hind stood on my side of the fence, less than 100 metres off. Its calf was happily grazing on the thick grass growing on the forest verge. The wind was in my face and the animals were totally undisturbed. Soft golden sunlight highlighted their sleek coats, shining deep lustrous brown. As I watched, the hind melted back into the brush, showing me her lighter, yellowish rump. The calf stayed in view. I lined up using a convenient trunk as a rest.

ABOVE: A much younger David during one of his early trips into the forest.

I was pondering whether to shoot the hind or the calf. If I shot the hind, I didn't know whether the calf would hang about long enough for me to bag it as well. That ran the risk of the calf starving to death without its mother, as I felt sure it would still be suckling. I didn't like the prospect of inflicting such suffering. I knew the calf would have veal-like meat; pale and tender and without any gamey character whatsoever.

OK, it would be the calf.

Ever so gently, I took up the pressure on the trigger, which I knew would break crisply when a force of a little over a kilogram was applied. The view through the Leupold VX-6HD was clear as a bell. The rifle barked, sending the 150gn projectile on its way. The calf flopped down without so much as a quiver, hit through both shoulders just above the heart.

Wow! I was absolutely exhilarated. The sun was barely over the horizon and I had my deer on the deck. I could scarcely believe how magically everything had worked in my favour. I was as pleased and excited as if it had been a trophy stag (well, OK, a 30 incher would have been more exciting).

I took a few photos, then set about the task of boning out the meat before the sun warmed things up.

I hung the meat in the shade to cool it in the crisp morning air while I just sat and soaked up the lovely forest panorama as the yellow glow revealed the new day. The calls of the pied butcherbird, surely the sweetest sound in the Aussie bush, added to the delightful atmosphere.

Years of effort in establishing the patterns of the local deer had paid off perfectly and I had bagged a deer exactly according to plan.

My euphoria passed as I shouldered my now-heavy backpack and faced the climb back up the hill and the traverse along the ridgeline to the 4WD. This was going to expend considerable perspiration. All in a day's hunting. ☺

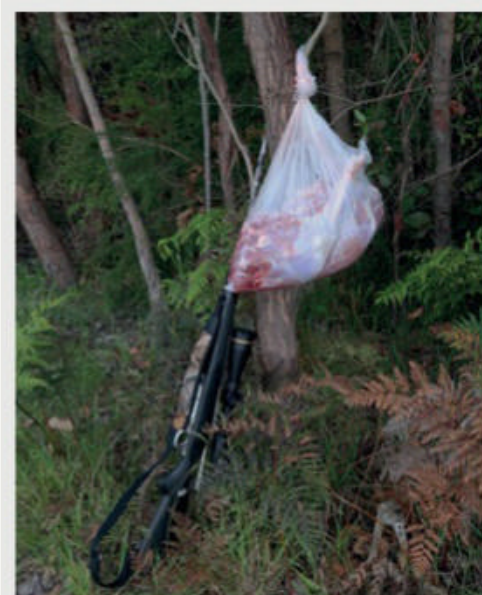
## Effective field dressing

When I butcher a smaller animal, I make an incision down the inner hind leg, skinning around the haunch and removing the hind leg at the pelvis. Leaving the hide in one piece creates a protective cape when rolling the carcass to the other side to repeat the process.

I drop the denuded hind legs, less hoofs, into a brand new clear plastic rubbish bag. These bags are sterile as purchased, so if care is taken not to contaminate the exposed meat with dirt or leaves, keeping quality is much enhanced.

I habitually use disposable gloves for my field butchery. Arguably, it's not necessary but it certainly reduces the risk of contamination.

The backstraps are removed next. Both shoulders of this calf were messed up by the rapidly expanding Winchester Deer Season XP bullet, but I decided to take some ribs from each side and found the heart intact. Not a bad haul from a really young animal.



TOP: The venison cooling off before packing out.

ABOVE: Part of the venison haul being made ready for cryo-vaccing and freezing.





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**SPECIES  
GUIDE**

# Greatest Of All Targets

Brian Boyle provides  
a guide to one of Australia's  
most ubiquitous game  
animals, the feral goat.



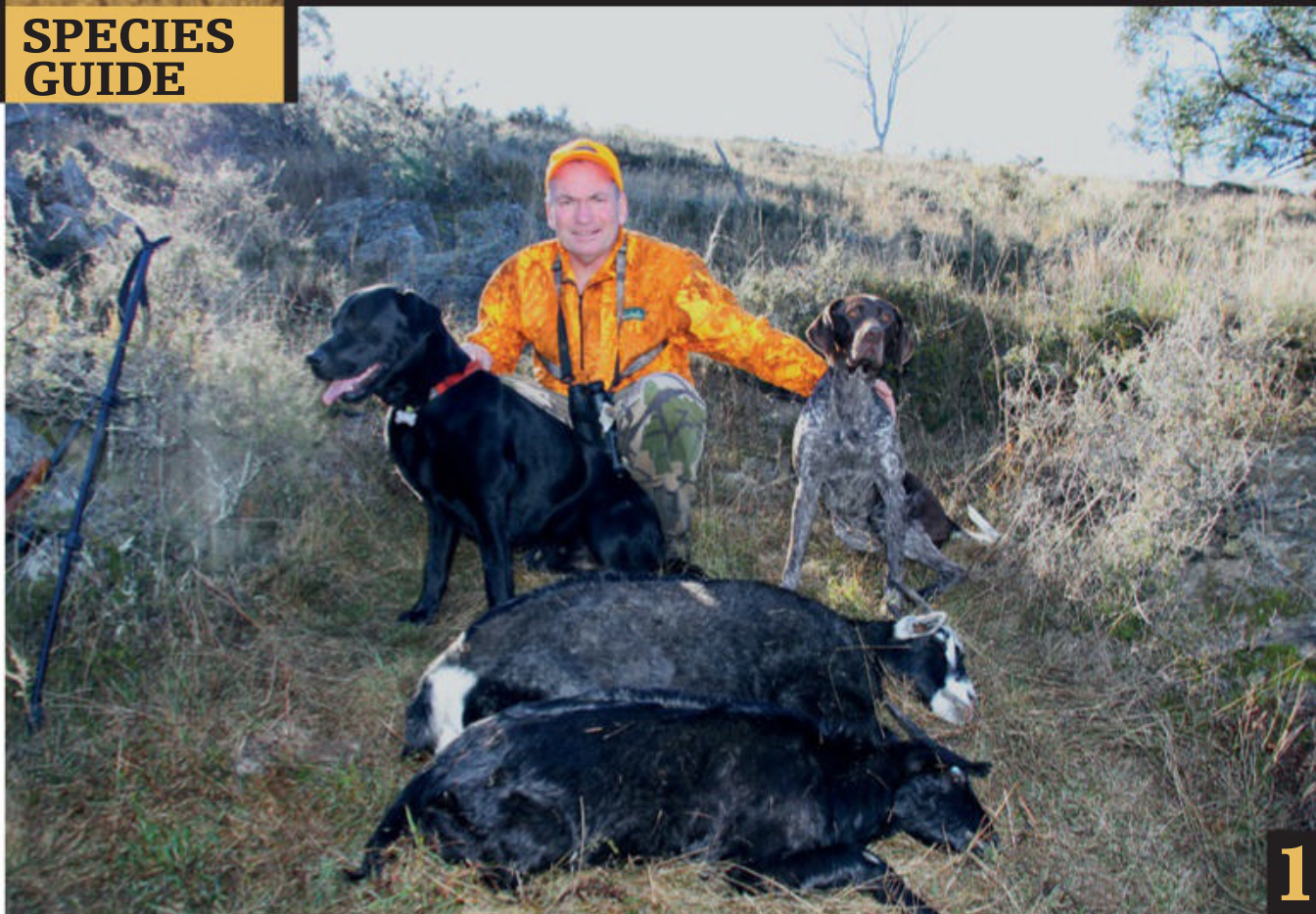


**W**ith an estimated population of 2.3 million spread across large portions of Australia and no seasonal hunting restrictions, the humble feral goat provides year-round opportunities to hunters. Treated correctly, meat from nannies and young billies is superb in a wide range of dishes, but never better than in a good curry. Goat skins come in a wide variety of colours and patterns that make great floor mats or covers on the lounge. A set of 40-inch plus horns on a nice mount also looks good on the wall.

---

MAIN: This nice representative young feral billy from the central-west of NSW clearly shows his Angora origins.





SO, there are a good many reasons, as well as opportunities, to get out and hunt these animals with the rifle and, if you really want some great sport, with the bow.

## Origins in Australia

The translation of the goat's scientific name, *Capra hircus*, is interesting and very much to the point! *Capra* can mean "goat" (of course), but also translates as "smell of armpits" and *hircus* translates to "smell of goats". The old-time zoologists who gave the humble goat its scientific name didn't mince words when describing goats, especially billies, and more so when those billies are feeling a bit amorous in peak breeding seasons.

Any hunter who has been downwind of a bunch of breeding billies will affirm this. Goats certainly have a distinct bouquet!

Other species from the goat family, such as ibex and tahr, can also have a bit of a goaty smell, but big mature feral billie goats, especially ones with long, hairy coats at breeding time, take it to a whole different level!

Humans have had a long association with goats and their progenitors, the ibex. If you are travelling in the Spanish Pyrenees or southern France, do yourself a favour and visit some of the caves to have a look at the rock art that dates back 40,000 years. I have visited a few in both countries and the ibex drawings that feature in most galleries are simple but spectacular.

Archaeological evidence



suggests that the bezoar (*Capra aegagrus*), the wild progenitor of the domestic goat, was the first wild ungulate to be domesticated. This occurred around eight to ten thousand years ago around the dry hills of the Mediterranean basin, including what is now Turkey, Iran and Pakistan.

I was lucky enough to get close to a Spanish ibex while on a hike in the Pyrenees in 2019. They are very goat-like indeed. I got within about 15m of a Spanish ibex billy and photographed it standing nonchalantly on a branch in a pine tree on the side of a steep mountain, quietly having a chew. This species looks and acts like goats. I thought to myself at the time, "yep, they are definitely very much in the goat family!"

Goats arrived in Australia with the First Fleet in 1788. They were a convenient livestock animal for early European settlers, being relatively small, eating a wide range of plants and providing both

## ON THIS PAGE

**1** Some good curries coming up for Brian and his family after he took a couple of nannies on a Sunday morning walk in some steep country above the Macquarie River in central-west NSW.

**2** Goats are a very social and, at times, vocal animal. This mob was located from a kilometre and half away on a calm day by the plaintive bleating of a nannie that was receiving the attention of the three big billies in the centre left of this photo.

meat and milk to the new colony.

The present feral goat populations are descendants of animals introduced for a variety of reasons since 1788. Goats were spread around Australia by our early settlers, railway construction gangs and miners who used these domesticated animals as sources of milk and meat. Domestic goats escaped, were abandoned or were deliberately released and established the feral herds we hunt today.

## Habitat and diet

Feral goats are most common in rocky or hilly country in the semi-arid rangelands. These areas provide security from predators and humans. Goats are not normally found on flat, treeless plains, but can be found on flat country with dense shrub cover. Favourable habitat requires availability of shelter, surface water and an abundance of preferred food species.

Goats like rocky, bluffy country. If you are in more temperate areas, northerly sheltered faces out of the wind are good places to look for goats on cool winter days or when the sun comes out after a hard frost or a couple of days rain.

Goats are generalist herbivores. They will eat almost anything that is green and some things that aren't! They eat foliage, twigs, bark, flowers, fruit and roots and think nothing of climbing into a shrub or tree to get a tender morsel. They will also eat plant litter, seeds and fungi.

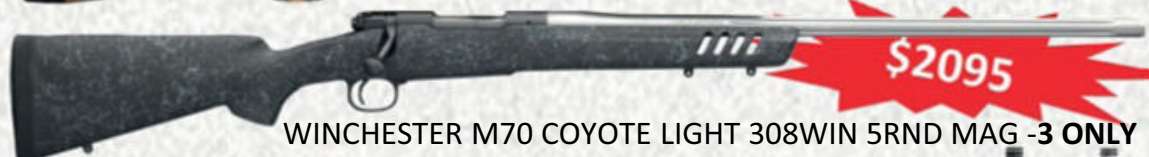
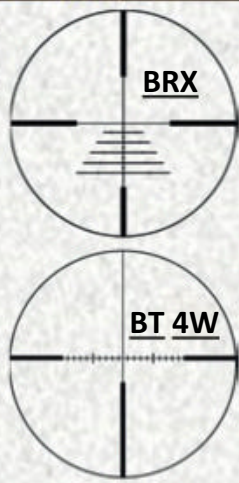
They can eat the majority of plants in the pastoral zone of Australia, including prickly acacia, many poisonous or bitter plants and species avoided by sheep and cattle. It is no wonder they are found over such a large area of Australia, from southern South Australia to islands off the north coast of the Northern Territory, and from WA to Queensland.

Some goats, particularly those in temperate or wet climates, can obtain most of their water requirements from their food and can survive in areas with no permanent fresh water. During dry times goats need to drink water. An average-sized goat will drink between 2 and 4.5 litres of water



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| CZ 457 BEECHWOOD 22WMR 20IN TB 5RND.....                 | \$995  |
| TIKKA T1X MTR SYNTHETIC BLUED 20IN 22LR.....             | \$980  |
| TIKKA T1X MTR SYNTHETIC BLUED 20IN 17HMR.....            | \$980  |



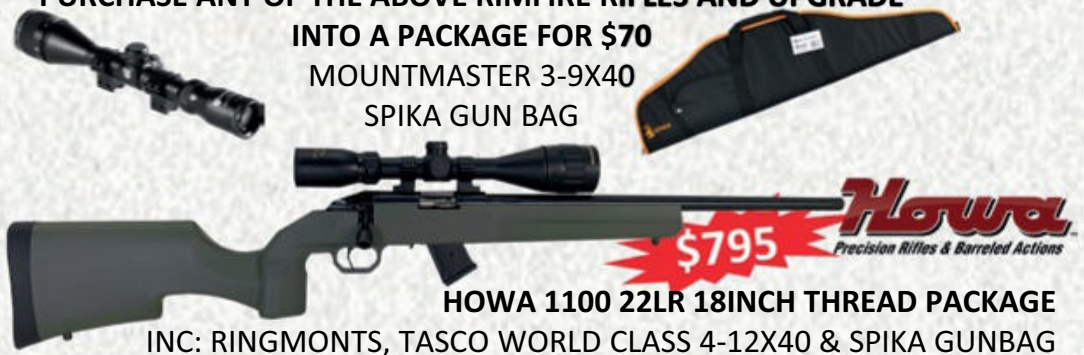
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| WINCHESTER DEER SEASON 243WIN 95GR XP 200PKT.....            | \$360/200 |
| WINCHESTER DEER SEASON 6.5CM 125G XP 200PKT.....             | \$420/200 |
| WINCHESTER DEER SEASON 270WIN 130G XP 200PKT.....            | \$385/200 |
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per day, depending upon temperatures, humidity and reproductive status. You can utilise this need for water in summer in the hotter inland regions by hunting over waterholes, dams and bores in the middle of the day when goats (and pigs) will come to water.

### A social animal

Feral goats are social animals and are found in herds, the basic social unit being adult females and their recent offspring. The males leave these matriarchal groups to form loose associations with similar aged males or larger mixed-aged groups, which associate with the females' home range during the breeding season but range over larger areas at other times.

Group size within herds of feral goats varies on both a daily and seasonal basis. Much of the seasonal variation seems to be related to the availability of surface water. When water is abundant, groups are generally small and well dispersed. During drier months, groups come together and increase in size, consisting of both males and females of all age brackets. The herd's composition can be highly variable. Feral herds are continually forming, breaking up and then re-forming. In areas where they are not hunted hard or mustered they can form herds in the hundreds.

One social trait you can use on a calm day to locate goats is listening for nannies calling and, in the mating season, the distress call from nannies receiving too much attention from a number of billies. I once located a nanny by

## Goats were spread around Australia by our early settlers."

her distress calls; she was being harassed by four mature billies in thick mallee scrub out near Bourke in western NSW. The billies were so wrapped up in mating that I shot three in quick succession from 10 metres away with the bow. Each one was either on or trying to mate with the nanny. The fourth one looked at me, back at his dead buddies lying beside the poor nannie and decided, "Yeah, nah, maybe not." Discretion was the better part of valour and he bolted.

### Gearing up for hunting goats

You don't need any special gear for goats. Your normal hunting gear will do, including good boots,

### ON THIS PAGE

**3** If you want more of a challenge, then take up hunting goats with a bow. At 150 metres your hunt is generally over with a rifle, but with a bow, it's when the fun begins!

**4** Getting high in good goat country early on a cool winter's morning and using binoculars and listening for goats is a good way of locating animals and then planning your hunt.

binos, a comfortable daypack and camo suited to the area you are hunting. It's a good idea to have a good canvas meat bag that rolls up and can be pulled out of your daypack to carry the legs and backstraps or whole young kids.

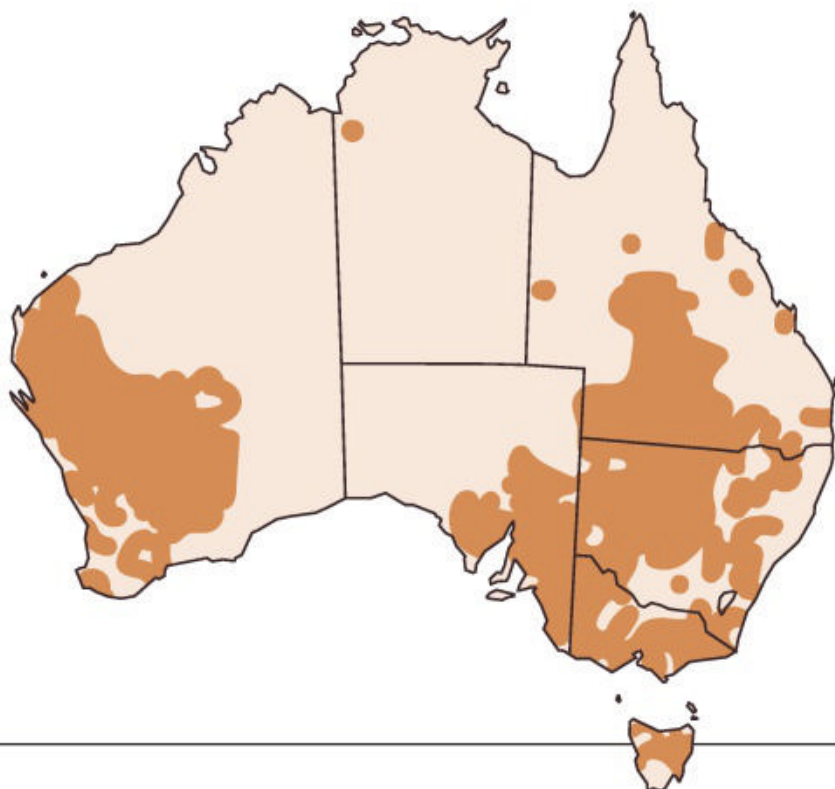
I have found you can carry out the meat from three or four goats in a good quality canvas meat bag. They fit your body well with the meat inside. The bonus is it stops the blood running all though your daypack and down your back.

Goats are medium-sized, soft-skinned game animals so you don't need a cannon to take one. A .243 or something similar with a reasonable vari-powered scope, sending out a soft point projectile that will mushroom well on a small animal, is ideal. As far as bows go, 40-50lb draw weight with a razor-sharp broadhead – your standard goat/pig setup – is all that is required. It's accuracy that is important for both, not calibre or draw weight.

### Introductory game animal

For someone just getting into hunting or parents introducing their kids to big game hunting, goats are a great animal to begin developing basic hunting skills. You still have to pay attention to ensure the wind direction is right, but goats are not nearly as wary as, say, deer, chamois or tahr.

Nearly every state has them, so most hunters in Australia have the opportunity to hunt them, whether it be to get a nice rug for the trophy room, a set of horns for the wall or some tender, tasty meat for a delicious curry. 📍





# ACCURA

## THE ACCURA STORY

The name Accura was introduced back in 1967. It originally formed a line of exclusive Camera lenses and binoculars that were made in Japan.

Now the Accura legacy continues with a brand-new line of Riflescopes created and designed in Australia like none other. The True Hunt Series gives hunters a simple but complete line of scopes that will take on all conditions. Offering a huge range of features unmatched by any other scope in this price range. Accura is Back!

C.R. Kennedy is an Australian company and was established in 1934. Over this time it has remained a family business solely and wholly owned.



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## Gunwerks: Performance in a lightweight rifle

If you are a serious long-range shooter or mountain hunter, you've probably heard of Gunwerks. For those who haven't, Gunwerks is a modest firearm manufacturer based in Cody, Wyoming that prides itself on quality rather than quantity.

The product portfolio includes first and foremost a range of rifle systems to suit the long-range target shooter and serious mountain hunter who requires a firearm that has all the bells and whistles when it comes to accuracy and precision, particularly in a lightweight package.

Gunwerks also offers the Revic range of optics, which includes smart riflescopes, rangefinders and more, all with the long-range shooter in mind.

For example, I'm told the Gunwerks HamR long-range rifle, which features a carbon-wrap barrel and military-style chassis, is capable of accurate shooting over 3km. For hunters, the Magnus and Verdict rifle systems are also an excellent choice.

However, I managed to have a look at

what's considered the ultimate in mountain hunting rifles. Referred to as the ClymR Rifle System, it features a carbon-wrap barrel and carbon-fibre stock (a fibreglass stock also available).

The ClymR is available in a huge selection of calibres and was designed as the ultimate mountain hunting rifle, as it's lightweight, perfectly balanced and features long-range capability in barrels as short as 18 inches and up to 22 inches.

Make no mistake, these are not an off-the-shelf rifle but more a custom-built gun to your requirements, with a long list of options when it comes to things like stock and barrel finish, calibre and accessories.

Other features include an optional titanium action, indexing directional muzzle brake, choice of detachable magazine or hinged floor plate, and all in an overall weight of just under 2.7kg depending on the accessories you choose. It also offers a negative-rise comb that minimises muzzle jump and, combined with the directional

brake, minimises recoil regardless of calibre, even on this very lightweight firearm.

This perfectly built mountain hunting rifle is engineered from the ground up, taking into careful consideration size, weight and performance.

In addition to all this, the team at Gunwerks can supply the perfect load to suit your choice of calibre for target or hunting purposes. Gunwerks will guarantee exceptional accuracy over short- or long-range shooting.

The good news for Aussie hunters and shooters is the fact Gunwerks firearms are now available in Australia through Wilderness Precision, based in NSW. Keep an eye out for a full review of the Gunwerks ClymR in an up and coming issue of *Sporting Shooter* magazine.

**In the meantime, to find out more about this exciting new range of firearms visit [www.wildernessprecision.com.au](http://www.wildernessprecision.com.au) or email Josh Rafin at [info@wildernessprecision.com.au](mailto:info@wildernessprecision.com.au).**

## Timney's CZ 457 trigger

Timney triggers have been around for almost 80 years. They actually started back in the late 1940s when founder Allen Timney got to work on making aftermarket triggers for soldiers who wanted their military rifles sporterised on their return home from war. Today, Timney Triggers still make replacement triggers for those who require them.

For example, Timney's customers have been asking for a dedicated CZ Model 457 rimfire trigger for hunting and competition shooting and Timney has delivered. For the discriminating

shooter demanding the utmost performance from their trigger, Timney's CZ 457 trigger is designed to be robust, user-friendly, adjustable for weight and over-travel, yet delicate enough to be set with a pull weight as low as 280g (10oz) or up to 900g (2lb).

The Timney CZ 457 trigger is available in both curved and straight trigger blade styles.

**To find out more about these and the full range of Timney triggers ask at your local gun shop or visit [www.nioa.com.au](http://www.nioa.com.au).**





## Primos Dogg Catcher 2 predator call

This compact and simple-to-use electronic predator caller is designed to make your hunt easy and effective. The Dogg Catcher 2 is packed full of features including the 100 yard remote and the ability to play two sounds at once, all at an extremely affordable price. It also has adjustable legs so you can direct the call into the air for longer reach.

Utilising 12 different proven Randy Anderson sounds, the Dogg Catcher 2 can call in some of the wildest predators out there including cats, foxes and wild dogs. Whether you're a seasoned caller or a beginning hunter, the Dogg Catcher 2 is an excellent addition to your bag of tricks.

Primos is an American company offering a huge range of predator calls, deer calls and accessories. **Ask to see the range at your local gun shop or visit [www.nioa.com.au](http://www.nioa.com.au).**



## Vortex Venom 5-25x56 riflescope

An excellent choice in the Vortex range for long-range shooters is the Venom 5-25x56 riflescope in the first focal plane (FFP). This scope features a 34mm tube that provides a huge amount of reticle adjustment for long-range shots: a full 85MOA or 25MRAD maximum elevation and windage adjustments. It also has the RevStop zero system for fast and reliable return to zero.

The Venom uses the EBR-7C reticle for an accurate hold at any magnification and also includes a throw-lever for fast transition between magnifications. You can choose between MRAD or MOA graduations. The reticle is set in the first focal plane.

Other features include XD optical system, fully multi-coated lenses, Armortek and nitrogen gas purging making it fog proof and shockproof. The new Venom 5-25x56 comes complete with 76mm sunshade, rubber lens covers, turret tool, 2mm hex wrench and throw lever.

**Ask to see this new scope at your local gun shop or visit [www.extravision.com.au](http://www.extravision.com.au) for more information.**

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## Ridgeline 5 Piece Knife Roll

Whether you're skinning, butchering or caping a trophy, good knives designed to do the job and hold an edge are an important consideration. In saying this, different blade shapes are designed for different tasks, so chances are you need one of Ridgeline's 5 Piece Knife Roll kits in camp or in your backpack to get the job done.

The 5 Piece Knife Roll features five different blades and a compact knife sharpener. Firstly, there's the drop point blade with gut hook for opening up a carcass. Next there's the two flaying-style blades for removing the skin, a thin boning knife for deboning the meat and a very thin blade for tasks such as caping a trophy where a small, sharp, pointy blade is required for getting around the eyes, lips and ears. All five blades are constructed of 420 stainless steel and feature a non-slip, hard plastic handle in lime green colour so you won't lose them.

Also included is a sharpening tool to touch up dull blades in the field and a handy nylon knife roll to keep everything together.

The Ridgeline 5 Piece Knife Roll retails for a recommended \$79.95 and represents excellent value for money.

**Ask for them at your local gun shop or visit [www.ridgelineclothing.com.au](http://www.ridgelineclothing.com.au).**

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## AccuSharp 4-in-1 Knife & Tool Sharpener

This AccuSharp tool will not only sharpen straight and serrated knife blades, it is also ideal for sharpening fish hooks and other bladed tools via its retractable diamond-coated file and rod. Its built-in V-notches will ensure you pull blades through at 90 degrees to the built-in sharpeners, producing a sharp edge.

While the flat, diamond coated file is ideal for straight edge blades, I recommend the tapered rod for serrated blades and by simply running the rod through each serrated unit back and forth a few times, you'll achieve a sharp finish. The AccuSharp 4-in-1 is lightweight and ideal for the backpack hunter, around camp or at home.

**Ask to see the AccuSharp range at your local gun shop or visit [www.osaaustralia.com.au](http://www.osaaustralia.com.au).**





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## Skull Hooker Bone Bracket

Whether you don't have room for a shoulder mount on the wall or simply want to display the antlers or horns only, Skull Hooker has the answer. This company offers various professionally made mounting solutions that don't take up a lot of space nor cost a small fortune to purchase.

I shot a nice whitetail many years ago but the trophy has since fallen apart, and not wanting to go to the expense of another taxidermy bill I decided to remove the antlers and purchase an inexpensive wall-mounted bracket that was simple to install and gave the desired effect.

Skull Hooker offers a huge range of options to suit a variety of game. For example, its wall

options include a corner shoulder mount, a dual shoulder mount and single small or large shoulder mount bracket.

I opted for the single small unit to display the whitetail and what impressed me most was the fact I could tilt or turn the antlers left or right for better display.

Also available are units that sit on the table or other horizontal surfaces and even a Trophy Tree stand that sits on the floor, is six feet high and will accommodate several mounts.

The RRP on the single, small wall mount as seen in the image is around \$79 and it's now available through most gun shops.

**Trade enquiries contact  
TSA Outdoors.**

## Pro-Tactical Hunter Series gun safes

Pro-Tactical offers a series of gun safes, ammunition storage safes and even heavy-duty handgun/personal belongings safes at value-for-money prices.

The Pro-Tactical Hunter safes for longarms include sizes to suit five, seven, 10 or 14 guns and all feature key locking with separate top locker for storage of rifle bolts and other belongings. Suitable for category A and B firearms, these safes all have a 3mm thick solid steel door with 2mm body and five-bolt locking mechanisms, while the ammunition compartment features a two-bolt lock.

The Hunter Series also includes a heavy-duty handgun safe with a 6mm body and door thickness. This safe weighs 45kg and has eight pre-drilled bolt holes to mount it to a secure surface. It is suitable for handguns and other small valuables, but check with your local state firearms storage regulations before purchasing.

As optional extras, Pro-Tactical also offers mini dehumidifiers designed to keep moisture out and protect your safe's contents from rust, mould and mildew. Pro-Tactical also has an LED motion-sensor safe light that is battery powered and designed to only come on when motion is detected.

**To see the full range of Pro-Tactical Hunter safes or for more information regarding dimensions, visit [www.protactical.com.au](http://www.protactical.com.au).**



## SOG Multi-Tool

SOG offers an excellent range of cutlery including knives, multi-tools, specialty axes, hatchets and even a range of packs. One product that caught my eye for around camp, in the field or a dozen other possible uses is the SOG Power Access Deluxe Multi-Tool. This little beast features 21 different tools including a 12-piece hex bit kit.

The main frame is fitted with needle-nose pliers, a wire cutter and a bolt gripper at the top. Then the grips offer a host of additional gadgets like knife, wood saw, bottle opener, three-sided file, serrated blade, can opener

and various screwdriver heads, including Phillips and flat. Next, a magnetic bit holder with the 12 driver heads is stored in a separate plastic case that will double as grips for the driver.

The SOG Multi-Tool also includes a well-made carry pouch constructed of black nylon web material with Velcro closure, offering a separate compartment for pliers and bit holder.

**Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit [www.osaaustralia.com.au](http://www.osaaustralia.com.au) for further details.**







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# Powder and bullet preferences in individual cartridges

In the third and final part of this reloading series, Nick guides you through the final stages of perfecting your load.

**JUST** as different guns exhibit distinctive preferences in ammunition, some cartridges will show a preference for a certain powder or bullet. Most handloaders gradually accumulate a variety of different powders but often the one they don't have is the one most suitable for their new rifle and cartridge.

Today, it's more than likely there will be a wide variety of bullets of different weights and shapes available for any chosen cartridge, but it is unlikely that you'll reload more than one or two in your preferred weight, shape and structure for hunting. Once you have chosen the correct projectile(s) for the job in mind, you have to determine what seems to be the most promising powder. The logical choice is the one that will give the highest velocity for the proposed load.

The next step is to estimate the charge weight at which the desired performance is likely to be realised. Note that I didn't say "maximum performance". The word maximum is tossed about among reloaders without reservation, which is frightening because most reloaders don't seem to understand what a maximum load is.



**In a hunting rifle, accuracy should always be the fundamental starting point.”**

The reality is that what many reloaders refer to as their “max” is often an overload, and the fact that they get into as little trouble as they do is testament to the strength and margin of safety built into modern firearms.

It is axiomatic that the hottest safe load is not necessarily the best handload for any given purpose. Working

up a handload can involve something other than velocity, because power is wasted if the load is not accurate enough. In a hunting rifle, accuracy should always be the fundamental starting point.

For this reason I recommend the reloader starts by drawing up a list of specifications for each handload, such as point of impact relative to another load in the same rifle, or some specific velocity. This should be done before the reloading process begins. The trajectory and terminal energy can be calculated after you've worked up the load and have then chronographed it; even before accuracy-testing in the final stage of development. For most handloader/hunters their objective centres around patient and thorough testing, with the objective of obtaining

the highest performance out of their rifle through a trial-and-error process.

It stands to reason that the hunter will choose the design and weight of bullet best suited to the task he is going to set it. Let's say he starts with the brand of bullet, and make of case and primer he has regularly been using which is predetermined by his current inventory. In a particular instance, there is often one powder that stands out, with the only variable being the charge weight. Once he has established a safe maximum by working up from the starting load, and accuracy proves adequate for the size of

**ABOVE:** To reach away out yonder and tag game, you need a load that's accurate and flat-shooting as well as a properly structured bullet.



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game, meeting his previous criterion, he will have attained his objective.

Suppose, however, that he is not entirely satisfied with the result and suspects that an entirely different propellant may give even better results. The procedure is repeated and results compared with his earlier tests. It could happen that he has to go through another two or three powders which have a burning rate appropriate to the cartridge without one of them showing any obvious improvement in his particular gun.

This is not unusual. It is a fact that different rifle barrels definitely respond differently to different powders. What is listed as being a good, accurate load in one factory's test barrel may turn out to be at least a better-than-average one in a given hunting rifle. However, it may not fulfil the hunter's expectations of what constitutes the perfect load for his intended purpose. Hence he may have to try several different powders in an attempt to gain his desired load.

Or it could happen that a barrel shows a distinct preference for one particular bullet. This cannot be predicted and likes and dislikes can only be determined by experimental shooting. If a good game bullet

NICK HARVEY'S MEDIUM-CALIBRE PET LOADS

| Cartridge (calibre) | Bullet (gn) | Powder (type) | Charge (gn) | Velocity (fps) | Energy (ft-lb) | Barrel (inches) |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| .243 Win            | 100 Speer   | RE26          | 48          | 3200           | 2278           | 24              |
| .240 Wby Mag        | 100 Lapua   | RE22          | 53          | 3335           | 2470           | 24              |
| .257 Roberts        | 100 TSX     | AR2209        | 49          | 3236           | 2325           | 22              |
| .25-06              | 110 ELD-X   | WMR           | 60          | 3307           | 2672           | 23.5            |
| 6.5-284             | 130 TSX     | RE22          | 53          | 3080           | 2739           | 26              |
| 26 Nosler           | 142 ABLR    | AR2218        | 81          | 3210           | 3249           | 26              |
| .270 Wby Mag        | 130 TSX     | AR2213sc      | 75          | 3340           | 3221           | 24              |
| .280 Ackley         | 168 AB      | RE26          | 62          | 2984           | 3322           | 26              |
| 28 Nosler           | 155 TA      | RE33          | 88          | 3190           | 3503           | 26              |
| .30-30              | 160 FTX     | AR2219        | 30          | 2300           | 1880           | 20              |
| .300 Wby Mag        | 175 Edge    | Re26          | 86          | 3290           | 4207           | 26              |
| .338 Win Mag        | 225 TSX     | AR2209        | 75          | 2912           | 4237           | 24              |

Note: All loads were worked up in individual rifles and should be reduced by 10 percent. The .257 Roberts and .25-06 chambers have long throats. Abbreviations: TA, Terminal Ascent; AB, AccuBond; ABLR, AccuBond Long Range; TSX, Barnes Triple Shock X-Bullet.

is what the hunter is searching for, he should make sure the only variable in the tests is the bullet. The idea is to find the one perfect combination by varying one component at a time, while keeping everything else as nearly the same as possible.

If you fire handloads containing a couple of different bullets and two or three different powders, with varying charge weights of each powder, it may be difficult to know at which stage you produced a radical improvement in accuracy.

Choose your pill

Selecting the one perfect bullet for your load is the starting point for every handload, and the most critical. This is because the bullet is the component upon which accuracy and killing effect is largely dependent. If the bullet fails to perform reliably, the load is a failure, no matter how well case, primer and powder did their share. You might take several bullets of identical weight and diameter, but they will have major differences in design and construction, according to the maker's intent.

When the bullet fails to score a clean kill, nine times out of ten it's because the handloader has chosen the wrong bullet for the task he has set it. There is no excuse for this since bullet makers issue brochures which show a cutaway view of each bullet and recommend the size of game it was designed for. So obviously, the handloader has no excuse for choosing a thin-jacketed varmint bullet for use on big game, or a full metal jacket on any sort of game except those that are large and dangerous.

The term "game bullet" covers a wide category of animals ranging in size from fallow deer to sambar, wapiti and moose. Fallow and smaller species of deer are slightly built animals succumbing readily to a well-placed conventional cup-and-core bullet which opens up fairly quickly. Sambar and other deer of similar size require controlled expansion bullets designed to hold together and expand more slowly in order to penetrate deeply and reach the vitals on these heavy muscled, heavy-boned species.

Dangerous game such as buffalo, lion and big bears call for the heaviest bullets with delayed expansion characteristics. My own preference for buffaloes is a solid which won't expand at all and provides the deepest penetration of all, coupled with the ability to smash the largest bones.

Pure copper and mono-metal copper alloy bullets of monolithic construction retain 95 percent or more of their original weight, making them ideal for angling shots on larger deer like sambar and



Large-case small-bore magnums like the 26 Nosler consume heavy charges of very slow powders with a high load density to develop their full ballistics.



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moose. On smaller deer they make exit just about every time, but kill without wrecking a lot of venison for the meat hunter.

Bonded bullets that lock core and jacket together usually deliver a deep, wide wound channel without separating or over-penetrating. Allied with a thicker, stiffer jacket they retain about 90 percent of their mass, even through thick hide, heavy muscles and bones. Designed to expand to more than twice their diameter, they deliver maximum energy transfer.

## Ballistics

A projectile has a couple of physical properties which the handloader must take into account when assembling his perfect load. The first of these is called sectional density (SD), which is a mathematical description of its weight as related to its cross sectional area. Of two bullets with identical diameter and shape, and composed of the same materials, the heavier one has the highest sectional density. The numerical expression of SD is derived by dividing the bullet's weight in pounds by the square of its diameter in inches.

The importance of the SD concept is that the higher the sectional density, the harder the bullet is to stop and the deeper penetration it will achieve in any medium if all else is equal, including air resistance.

The second property crucial to the bullet's performance is called ballistic coefficient (BC), which is related to the sectional density. Essentially, the BC is a mathematical expression of the shape of the projectile, or, to put it another way, it is streamlining. A bullet of high BC cleaves through the air more readily than one with a lower BC, and thus has a flatter trajectory, and more retained velocity and energy at any range, if

they are started out at the same muzzle velocity.

SD and BC are critical to the handloader of hunting ammunition, because they govern the performance of the bullet in flight.

With the current tremendous interest in 6.5 calibre rifles, an interesting sidelight is the subject of stability, which is something to take into account when testing the accuracy of your reloads. A bullet usually doesn't "go to sleep" or stabilise properly for quite a few yards after it has left the muzzle. This phenomenon is commonly seen when sighting in at short distances when the target will show slightly oval holes — an indication the bullet was still yawing.

Yet the same bullet at 50 yard will print a perfectly round hole. This tendency is most pronounced when shooting long, heavy .264 projectiles, particularly at moderate velocities. It is not uncommon for a 6.5mm rifle to shoot tighter groups at 200yd than at 100. So when working up a perfect load for a rifle in 6.5 calibre, if 100yd groups are not quite good enough, I recommend checking at 200yd before you try a different bullet.

Of great interest to the hunter/rifleman is terminal ballistics, which occurs after impact with the target. What makes the bullet work is the velocity, and resultant kinetic energy, it imparts when it strikes. In my opinion kinetic energy (essentially the weight of the bullet multiplied by the square of its velocity) does not give a true indication of killing power, but it does give us an adequate comparative measurement of various bullets at different velocities.

A critical feature is the importance of velocity in that formula; its square is used, which means the faster the bullet is traveling, the harder



it hits. And this also means that a bullet with a high BC will hit harder at any range than one with a lower BC.

## And on to accuracy

Let's assume that a load has reached its final shape. You have the right bullet and powder, and know the velocity range in which it will deliver the desired performance. No compromises have been made. Cost, recoil and muzzle blast have been traded off to get a serious big-game hunting load to obtain the flattest trajectory, highest power and best accuracy. It is now time to look at the results of such a prolonged reloading operation.

Although accuracy and killing power have no surface relationship, their close connection is clear. A 100gn bullet placed in an animal's heart, lungs, brain or spine is more effective than a 300gn bullet placed in the leg, guts or brisket. Where the bullet strikes is more important than what rifle or load is employed. A .25-06 or a .300 magnum are equally deadly when their bullets land in the quarry's heart/lung area, and each is equally ineffective when its bullet only wounds.

The required degree of exact bullet placement will obviously vary in proportion to the size and life tenacity of the animal, but will be somewhat inversely proportional to the striking energy and momentum of the bullet. We strive to obtain high

velocity because it is most desirable for all long-range shooting and fortifies the bullet's killing power away out yonder where it needs bolstering. A flatter trajectory also helps relieve the shooter of the necessity for making any sight adjustments.

During the course of juggling bullets and powders we discover that the better long-range deer loads utilise medium-weight bullets driven at the highest velocity we can safely achieve. Without producing excessive recoil, a light-weight rifle chambering such loads is capable of sure-killing hits to between 350 and 400 yards — much farther than the average hunter can reliably effect a hit with any rifle.

The table lists pet loads that I've developed for my own rifles and a number of other rifles I have used. There is no guarantee that they will work equally well in your gun, or even that you can duplicate them, but they do provide a goal to strive for.

When I assemble handloads for the hunting field, nothing less than absolute mechanical reliability is acceptable in such rounds. Perfect functioning, feeding from the magazine, chambering, firing, extraction, and ejection are important considerations in hunting handloads. These things must not be compromised for any other performance factor. If they are, the trophy of a lifetime and an expensive hunt may be wasted. ☒



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# Gone clubbing!

Chloe gets back to the club house to catch up on the social scene.



1

IF COVID-19 and the many lockdowns have taught me anything over the past two years, it's definitely the importance of socialisation. Just being able to see and communicate on a face-to-face level on a regular basis, or catch up with friends for a cold one, are things that I know I won't take for granted.

Moving eight hours away with my partner BJ just before the second wave really brought this home. Luckily enough, with social media I

could still attend our monthly hunting club meetings, but it was far from normal.

Now that all the hellish nightmares of COVID are nearly behind us, and BJ and I are back down south, it's great to be able to catch up in person with my many friends in the hunting club.

Not to be biased or anything, but I'm glad I'm a member of one of the best hunting clubs around, and there is no other group I'd rather sit and talk about hunting with.

Over the years and along the many tracks I have taken, so many hunters have asked why I bother joining a hunting club, especially since I have access to private land.

Apart from being a great social place, with monthly events and hunting trips, the



2

“  
Unlike many answers given on social media, the ones I get from members of my hunting club are genuine and honest.”

club is a great and safe place to bounce advice, get tips and ask questions about hunting and shooting. Unlike many answers given on social media, the ones I get from members of my hunting club are genuine and honest.

Being a member of a hunting club also provides a genuine reason for holding a firearms licence, without being tied to a single property and the vagaries of a property owner's choices.

The club includes a diverse group of people, and there's nothing better than catching up with them and talking about hunting.

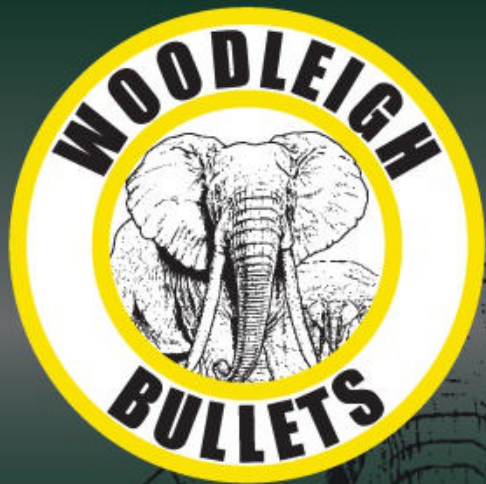
If you would like to join a hunting club, or are local to the NSW Southern Highlands, feel free to drop me a line on social media and I can point you in the right direction!

## ON THIS PAGE

**1** Dodge demonstrates butchering at a WHAC open day.

**2** WHAC member Nathan with a beautiful redcoat.



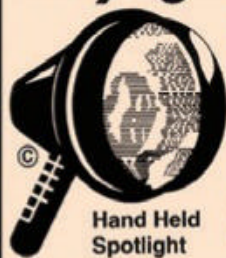
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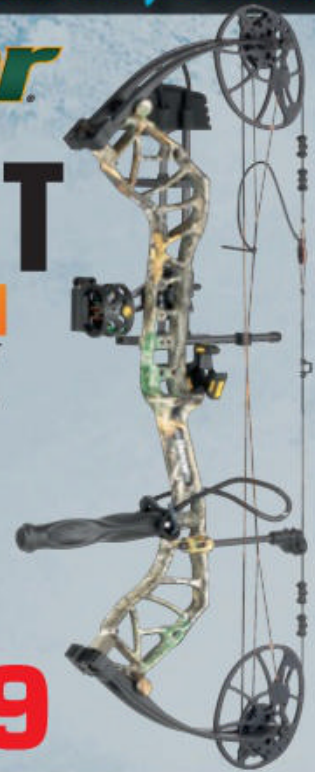


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## WINNER

**Mitch Basile** has been out on Northern Territory public land, hammering the pig population there with great success! We've asked him to put together a story on hunting there, which you'll read in the next issue. Meanwhile, you can see more on his Instagram: @Out\_hunted.







## WIN

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