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JULY 2022

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MAIN FEATURE

At about \$1450, the Bergara B-14 Hunter appears to be great value, especially when you realise its barrel quality is excellent, the trigger is flawless, the stock rigid and the accuracy brilliant.

"I believe established gun companies will have to lift their game if they want to better the performance of Bergara's well-crafted sporters," says Nick Harvey. In today's competitive market full of MOA guarantees, that's saying something ... and it says a lot of Bergara's efforts.

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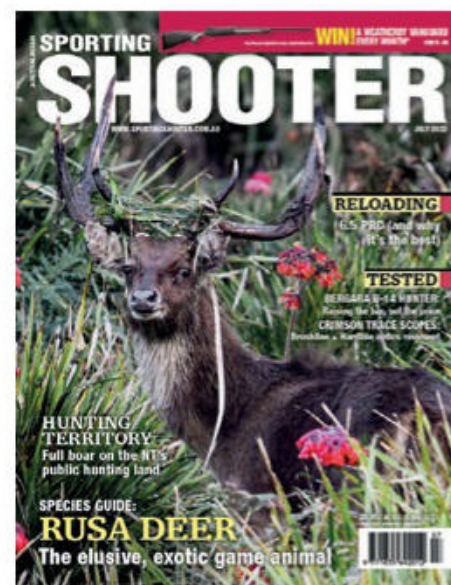


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ON THE COVER

Who's a pretty boy, then? Zac McKenzie caught this rusa stag making himself as attractive as possible for the hinds during the rut. His story on this fascinating species of deer is on page 66.






BULL BARS &
PROTECTION


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THE PTA has been approved, the rifle has been ordered, the flights are booked and the hunt has been set in stone. And mate, I'm excited!

For the first time in a few years I'm jumping on a plane to go for a hunt in exotic country, that is, anywhere that's not like here. This time, it's Cape York, where I haven't hunted since the 1980s. I'll be pursuing a species I've never hunted before: scrub bulls, though with some pigs on the side because what's the point of heading to the top end if you aren't going to shoot big pigs? It's compulsory!

And I'll be using a calibre I've never used before in a brand new rifle. I've bought a Sauer 100 Classic in 9.3x62, a calibre I've always been keen to try since falling in love with the 9.3x74R. The two cartridges are twins, but not identical ones. You can tell them apart at a glance, but from behind the butt or in front of the muzzle I doubt anyone or anything could tell you which was which.

About the grunniest rifle (for want of a better description) I currently own is a .308 because I haven't needed anything more for a while. Booking the scrub bull hunt was all the excuse I needed to put something bigger back into the gun safe. But the current market doesn't make it quite as simple as grabbing a .223. Not many Aussies buy a rifle much bigger than .30 calibre and only the bigger gun shops might carry more than a .300 Win Mag in stock.

Besides, with guns and ammo being in relatively short supply these days — the result of bigger, more worldly issues than I've room to write about today — choices are much narrower than they used to be. There aren't a huge number of 9.3x62 rifles listed in the catalogues of the various distributors and fewer still are actually available in Australia right now.

Still, the Sauer was one of the available ones and, after Uncle Nick's review of the 100 XTA model in the May issue,



Great experiences with this cartridge, the 9.3x74R, have now led to Mick opting for a 9.3x62 in a bolt-action Sauer with five-round capacity

I was more than happy to order the 100 Classic. It's now waiting for me at Shorty's in Mudgee while I wait anxiously for the PTA to lob in the mail.

Ammo was harder. In fact, the only factory 9.3x62 Shorty's could source was Sellier & Bellot; none was available from any other brand. That's OK, I've used plenty of S&B in various calibres with good results. With luck, its arrival at Shorty's will coincide with delivery of the PTA and I'll collect it all at once.

If that happens and I manage to steer clear of COVID-carrying germ spreaders, I'll be right. After the past few years of only hunting locally, I cannot wait.

Want a job?

Keen to work in the gun industry? Last month I mentioned the Shooting Industry Foundation Australia (SIFA), and just as we went to press they launched a dedicated job website for people like us.

The SIFA Job Centre is online at jobs.sifa.net.au. Last I looked there were job ads by dealers and distributors, covering stores, customer service, sales, international sales and digital marketing. It's an Australia-wide site, too.

MICK MATHESON
Editor

SPORTING SHOOTER

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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

Straight-pull rifles popular

Q It look as if straight-pull rifles are becoming all the rage. Savage has added a straight-pull rifle to its range and there's also a new European entry called the Strasser, which competes with the Blaser, Lynx, Merkel and other European makers. Can you tell me who made the first straight-pull rifle?
Earl Warren

A The first rifle embodying this type of

mechanism (straight-pull, locked-breech, bolt-action rifle) was introduced by von Mannlicher of Austria in 1884. In the following 30 years five types of straight-pull rifles were developed and adopted for military use by various nations. These included the Ross rifles in 1905, the Model 1890 and 1895 Mannlichers, the Swiss Schmidt Rubin and the Model 1895 Lee-Navy.



The most prestigious straight-pull rifle of them all is the Blaser, which uses high-quality materials for precision and durability.

Measuring barrel length

Q How do I correctly measure the length of a rifle barrel? My local gun shop told me to measure from the muzzle back to the end of the receiver ring. Is this right?
Peter Hancock

A No, it is normal practice that the length of the barrel includes the chamber. At least that's the way the Americans do it, but some Europeans measure only the rifled portion. To measure the length of your rifle's barrel, simply insert a cleaning rod with the bolt closed, mark the rod at the muzzle and then measure between the end of the rod and the mark.

A better way to pull bullets

Q Help! I want to pull the bullets from forty 28 Nosler cases that I loaded too hot, but the cases are too large in diameter to fit in the three-piece chuck on my RCBS Kinetic Bullet Puller. How do I get around this?
Jock McBean



They didn't realise that pushing the shoulder back to lengthen the neck would have reduced powder capacity even more."

A I've answered this question before. The problem with the three-piece segmented chuck is that it is held together with a rubber band and when over-stretched, it won't hold the case. You will be able to use the puller by substituting the 28 Nosler shell holder for the chuck. Simply place a cartridge in the shell holder, insert the shell holder with the cartridge in the puller and screw the cap down tight. The bullets will come out easily when the puller is rapped against a hard surface.

I tried this with my 26 and 30 Nosler and other calibres and it worked perfectly. It's a lot more convenient to use regular shell holders instead

of the original chuck, which has always been a nuisance, especially when it falls apart.

7mm Express Remington is confusing

Q Recently, I bought a Remington Model 700 BDL rifle marked 7mm Express Remington, and don't know where to get ammunition for it. My local gunshop says they've never heard of this cartridge and told me to ask you. The rifle is in good condition and appears not to have been fired much as the rifling is sharp at the breech end of the barrel. Can you please tell me where I can get this ammunition?
Donald Martin

A There's a story here. The calibre of your rifle is actually .280 Remington. The name change to 7mm Express Remington was initiated because rifles in that calibre had been a slow seller for the factory. I was attending the Remington Seminar the same year (1978) the name change was announced. It was met by considerable skepticism by the assembled gun writers who said it would cause confusion among buyers. A factory employee then suggested changing the name again, to 7mm-06. Bob Brister, shooting editor of *Field and Stream*, killed this by reminding the guy that the headspace dimension for the old wildcat was longer than for the .280 Remington.

For a short period of time barrels were marked "7mm Exp Rem/280Rem", but it was eventually changed back to the original .280 Remington. It shouldn't be too difficult to find .280 Remington ammunition.

Terminal velocity

Q What would be the terminal velocity of a 150gn .308 Winchester bullet

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when it dropped back to earth if it was fired straight up into the air?

George Day

A The terminal velocity of any particular bullet falling back to earth after being fired straight up into the air (vertically or near vertically) depends upon the attitude in which it returns, and that attitude is not readily predictable. The terminal velocity is least if the bullet tumbles randomly as it returns to earth, and greatest if the bullet falls in a stable attitude, point forward.

For the .308 Winchester bullet, the terminal velocity would be somewhere between 180 and 420fps.

Why criticise the .300 Winchester Magnum?

Q Why do so many shooters criticise the .300 Win Mag for having too short a neck? I have owned and hunted with this cartridge for a lot of years. Using my own handloads I have never encountered a single problem, but I always adjust the sizing die so that the case headspaces off the shoulder instead of the belt. This is something you advised me to do in a reply to my letter many years ago. What is your honest opinion of the .300 Win Mag?

Arthur Price

A Winchester's other 'short' magnums, the .264, .338 and .458, all used a case 2.500" long, but for the .300 they lengthened it to 2.620", moved the shoulder forward 0.156" and shortened the neck to gain all the case capacity possible, which drew a lot of criticism. The accepted standard is a minimum of one calibre of neck length and the .300 Win Mag's neck is only .264", which falls .036" short of the 'preferred' length.

This led some handloaders

to complain that with the forward shoulder and short neck, long, heavy bullets had to be seated too deeply into the case, which reduced powder space. Obviously, they didn't realise that pushing the shoulder back to lengthen the neck would have reduced powder capacity even more.

Despite its so-called deficiencies, the .300 Win Mag has won an enviable reputation on the target range as well as in the hunting field. Forget the critics who in most instances have never owned a .300 Win Mag and are just parroting what's been written about it by others whose experience is even more limited than their own.

One good load for a 26 Nosler

Q I bought a Browning X-Bolt Hell's Canyon in 26 Nosler (just like yours) and want one good load for it with a bullet that will hold up over the long haul. I can't find the magazine which had your test report in it, and decided to write in. Could you recommend a bullet and load, and give me the ballistics and trajectory at 500yd?

Trevor Young

A If you read my article about the 26 Nosler, you'll remember my warning not to reduce the powder charges more than two or three grains under the listed maximum.

My three loads are: Barnes 120gn TSX BT and 78gn of AR2217 for 3420fps; Barnes 130gn TSX FB and 80gn Re-33 for 3418fps; and Nosler 142gn ABLR and 81gn of AR2218 for 3284fps. You should be able to duplicate those loads safely in your X-Bolt, but the long-range load that you are looking for uses the Nosler 142gn ABLR. Sighted in for a 300yd zero, the bullet is 2.63" high at 100, 3.25" high at 200, and drops 7.50" at 400 and 19.70" at 500, where the velocity is 2612fps



There are a number of excellent bullets available in 6.5mm, but the ballistically efficient Nosler 142gn AccuBond Long Range (right) is a fine choice.

and energy is 2151ft-lb.

By comparison, the Barnes 120gn bullet reaches 500yd with 2244fps and 1342ft-lb, and the Barnes 130gn has 2147fps and 1331ft-lb. Quite a difference and a good example of how much advantage there is in using a longer, heavier 6.5mm bullet.

.30-30 reloading woes

Q I have started reloading for a Marlin .30-30 but have struck a problem with cases collapsing during the bullet seating/crimping operation. Can you tell me where I am going wrong?

Alan Lewis

A There are several possible causes of your problem. Because it is necessary to crimp loads for tubular magazine use, it is essential that cases all be of uniform length. A too-short or too-long case will result in a crimp that

falls below or above the bullet crimping groove. When this happens, the shoulder of the case may collapse during the bullet seating/crimping operation.

A case length of 2.035" plus or minus 0.003" is about right. Maximum allowable case length is 2.040".

Another possible cause of your problem, but less likely, is one I once encountered with bullets whose cannelure was no more than a series of serrations on the bullet. It proved impossible to crimp them, as any attempt to do so resulted in collapsed shoulders.

Also, take care to adjust the crimping die so that the case mouth is forced no deeper than the cannelure depth allows. An unduly heavy crimp will reduce bullet pull, possibly cause collapsed shoulders, and result in poor accuracy.



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Because .30-30 brass quickly stretches when fired in lever-actions, case length should be checked after every sizing. And because chambers can be less than perfectly round, it pays to full-length resize. Finally, after your cases have had their third trim, discard them.

7.7mm Japanese ammo fiasco

Q I read in a book that the Japs used three different 7.7mm cartridges during World War II. Surely, this would have been a logistical nightmare? Is there anything you can tell me about this?

Harry Hayes

A It's true, the Japanese did have three different 7.7mm cartridges, which was confusing for supply personnel. Japan, like Italy, had used a 6.5mm cartridge in World War I, then found during the 1930s that the round lacked stopping power in warfare. Japanese forces, facing Chinese troops armed mostly with 7.92mm Mausers during the invasion of Manchuria, found their 6.5mm cartridge lacked stopping power.

In 1932, the Japs introduced the Type 92 heavy machine gun, firing a 7.7 semi-rimmed cartridge, but this proved too powerful for use in the Arisaka military rifle, so in 1939 the rimless Type 99 appeared. The two cartridges were almost identical except for the design of the rim, but the Type 92 won't chamber in Type 99 rifles.

Adding to this confusion, the Japanese Army and its air arm used Lewis guns in .303 British calibre which they designated 7.62mm Type 92.

Throughout the conflict, the Japanese were still using rifles and machine guns chambered for the old Type 38 6.5mm round along with captured Model 1895 Dutch



“

I've seen a German gunsmith throw a handful of sand into a Mauser action and it did nothing more than make the bolt gritty to operate.”

Mannlichers, Lee Enfields and M1 Garands. It appears then, that Japanese supply officers indeed were confronted with some really serious logistical problems.

Mauser 98 is superior

Q In a report I was reading about a modern rifle, the author compared it with the Mauser 98, which he said has a bolt that is sloppy and rattles around loosely except when locked. He praised the tightly fitted action of the rifle he was testing, claiming it enhanced accuracy. He also criticised the Mauser's long firing pin travel for affecting accuracy. Do you agree with this summation?

Andrew Atkinson

A Theoretically, I suppose he is right, but Paul Mauser designed his action to work in the field under the most appalling conditions — and boy am I glad he did! Once I watched a European

hunter crawling on his hands and knees across the sandy Kalahari desert stalking a gemsbok. When he tried to chamber a round in his Mannlicher-Schoenauer it jammed. With some difficulty I managed to get the bolt out and found that a few grains of sand that a Mauser would never have noticed had locked the bolt up solidly.

I've seen a German gunsmith throw a handful of sand into a Mauser action and it did nothing more than make the bolt gritty to operate.

As to the Mauser having slow ignition — a full ½” compared about ¼” or less for most modern actions — that may be true, but while this may disadvantage the target shooter and benchrest shooter, it is no problem for the hunter. It may take a few milliseconds longer for the firing pin to fall, but you can be sure it will give the primer a hefty clout.

Years ago I was handed a Kleingunther rifle with which

Rigby's Highlander rifle is based on a modernised version of the original Mauser 1898 action that is superior to the majority of modern actions.

to shoot a fallow buck in northern Germany. It released the firing pin three times before it finally fired the chambered round.

When I commented that I was lucky not to be a nervous type, the rifle's owner, my good friend Hubertus Dowidat, told me the rifle had misfired a number of times when he hunted in Namibia, but he hadn't got around to having it repaired.

I've yet to have a Mauser 98 fail me even in the most extreme climatic conditions.

Convert metric to US units

Q I have some German firearm and ammunition brochures, but all of the measurements are in metric — bullet weights in grams, velocities in metres per second, and energies in kgm. How can I convert these figures to standard US measurements?

Dennis Cole

A To convert bullet weights from grams to grains is easy; simply multiply by 15.43. To convert from grains to grams, multiply by .0648. To convert chamber pressure from kgm to psi, multiply by 14.22. Conversely, to convert psi to kgm divide by .07031. To convert m/sec velocity to fps, multiply by .3048.

To convert kinetic energy from kgm to ft-lb, multiply by 7.233 (actually 7.23293). However, pressure measuring methods and standards vary among countries. Direct conversions of pressure data from metric to English units therefore may not provide valid comparisons with pressure measurements made with US equipment. ☒

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RT308WA	308 Win	150gr	20
RT308WB	308 Win	165gr	20
RT308WC	308 Win	180gr	20
RT3006A	30-06 Spr	150gr	20
RT3006B	30-06 Spr	165gr	20
RT3006C	30-06 Spr	180gr	20
RT300WC	300 Win Mag	180gr	20
RT300WSM1	300 WSM	150gr	20

TOP END HUNTING

Mitch Basile has been hunting hard on about 90,000 hectares of NT



public land. You can, too!

Hunting the Territory

G

etting to the Northern Territory has always been a high priority for me. Boars, buff, crocs ... it's definitely my kind of place. It took me a few years to get here and thankfully work gave me the opportunity to get amongst it.





1 2



GAME abounds in the Territory, but access to private land is hard to obtain in prime hunting country. The luxury we have is that the NT offers multiple public land hunting areas. Often these areas are heavily dogged, and being the Territory it's hard to get around anywhere in the wet season.

Thankfully, I caught up with a long-time family friend in Mick Barrett and he told me about, and guided me through, another ripper hunting spot.

The Back Country Hunting Program (BCH) has been developed to give recreational hunters a place to get out and hunt ferals to help maintain the integrity of Litchfield National Park. The BCH area is broken up into three hunting zones: the North, Central and South blocks respectively.

Only ferals including buffalo, pigs, scrubbers and horses are fair game out there. No doggers, no

“

No doggers, no quads, just back to the basics of hunting on foot.”

quads, just back to the basics of hunting on foot. Numbers of what has been taken off each block are documented season to season in order to see how much impact recreational hunters have on these feral populations. The hope is that more land will be opened up to hunters in the future.

The scheme is brilliant. Hunters pay \$25 each per day of hunting, and a \$30 processing fee per trip. These funds go directly back into the program to further maintain the roads, tracks and campsites, and keep the people managing the

area doing their job. Permits are issued within the week, allowing any hunter a fair go. And it's only an hour south of Darwin.

It's hard country to hunt, but there are little tips and tricks you find out the more you hunt it.

The more kays you do, the more encounters you have. Simple.

Early starts and late finishes are the go. The cooler temperatures seem to get game on the move a lot more. Hitting water and heavy shade in the hotter parts of the day makes encounters a lot more likely.

Not many critters knock about in



ON THIS SPREAD

1 Ambushing pigs feeding on rotting carcasses is a good tactic. Keep track of where your past kill are.

2 You'll never go wrong hunting near water in the hot climate up north.

3 A typical buffalo in typical Back Country bush, which is subjected to regular controlled burns.



Back Country Hunting

The Back Country Hunting scheme is a hunting program run cooperatively in Litchfield National Park for the past six years by the NT Parks and Wildlife Commission and the NT Firearms Council. The program is loosely modelled on the NSW public land R-Licence system and the R-Licence is recognised for the accreditation of non-NT residents.

To access the hunting area and its three blocks (each about 30,000 hectares) you have to complete accreditation requirements, be a member of an approved hunting organisation and have a permit for each hunt. Non-NT residents must hunt with an accredited NT hunter who has a permit.

To date, around 600 people have been accredited in the scheme, which equates roughly per capita to the NSW R-Licence public land hunting program.

There are five campsites on the block, each with a clean pit toilet, fire, barbeque plate and steel poles with wire rope to hang shade cloth

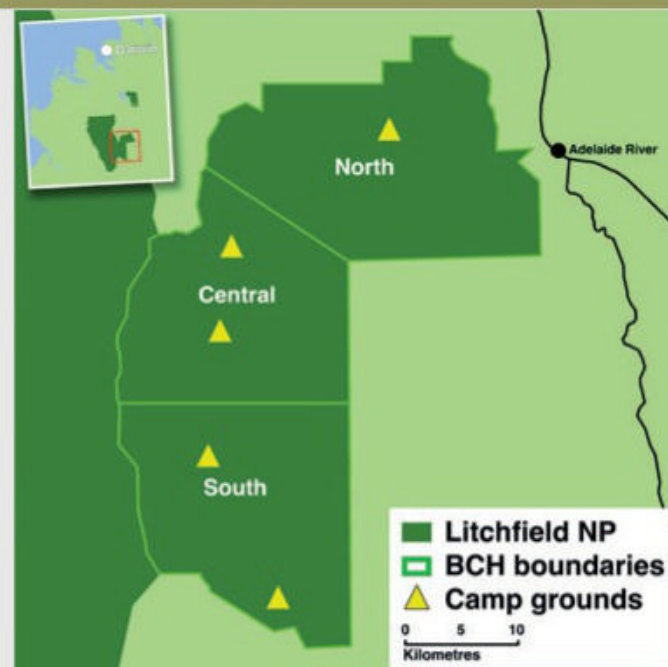
on to escape a bit of the sun around camp.

Illegal access and hunting, illegal fires and rubbish left in the area have almost been eliminated since the scheme started.

The fees for the scheme have gone back into assisting management of the block, including paying for and installing signage, boundary gates, helicopter time for aerial ignition of planned burns and weed spraying.

Hunters have reported unexploded WWII ordnance in the area, historic sites and new weed infestations. Over 1200 feral animals have been taken; horse and buffalo numbers are now noticeably lower. The local Parks manager and rangers, some of whom are Traditional Owners of the area, are very pleased with the scheme.

Back Country Hunting has been a resounding success, demonstrating that well-managed hunting by safe, responsible hunters has economic and



environmental benefits. Hunting really does equal conservation!

For more information on Back Country Hunting go to: www.ntfirearms.com.au.

— Brian Boyle
NT Firearms Council
Back Country Hunting Coordinator



“

The more kays you do, the more encounters you have. Simple.”

the blazing Territory sun; the effort expended doesn't match the resources gained. Come midday it's a good idea to find some shade yourself (close to a water source if you can), rest, rehydrate and get some sugars and salts into you. And who knows what game might come in to the water you're camped on?

Later in the dry season, when food is harder for them to come by, always go back to any carcass you've dropped. There's always a chance of a boar or a mob, either on the carcass or bedded close by.

The prime time for pigs to head

in for a feed on a carcass is three or four days after thin-skinned game such as scrubbers or horses have hit the deck. The thicker hides on buff make it harder for the tuskers to rip in. Six to seven days is the go here. Get a good GPS and mark these areas and any good wallows and water.

I often found myself looking at the escarpments, the gullies and the winding creek systems, knowing the potential of the game in the area.

It's hard not to get taken back by how rugged and harsh this environment can be, while simultaneously getting lost in its breathtaking beauty.

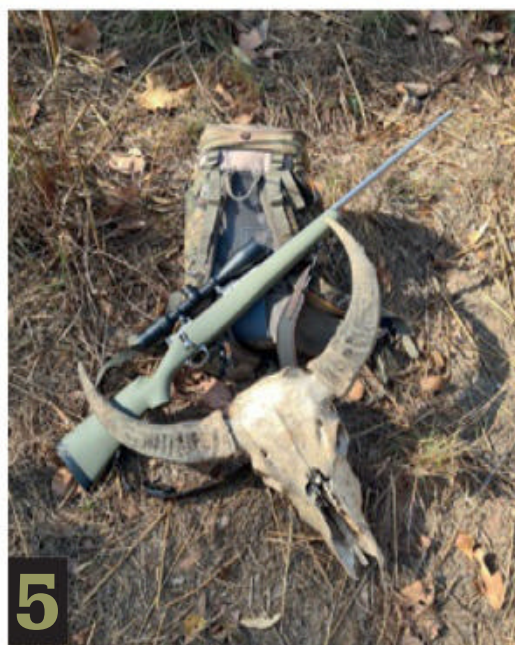
Often when hunting the creeks it's a good idea to have one bloke either side. If critters run left they're mine; if critters run right they're yours. It's a good system to maximise your shots on game.

Running the game trails and seeing fresh sign makes you nod

ON THIS PAGE

4 Mitch has whacked some impressively tusky boars on his Back Country hunts.

5 One they prepared earlier? Hunters have had a good impact on feral animals in the Back Country Hunting program's areas.



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SIFA





6

ON THIS PAGE

6 During the midday heat, find a shady spot near water to sit and wait for targets of opportunity.

7 A rifle in a hard-hitting calibre with a low-powered, wide-view scope is an ideal combination for hunting this kind of country.

8 Despite the hunting pressure, there are still trophy animals like this big old fella running around on the vast BCH land.

“

It's hard not to get taken back by how rugged and harsh this environment can be.”

your head, knowing you're in the right place. Time to walk quietly.

There are boar tracks heading south from a shaded muddy creek bed. It's hot enough for him to be close by. We go quieter still.

Call it intuition, instinct or just hard-gained experience, you can feel it when you're closing in on an animal. My eyes narrow, my ears ring softly and I feel my body pressurise. I'm sure every hunter knows what I'm on about. There's a sense of calm to it all, though; a plan set in motion, anticipating the moment to come.

A flick of the boar's tail is enough to give him away. Fast asleep at 5m, he never even wakes, the 250gn Barnes entering the neck and exiting out the far-side ham. My first 30-point boar, and an old boar to suit. We judge him to be at least six years old. Barely any front teeth left, body size deteriorating, he didn't have long to go anyway.

Hunting like this, we averaged 25km a day with seven critters per trip. And with 20 odd trips for the season, it starts to add up.

I don't say it lightly or boastfully, but it is hard country to hunt successfully. Hunt the creeks, hunt the burnt country, get into every gully and re-entrant.

Water, mud, shade and food are what the game are chasing, and we're chasing them. Get after them and hunt hard. 🎯

Mitch is on Instagram @out_hunted.



7



8



Winchester Subsonic Rimfire ammunition features a unique truncated hollow point bullet perfect for small game. Power-Point bullets have become known as the go-to bullet for hunters seeking accuracy, lethality and proven performance. This 40 & 42 grain bullet produce superior expansion compared to other rimfire bullets resulting in outstanding terminal performance even at subsonic velocities.

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The stylish hunter

Bergara's affordable B-14 Hunter features clean machining to tight tolerances, a no-nonsense profile, crisp trigger and accurate barrel in an elegant classic-style stock.

THE first thing that impressed me about the Bergara B-14 Hunter was its overall appearance and balance. In my estimation, at least 90 percent of a rifle's overall visual appeal is determined by the appearance of its stock. No matter if the bolt cycles as smooth as silk if the stock isn't designed so that the shooter can mount and align the rifle quickly and hold it steadily. Obviously, the designer of the

portion. This type of stock brings recoil back in a straight line and has the virtue of recoiling away from the face. The gently curving pistol grip has a diameter of 135mm, which feels very comfortable in my small hand. Combined with a 338mm length of pull, the grip correctly locates the first joint of my forefinger in the curve of the trigger.

There is utility behind every traditional feature of the Bergara Hunter's stock, which is handsome and functional. The forend is rounded and shaped to fit in the hand, so that it aids in controlling the rifle, and is thick enough to keep the fingers away from a hot barrel. The stock has Bergara's SoftTouch finish, giving the rifle a soft, comfortable, rubberised feel.

The stock has no cheekpiece. It doesn't need one because the comb is thick enough to align the eye with the centre of the scope's eyepiece. Stock furniture consists of a pair of quick-detach swivel bases and a 25mm Crushzone recoil pad. Panels of moulded-in chequering on the grip and forend have round-topped diamonds which are hardly visible and more decorative than useful.

The B-14's round-bottomed long action is 227mm long, based on the Remington Model 700 platform and machined

“

There's utility behind every traditional feature of the Hunter's stock.”

Bergara Hunter's classic sporter stock had an eye for line because it blends beauty with general utility.

The fibreglass-reinforced, black-flecked, green-hued stock has a comb that's rounded and straight, sloping down slightly from rear to front, so that the cheek is supported by the higher rear



from a blank of chrome-moly steel, but the tang sits on top of the stock, a la Model 70 Winchester. The recoil lug appears to be an integral part of the receiver, but it is actually a bracket-type sandwiched between the barrel shank and receiver ring. A nice touch, it is concealed by an extended collar at the front of the receiver ring.

The bolt face is recessed and houses a plunger ejector and sliding-blade extractor. Large dual locking lugs on the push-feed bolt turn into recesses in the receiver ring and are beveled to cam up into a coned breech. A large gas port, some 3.6mm in diameter,

on the right side of the receiver ring vents escaping gas from a blown primer; any gas entering the left raceway is deflected by a large flange on the steel bolt shroud.

Internally, on the left side of the receiver, a groove has been broached to coincide with the contour of the bolt's smooth, round body. A slot in the right locking lug engages a guide rail on the right side to ensure the bolt is controlled evenly and is wobble-free. On opening there is virtually no jump or discontinuity as the bolt head emerges from the receiver ring, and it is controlled so closely and evenly that the bolt handle

cannot be misaligned, thus there's not the slightest chance of the bolt jamming. The bolt release is a rocking catch on the left side of the bridge.

The one-piece aluminium alloy trigger guard/floorplate assembly attaches to the receiver conventionally using two screws. The front screw threads into the receiver ring

and the rear screw into the tang. An aluminium pillar encircles each action screw, pulling the round-bottom receiver firmly and evenly down onto pads in the stock.

The internal steel magazine holds four rounds, and with a length of 92.45mm, it is 7.60mm longer than the SAAMI maximum for the .30-06 cartridge. This allows bullets with long, slim points to be seated out farther. I made it a point to run all test loads through the magazine. While doing this with the Bergara, I was impressed by how smoothly it fed them. It was due not only to having proper cartridge feed angles from both sides of a staggered magazine formation, but the extremely slick surface of the aluminium follower as well.

The Hunter cocks on opening, a red cocking indicator extending rearward from the back of the bolt. The

ACCURACY RESULTS

Bergara B-14 Hunter, 600mm barrel

Ammunition (.30-06)	Bullet weight	Velocity (fps)	Average group(MOA)
Norma Semi-Point	130gn	3178	.776
Sako Gamehead	150gn	2835	.862
Federal Fusion	150gn	2822	.836
Federal Terminal Ascent	175gn	2686	.699
Sellier & Bellot Match	168gn	2682	1.019
Remington Core-Lokt	180gn	2752	.898
Sellier & Bellot	180gn	2682	.946
Sako Hammerhead	180gn	2582	.803
RWS Evolution	184gn	2646	1.133
Remington Core-Lokt	220gn	2432	.898

Accuracy results are the average of three 3-shot groups fired from 100 yards. Velocity figures are 12-shot averages recorded on a MagnetoSpeed chronograph at an ambient temperature of 28°C.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 And the winner is — Federal's 175gn Terminal Ascent was the B-14's favourite load.

2 The American classic-styled stock is synthetic, reinforced with fibreglass and given a SoftTouch finish.

3 The Bergara B-14's action is a straightforward traditional design which is smooth-working, strong and accurate.

4 Stock has aluminium pillar-bedding and forend is beefed up with reinforcing struts.



“

Adjusting the weight of pull is a pretty straightforward and simple process once the stock is removed.”

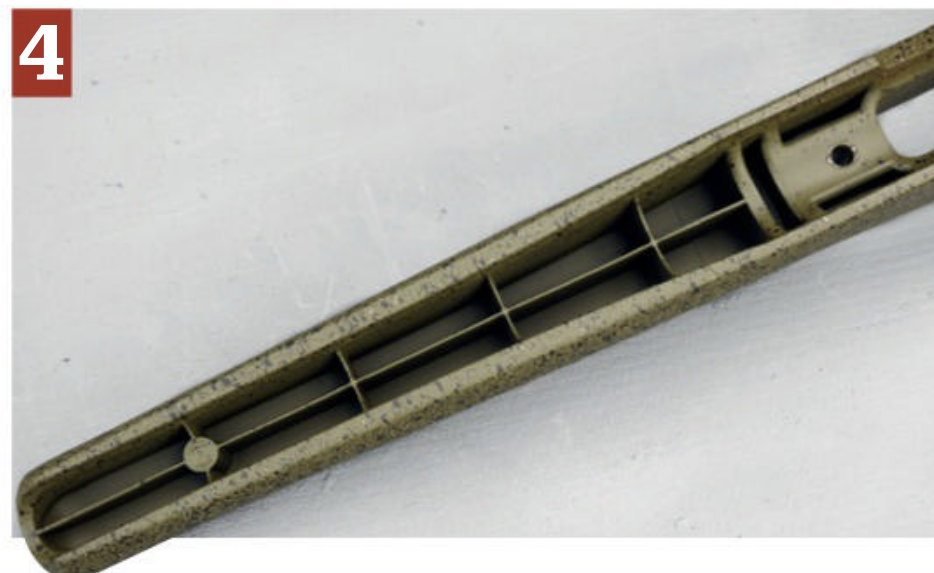
slightly curved bolt handle has a round polymer knob and a 90-degree lift. A two-position safety on the right side of the bridge behind the bolt handle is an integral part of the Bergara Performance trigger. The bolt can be cycled with the safety engaged, which allows safe loading and unloading of the rifle.

According to my RCBS trigger pull gauge, the rifle's trigger came from the factory set to break at 3¼lb (1.5kg) and was crisp, free from any creep, and is adjustable from 2 to 4lb (0.9-1.8kg). Adjusting the weight of pull is a pretty straightforward and simple process once the stock is removed. Doing so requires the

use of a 4mm hex wrench to remove the two retaining screws from the trigger guard assembly, which allows the barrelled action to be lifted out of the stock, providing access to the adjustment screw. Turning the screw clockwise increases the trigger's pull weight, and turning it counterclockwise reduces it.

The rifle's barrel is made of 4140 carbon steel with a matte blue finish on our test gun. It is medium weight and measures 34mm at the receiver ring before gracefully tapering to 17mm at the muzzle, where it is threaded 5/8x24 TPI for a muzzle device and fitted with a knurled thread protector.

The kind of accuracy we





“

The kind of accuracy we achieved with the Bergara Hunter in .30-06 could only have come from a good barrel.”

achieved with the Bergara Hunter in .30-06 could only have come from a good barrel. Bergara says that each barrel starts life as a cylindrical bar of chrome-moly steel that must be straight to within .004” before drilling. The steel bar is clamped into a four-spindle machine that drills the precise diameter hole. Instead of reaming the hole, Bergara uses three separate honing spindles with diamond-tipped bits to polish the bore’s surface to a smooth finish.

The barrel is rifled by pulling a button through the bore. Groove diameter varies less than .0002” the length of the bore. Finally, barrels are heat stress-relieved to remove any tension in the metal that might cause the barrel to warp as it heats up during shooting.

The test rifle was chambered in .30-06 — a commonsense calibre. Many readers will think the cartridge rather pedestrian and wonder why I didn’t choose the rifle in one of the new you-beaut boutique rounds. Well, this old warhorse still has a lot going for it and it’s still highly regarded by hunters all over

the world. Many professional hunters in Africa still prefer to use the .30-06 with 180gn ammo for a wide variety of plains game.

Many other chaps have shot more game with the .30-06 than I have, but I believe I’ve done enough hunting with rifles chambered for that cartridge to have a pretty fair idea about its capabilities. I have shot a variety of game ranging in size from wild pigs to sambar deer, was in at the kill of a couple of moose, and have seen more game shot with it by others. I’ll even go as far as to say that if I could only own one rifle and it was chambered in .30-06, I’d not feel handicapped in any way.

Put it this way: any good rifleman can take any North American big-game or African

plains game with the .30-06 if he has suitable bullets. For animals in this class the 165gn bullets are the quickest killers in the .30-06 and offer the best chance to anchor game with a poorly placed shot.

But for the largest big-game animals I’d skip the 165 and 168gn bullets in favour of the 180gn, which is constructed to hold together and does better on larger animals like sambar, elk and moose, simply because they have more bulk to slow the bullet and allow it to expand into a tissue-destroying slug.

A good 150gn bullet like the AccuBond handloaded to a muzzle velocity of 3000fps is incomparably the best medicine in the .30-06 for longish ranges on light game like deer and antelope. The

man with a scope-sighted .30-06 can sight-in to put his group three inches (75mm) high at 100yd. He’ll then be three inches high at 200, on point of aim at about 275 and 1.75” low at 300. The drop at 400yd is 12” (30cm) but a backline hold will land a bullet in the deer’s boiler room.

The 220gn bullet is still being loaded to the modest velocity of 2410fps, but for Australian hunting it hasn’t much place in the scheme of things, I believe, unless it is for sambar. Since they are often shot at close range and in heavy cover, when high velocity is not needed, and the bullet would have to drive

ON THIS PAGE

5 The Bergara B-14 Hunter was accuracy tested with 10 different .30-06 factory loads.

6 The Bergara Performance single-stage trigger is adjustable from 2 to 4lb (0.9-1.8kg) after the stock is removed.

7 The B-14’s round-bottom receiver is based on Remington’s much copied Model 700 platform.

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“

My standard practice for testing a big-game rifle with a light- to medium-weight barrel is three-shot groups fired rather quickly.”



view of its reasonable price. The company offers an MOA accuracy guarantee and an important factor in this is the quality of the B-14's trigger, which couldn't be faulted. The Hunter's nicely shaped stock also contributed by letting us do the shooting in fine style.

The weather was sunny and the wind dead calm the day I shot the rifle. Rifles are often finicky and shoot more accurately with one load than another, but the Hunter shot at least three loads under an inch. The Federal 175gn Terminal Ascent shot especially well, as did Sako's 180gn Super Hammerhead. However, the rifle didn't particularly care for the RWS 184gn Evo or the Sellier & Bellot 168gn HPBT Match, although the groups weren't much over MOA. The results are shown in the table.

This is one of the few rifles I've shot that has continued to shoot tight groups with no sign of the bullet holes straying around the target after the barrel heated up.

The Bergara B-14 Hunter has a stylish synthetic stock which shows that the company has once again done itself proud. A serious hunter will appreciate not only the way it handles and shoots, but its reasonable price. I believe established gun companies will have to lift their game if they want to better the performance of Bergara's well-crafted sporters. 

through heavy chest muscles, I can see that the 220gn bullet would offer an advantage.

All in all, I question whether most hunters need a more powerful rifle than the .30-06 on any big game. It is the workhorse of hunting calibres! Jack O'Connor's wife Eleanor killed two tigers in India and an elephant in Africa with it. While I don't think that cartridge progress stopped with the .30-06 by any means, it is still a most excellent cartridge.

And the .30-06 has just about all the recoil most people can handle, and no one who is afraid of a rifle's recoil can shoot it well. It is far better to put in a well-placed shot with a .30-06 than a poorly placed shot with a .30-378 Weatherby. Also, I am convinced that any reported lack of killing power in the .30-06 comes from poor

marksmanship or unsuitable bullets — things that even the latest and greatest cartridges are not proof against.

The Bergara Hunter weighed 4kg with Kahles KX 3.5-10x50 scope in a Leupold Q/R mount, a sling and a full magazine.

My standard practice for testing a big-game rifle with a light to medium-weight barrel is three-shot groups fired rather quickly with the barrel allowed to cool down a bit between groups. This eats up quite a few hours of range time, so I took along a couple of other rifles that needed to be sighted in for upcoming hunts or further testing. Rotating them along with the Bergara Hunter at the bench helped shorten the session and, luckily, it was a cool day and the barrel didn't heat up as fast.

Our testing determined the Bergara Hunter to be a highly accurate rifle, particularly in

ON THIS PAGE

8 For testing, the rifle was fitted with a Kahles KX 3.5-10x50 scope in Leupold quick-release mounts.

9 The recoil lug is a bracket type cunningly concealed in a recess in the receiver ring.

✓ SPECS

Bergara B-14 Hunter

Manufacturer: Bergara, Spain

Type: Turn-bolt action

Calibre: .243 Win, 6.5 Creedmoor, 7mm-08 Rem, .308 Win, .270 Win, .30-06 (tested), 7mm Rem Mag, .300 Win Mag

Magazine: Hinged floorplate

Capacity: 4 rounds standard calibres; 3 magnums

Barrel: 600mm, chrome-moly, 1:10" R/H twist

Finish: Matte blued

Overall length: 1050mm

Weight: 3.2kg

Stock: Classic-style synthetic with SoftTouch finish.

Trigger: Bergara Performance trigger, adjustable 0.9 to 1.8kg

Sights: None. Takes Remington 700 scope bases with 6-48 screws

Price (indicative only): \$1450

Trade enquiries: Herron Security & Sport, www.herrons.com.au



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PERFORMANCE IN MIND

Bright Crimson

Crimson Trace has hit the Aussie market with a range of feature-packed scopes that appeal for their optical quality and their good pricing. Nick reviews three of them.



FOR a number of years Crimson Trace has been making a broad array of red dot and reflex-style sights for rifles and handguns which were reasonably priced. Since 2018 the company has greatly expanded its range of optic products to include a line of riflescopes, currently extending to 52 different models including a diverse selection of high-performance hunting and target scopes. All of the scopes were designed in the USA and built in the Phillipines using premium components.

Riflescopes have progressed so far that models considered cutting edge a couple of decades ago have been eclipsed by new models with features that make older scopes seem pretty outdated and obsolete. These new scopes have innovative features like illuminated reticles, laser rangefinders, ballistic computers, more capable ergonomic elevation turrets, computer-engineered lenses and coatings which give increased light reflectivity,

extra brightness, sharpness, clarity and truer colour fidelity.

Not surprisingly, such sophisticated optics are commensurately high priced. But Crimson Trace sells incredibly advanced scopes for what most shooters would consider to be affordable prices.

Crimson Trace may be based in the US, but its scopes are made in Asia. Let's get that established right up front. Purely from a quality standpoint, the best riflescopes and binoculars coming out of Asia today are superb, the equal of most good American brands and surpassed only by the most prestigious European optics. I'll reiterate "the best", since the cheapest Asian scopes are still as bad as ever.

All Crimson Trace scopes have one-piece tubes of aerospace-grade aluminium and a non-reflective anodised finish. My three Crimson Trace test scopes represent different levels of riflescopes — the Brushline, Brushline Pro and Hardline Pro.



BRUSHLINE 3-9x40 BDC

The first scope I tested was the Brushline 3-9x40, of which there are two models available — one for centrefire rifles and one for rimfires. My 3-9x40 Brushline test scope was the former. Crimson Trace chose to use a second-plane bullet drop compensation (BDC) reticle with three open diamonds in lieu of hash lines in this scope series to compensate for the trajectory of a specific cartridge and load. In this case, it's the .308 Win 150gn bullet with a BC of .415 at a muzzle

velocity of 2820fps, which I couldn't duplicate. Instead of a .308, the scope was attached to a Mauser M18 in 6.5 PRC.

The 3-9x40 has ¼-MOA clicks instead of ¼-inch clicks and a proprietary system called CT Custom BDC. Remember, however, that for very long shots this introduces a five-percent error since 1 MOA is equal to 1.047 inches. As an aside, also be aware that Mdot and Mrad are not the same either, producing a 1.8-percent error if used interchangeably.

Yardages are calculated



“

Crimson Trace didn't skimp on glass or construction.”

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Crimson Trace Hardline Pro 4-16x50 (top) and Brushline Pro 6-24x50 have similar exterior contours and second plane reticles but main tube diameters are different.

2 The Brushline 3-9x40 is one of the entry-level Crimson Trace scopes, still with decent glass and some neat features as well as a very low price.

from three points on each diamond — top, centre and bottom — which gives you 10 different aiming points and drop figures ranging from 100 to 500yd from a 100yd zero.

Adjustment turrets centrally positioned on the main tube have two inches mounting distance at front and rear, which allows enough fore and aft latitude to work with just about any rifle/mount combination.

Specs of the scope are: length 31cm (12.3”); tube diameter 1”; weight 400g (14.1oz); and there's 95 MOA of windage and

elevation adjustment. Field of view shrinks inversely from 10.3m (33.9ft) at 3x to 3.4m (11.3ft) at 9x.

Crimson Trace didn't skimp on glass or construction. The lenses are fully green multi-coated and nestled in a one-piece aluminium tube with matte anodised finish. I have one minor gripe: the scope doesn't have a fast-focus European-style eyepiece; you have to rotate the entire ocular eyepiece and then tighten a lock ring to hold the setting.

This unassuming 3-9x40 is bargain-priced at \$279.



3



BRUSHLINE PRO 6-24x50 BDC

The second scope sent for review was another Brushline model, the Pro 6-24x50 with one-inch main tube and a CT Custom BDC Pro reticle. This varmint-target scope has a length of 39cm (15.5") and weighs 580 (20.5oz). The very pronounced objective bell is long and commences to taper from 14cm (5.5") before it levels out for the last 4cm (1.5").

The tube has a front mounting length of 6cm (2.3") against 5cm (2") at the rear. Not all scopes are compatible with every rifle, since interference from forward located adjustment turret housings of some models limits fore-and-aft movement

to the point where they may not fit certain combinations of rifle and mount. The more centrally located turret housing allows the 6-24x50 Crimson Trace scope to work with just about any rifle/mount combination you are likely to come up with.

All Crimson Trace lenses are MOC multi-coated for maximum light transmission, glare reduction and a crystal-clear image. Blooming on the lenses shows bars of green and yellow and colour fidelity is excellent.

The Brushline Pro comes with turret caps which allow the shooter to protect the adjustment dials from the elements — and from accidental adjustments while in the field. Some variable-

4



power scopes have a number of potential leak paths through which moisture can enter. These are reduced to only two in the Brushline Pro, and they are sealed with special quad seals rather than the cheap rubber O-rings commonly found on many scopes.

Each click has a value of ¼ MOA and a maximum movement of 36 MOA. A fast-focus European-style eyepiece allows you to focus the reticle. An adjustment turret on the left of the scope looks after parallax focus.

If weight is any indication, the wall of the main tube is a bit thicker than on most other brands of scopes. The exterior surface of the tube is hand polished and then hard-

“

The exterior surface of the tube is hand polished and then hard-anodised.”

anodised, which is a thicker and more durable process than soft-anodising.

The CT Custom BDC Pro reticle in the 6-24x50 works on the same principle as that of the 3-9x40, but the side bars are shorter and it has an extra diamond aiming mark lower down to allow extra elevation on the higher magnifications.

The knurled power-change ring is clearly graduated for each magnification and the white numerals are easy to read. The 6-24x magnification provides a great deal of versatility, from average shots at big game to extreme-range shooting at small varmints or steel plates. The design offers generous eye relief of 90-100mm (3.6-4.0") and a field of view from 5.1m (16.8ft) at 6x shrinking to 1.3m (4.2ft) at 24x.

This high-range 6-24x50mm is affordable at \$899.

5



ON THIS PAGE

3 The Brushline Pro has a fast-focus eyepiece and a knurled power ring. White magnification figures are easy to read.

4 The Brushline Pro 4-16x50mm shown here on a Sauer 100 XTA .308 has a one-inch tube and BDC reticle. Left hand turret allows parallax correction with settings from 50yd to infinity — essential when shooting at long ranges using high magnification.

5 Crimson Trace's high-range variable has turrets with caps which screw down onto special quad gaskets to seal out moisture.



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HARDLINE PRO 4-16x50

This is a quality, 30mm-tubed optic that combines second focal plane (SFP) ranging capabilities with a push-pull locking elevation turret system, which is also equipped with a zero stop feature that allows nearly instant return to zero after large elevation corrections. The scope's controls also allow making any necessary adjustments while on the rifle and making the shot.

What struck me at first glance was this scope's compact dimensions — about 36cm (14.25") in length and weighing a solid 720g (25.4oz). Eye relief is a generous 90-100mm (3.6-4.0") and field of view varies from 8.7m (28.5ft) to 2.2m (7.2ft).

Second-plane reticles (unlike FFP reticles) are often claimed to limit ranging, with correct subtensions only when set at the highest (or other specified) power setting. If the reticle is located in the first plane, the space between the bars remains the same at all powers; if the reticle is located on the second plane, the space between each bar is normally good only at maximum power. You have the flexibility to change that by changing the magnification if the bars are spaced at 2 MOA at maximum power. They are on the CT 4-16x and changing the power to 8x will space the bars at 4 MOA. This may offer an advantage under certain circumstances.

Being able to turn the turrets to provide holdover is often more precise, but reduces the speed at which a target can be acquired and fired at. The bars subtend the same amount from bar to bar in MOA. A word of warning: do not attempt to cross reference between MOA and inches. For example, to range an animal 24" deep, use the formula 24" divided by (2 x 2



6



7

bars) = 6 x 100 = 600yd. However, MOA is inches times 1.047. So the true formula for the MR1-MOA reticle is 24 divided (2 x 1.047 x 2 bars) = 5.73 x 100 = 573yd. A difference of 27yd (600 minus 573) would likely produce a miss or, what is worse, a wounded animal.

Many shooters prefer the second plane reticle because with a FFP reticle, crosswires grow thicker in relation to the target as magnification increases, and they begin to

obscure the target at longer ranges. Having said this, many serious target shooters prefer FFP set-ups for their time-saving properties.

The scope's exterior contours copy the 6-24x and the 50mm objective lens delivers a 4x exit pupil of 12.5mm. Relative brightness is simply the exit pupil measurement squared — 156.25. Twilight factor is the square root of the product of objective lens diameter and magnification. This 4-16x showed a perfectly focused

ON THIS PAGE

6 The Hardline Pro is aimed more at long-range precision shooting, whether target or hunting, and has reticles such as the MR1-MOA to suit.

7 Like the Brushline Pro, the Hardline Pro has the functionality of a fast-focus eye piece and knurled magnification ring.

reticle superimposed on the target, which was sharply defined in dim light. This clarity is the result of these Crimson Trace lenses being ELD glass with CT's proprietary MOC multi-coatings.

Parallax can be quickly adjusted using the turret of the left of the scope.

How much magnification is best in a big-game hunting scope? How much is too much? A lot of hunters buy more power than they can use, because with a 3-9x or 2-10x

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“

This 4-16x showed a perfectly focused reticle superimposed on the target, which was sharply defined in dim light.”

you can see clearly enough to shoot deer-size game out to 800 yards. Most shooters can't shoot well enough to land a shot in the vitals of a deer at 400yd under hunting conditions, no matter what scope they are using. Most scopes bought by deer hunters are variable-powered and this 4-16x would certainly qualify as an all-round optic for predator hunting as well as big game, but for that purpose I'd prefer a different reticle.

The MR1-MOA reticle in the test scope is designed for

long-range target shooting and hash bars above, below and on both sides of the crosswires allow 40 MOA of windage and elevation adjustment. The hash bars at the top are used primarily for ranging, while the lower bars are used for holdover.

Ballistic information for the ammunition you are using can be obtained by going to crimsontrace.com where the Crimson Trace Ballistic Calculator will give precise ranging formulas and configure the scope's reticle to fit any cartridge's ballistic path,

optimising the use of the reticle. The MR1-MOA reticle can be used and optimised for any cartridge.

However, for the reticle to work accurately you need to know the exact velocity of the factory ammunition or handload you are using. The best way to confirm the exact velocity is to measure the velocity in your rifle with a chronograph. In the field, measure the distance to the game using a laser rangefinder.

With a little thought,

ABOVE: The long eye relief on Crimson Trace scopes is a welcome safeguard against a cut eyebrow when shooting a hard-kicking rifle.

running through the Crimson Trace ballistic software, and studying the MR1-MOA reticle system, you will begin to get a sense of all this and which particular bar to use in each situation, quickly.

This 4-16x50mm with MR1-MOA reticle has a recommended retail price of \$1190. 

Reticles as reviewed

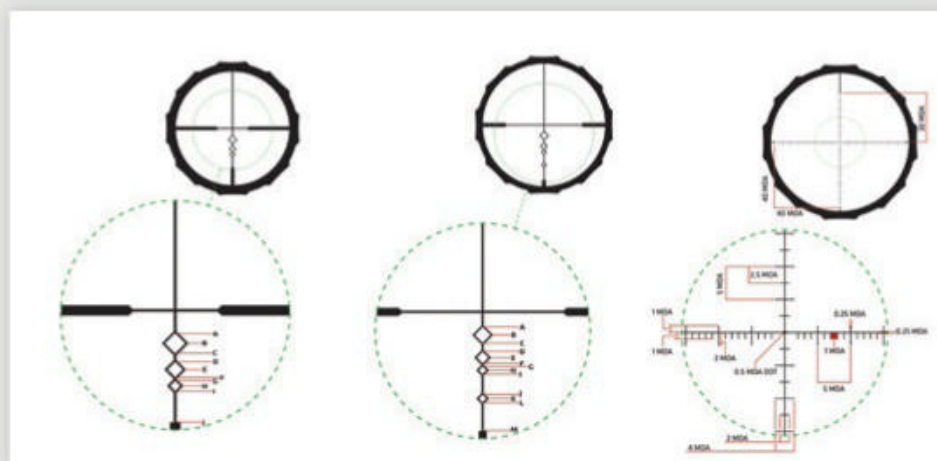
Three different reticles featured in the scopes we reviewed, but they're just a few of the ones available in various Crimson Trace optics.

The basic BDC reticle has three open diamonds for ballistic drop compensation out to a theoretical 500 yards. The BDC Pro reticle has four diamonds to provide ballistic compensation out to around 600yd. Both are

practical hunting reticles.

The MR1-MOA reticle, on the other hand, features MOA graduations on the crosswires, providing quite precise windage and elevation measurements once you learn it.

The Crimson Trace website has a ballistic calculator to help you translate each reticle's graduations to the ballistics of your chosen ammunition.



ABOVE: Reticles from left: basic BDC reticle in the Brushline; BDC Pro in the Brushline Pro; MR1-MOA in the Hardline Pro.



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Gun Digest 2022

The 76th edition of this shooting tome is the best yet.



GUN Digest, The World's Greatest Gun Book debuted in 1946 and the 76th edition is chock full of information of great interest to every kind of gun nut, from hunters to those who shoot distant targets.

Feature stories include the history of Weatherby Magnum cartridges (congratulations to Weatherby on its 75th anniversary) as well as Mike Williams' treatise on the .257 Weatherby Magnum. There's a rundown on modern single-action revolvers and the histories of the Chinese SKS, Colt Python and Colt Walker. Steve Gash lavishes fulsome praise on the .280 Ackley Improved; Dick Williams sets out to convince us how

underrated and overlooked the .41 Remington Magnum is; and Stan Trzoniec discusses the accuracy potential of the 6mm BR Remington.

Phil Massaro tells us about the excellence of the new Winchester-Browning collaboration known as the 6.8 Western, Joe Coogan shares his views on the rifles favoured by African professional hunters and Dave Fulson regales us with his experiences and history of the revered double rifle.

Finally, Alaskan master guide Phil Shoemaker tells of his close encounter with a rampaging brown bear and how he dropped it using a 9mm pistol.

The Reports From the Field

section includes a host of new products related to the shooting sports — muzzle loading, optics and reloading. The TestFire department has in-depth reviews of everything from rifle and handgun designs of the 19th century to the latest releases. But I am only scratching the surface, other articles see writer's reminiscing about the Remington Model 710, the .45-70 Handi-Rifle and Ruger 77/44. Tom Turpin's opus "Five Favoured Custom Rifles" will be of special interest to connoisseurs of fine hand-crafted rifles, as will LP Brezy's treatise on the Uberti 1885 Courtenay Stalking Rifle.

The comprehensive 2022

Firearms Catalogue lists every conceivable type of firearms available — longarms, shortarms, handguns, shotguns, blackpowder and airguns — as well as pages of ballistic tables.

I'd have to rate the 76th edition of the *Gun Digest* as being the best ever. 🎯

Gun Digest 2022

Edited by Philip P. Massaro.
Published by Gun Digest Media. Soft cover, 592 pages, 276 x 208mm, illustrated in colour and B&W, reports, histories and firearms catalogue. Approximate price \$A65.



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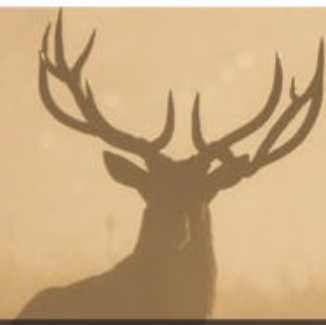


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Yew and your longbow



1

It doesn't get more traditional than a longbow made from yew

WHEN you get the urge to buy some new gear the inspiration can come from anywhere. Movies, friends and magazine articles have been responsible for many of my new acquisitions over the years. My most recent purchase — a new longbow — was inspired by historical novels written about the Hundred Years War between France and England.

I've always found it hard to sit down and dedicate the time to reading books, but with audiobooks I find I can power through hours of entertainment while doing work around my house. Now, it's as if a whole new world of inspiration is just waiting for me to discover it.

A traditional longbow is about as simple as you can get for a hunting tool. Essentially, a few pieces of wood are glued together in a straight line and

shaped in a way that allows you to put a string on it, hold it and shoot an arrow from it. The beauty is in the simplicity. However, modern lamination techniques and machines have made contemporary longbows more durable and easier to shoot than the early versions that Englishmen used to cut down the French at Agincourt.

Most of the literature around this period talks about bows being made of yew, with a perfect stave having both heartwood and sapwood, appearing as though two different pieces of wood have been glued together to give perfect performance. Most modern longbows are made with bamboo because the performance is fantastic, while being readily available at the same time.

You can imagine my excitement, though, when I was made aware of a bowyer in Minnesota who started making modern longbows with yew laminations in the limb cores!

Being able to carry around a

modern bow that has been made with these materials is a truly special feeling.

To know that this wood was appreciated hundreds of years ago and used by peasants to bring down French nobles only strengthens these feelings. Being a bowhunter makes you a bit of an underdog anyway.

The longbow was a part of life, with people training their entire lives to be able to handle the huge poundage necessary to send heavy

ON THIS PAGE

1 A longbow made from yew is a special thing indeed.

2 Dylan's first animal taken with a longbow.

arrows towards the enemy.

My imagination was running wild with these thoughts on a recent poke around a farmhouse where I was lucky enough to shoot a rabbit with my bow. Small game with a bow is often overlooked and under-appreciated in a similar way to rifle hunting these critters, where people are too often drawn to big boars or bucks.

I have to say, making the shot at that rabbit from 15 metres is probably one of the most satisfying shots I've ever made in my life, with both rifles and bows.

I also loved considering just how many rabbits had been taken with a yew bow many hundreds of years ago to feed an archer and their family. This one was going straight to the freezer.

Until next time, enjoy living your wilderlife.

Follow Dylan on Instagram at ['_wilderlife_'](#)



2



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Register of failure

WA's unforgivable release of shooters' data reveals the underlying danger of firearms registries

THE doxxing — the release of personally identifiable information — of a large number of Western Australian gun owners by West Australia Police (WAPOL) has to be one of the most spectacular own goals in recent memory, and represents undeniable, un-ignorable proof that centralised registries of firearms are a security issue waiting to happen.

In case you missed the news, in late March *The West Australian* newspaper published a front-page story with a street map of part of Perth showing locations where registered guns were located. They were represented by bullet holes.

The information, it turned out, had been provided by the state Police Minister, Paul Papalia, who had himself obtained it from WAPOL — and apparently made it known to them the information was going to be provided to the media.

WAPOL pulled the information from their licensing system and allegedly “de-identified” it, apparently by removing street names from the map and Photoshopping out a major arterial road.

They did a terrible job. Within hours, the street-level map location had been determined by people on the internet, and it had been confirmed the bullet-holes on the map did indeed match up with the addresses of licensed firearms owners.

We’ve been making a lot of noise about the issue since the story broke, but in addition what is abundantly clear is that firearms registries serve no public safety purpose at all, and are in fact a potential threat to public safety.

By our reckoning we have multiple incidents of gun-owner data from registries being compromised and/or released to criminals or the public since 1996, and zero incidences of a firearms registry preventing any shootings.

We already know police assume there are firearms in possession of anyone who holds a firearms licence, so why do they need to know the specifics of what guns are there? It’s not like the police will say, “Oh, he’s only got a .22, nothing to worry about,” when doing a risk assessment before attending a property where a firearms licensee lives, for whatever reason.

Not that the information in the registry is going to be accurate anyway — I suspect nearly every shooter in Australia who has multiple guns will have a story about the registry getting the details of at least one wrong, not removing a gun from their registration when they sell it, or taking months to add a newly acquired gun to their licence.

So given the data is completely out of date, inaccurate, generally useless for anything except stating the



The West Australian's deplorable cover was facilitated directly by the state's Police Minister

We have multiple incidents of gun-owner data from registries being compromised and/or released to criminals or the public since 1996.”

obvious (“person with a firearms licence owns a gun”) and a proven security risk to firearms owners, what exactly is the realistic point of a firearms registry?

We say there isn’t one.

From our perspective, firearms registries have no public safety benefit and exist only to provide yet another way for police forces to beat law-abiding firearms owners over the head due to bureaucratic stuff-ups which are generally not even remotely the shooter’s fault anyway.

It’s not the gun owner’s fault that the firearms registry still hasn’t processed a properly lodged PTA notice of acquisition from six months ago. It’s not the gun owner’s fault that the firearms registry still has that shotgun they sold ages ago registered to their licence.

Yet the gun owner is the one who has to deal with the headaches of those all-too-common situations — and, as the situation in WA has so clearly proven, will also be the one left carrying the can when their details or location are made available on the internet.

It’s well known firearms registries across Australia are inefficient, outdated, don’t work, and insecure. It’s long past time they were abolished.

Data that doesn’t exist can’t be leaked to criminals or the public, and the tens of millions of dollars in savings from not having to administer firearm registries can go straight to front-line policing and social support services, where it is badly needed instead.

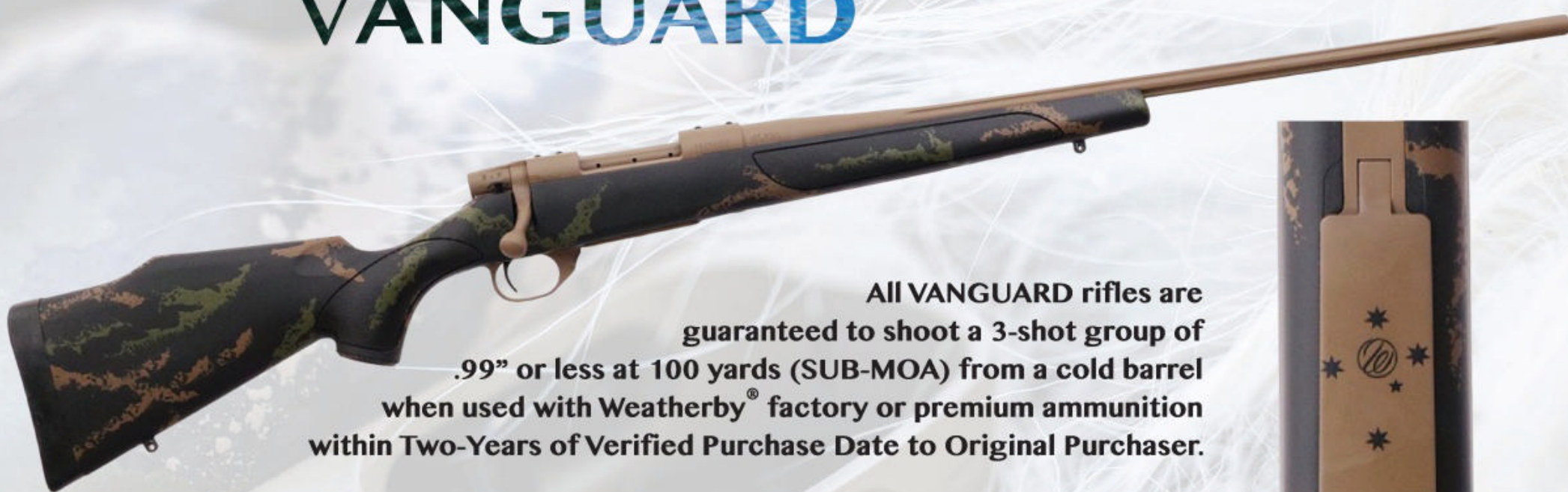
Graham Park is the president of Shooters Union Australia

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WEATHERBY/FIOCCHI PHOTO COMPETITION

WINNER



Nat Honeysett 
dropped a couple of ginger porkers during a walk up the back of his property, using both a Weatherby and Fiocchi ammo. Nice work, mate!

 **Georgia Howell** has had some great entries in the Hunter's Gallery competition and she has cracked it with this terrific shot of two meat animals dropped with her faithful .223 and Fiocchi's EPN 50-grainers. Time to add a larger calibre to the safe now, eh? Well done, Georgia.

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John Starr is going to win another rifle at the rate he's going. Yes, you can win more than once if you keep entering with good photos! This time he dropped a way-too-healthy looking fox that won't do any more harm now.



Brandon Pace sent this photo from a great trip out to Louth, NSW. "It's been a long wait with COVID lockdowns etc to finally get away and enjoy a hunt," he says. "I was really impressed with the Fiocchi 150-grain SSTs out of my Sig Sauer 308. It barrelled him at 180 yards. He's not the best pig out there but I'll take a good boar when I get the chance." That pig doesn't look too bad to us, Brendan!



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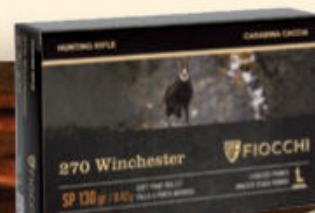
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PLEASE NOTE: this competition is not a game of chance. To achieve entry, photos must be submitted to the satisfaction of the Sporting Shooter editorial team. All entrants must be over 18 years of age and need to be suitably licensed as per individual 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



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



Stirring the pigs



At 13, Charlie has become a proficient shot and successful killer of ferals.

Charlie's been nailing porkers with his new Weatherby!

BY LYNDEN CLARK

CHARLIE Clark, 13, is a keen shooter and loves hunting wild pigs on his grandparent's station in NSW. In recent weeks the farm has had high rainfall, which has stirred up the wildlife.

With Pop driving the Cruiser ute and Charlie in the passenger seat nursing his new .223 Weatherby, which he won last year in the Fiocchi Hunter's Gallery competition, they were in for a good time.

Charlie instructed Pop to drive down the front of the farm, away from the creek to where the crop was recently stripped. The tracks were drier in that area.

As they drove through the paddocks towards a tank Charlie's keen eye noticed a mob of about 30 pigs splitting and running in all directions through the tree lines.

With his new rifle, he was able to drop six before they lost the split mob and were

unable to go any further due to the extremely wet conditions.

Charlie, very excited and with a big smile on his face, went back to the homestead and advised Gran of his trip out on the farm with Pop.

The following morning we pulled four of the larger pigs together for a photo.

Last year was a great one for Charlie's hunting, which resulted in many pigs and foxes. However, 2022 started off even better! 🎯

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HUNTING MISADVENTURES

Some say Murphy was a bastard. Others call him an optimist. David Hughes is being optimistic with these tales of woes.

Things go wrong

“**W**here are the keys?” I asked, ferreting about in the glovebox as we neared the padlocked Tasmanian farm gate after several hours of driving. I looked questioningly at Zeke, who was at the wheel. He looked at me sheepishly.

“**HAVE** you got yours?” he responded. “I think I left mine in the gun safe at home.”

We’d arrived that morning on the overnight ferry from Melbourne, laden with gear and expectations. This was not the right start to our long-awaited deer hunting trip into the middle of the Tasmanian high country! The curse of Murphy seemed on us.

It was my first time to the property in years, but I figured the weighty bunch of keys I was carrying for my rifle case, ammo boxes and other hunting

paraphernalia would still have my set of gate keys on it. A spark of hope was lit. We might yet escape Murphy’s embrace and extricate ourselves from our predicament, stranded miles from anywhere. Fossicking through the keys, I pounced on one I recognised and, sure enough, I soon had the lock opened and the heavy chain released. Phew, disaster avoided.

Murphy’s Law says that if anything can go wrong, it will go wrong — sooner or later. A fun fact is that Edward Aloysius Murphy Jr was a real bloke.

Apparently he was an American aeronautical engineer and was said to have coined the famous words when one of his rocket sled launches went disastrously wrong in the late 1940s.

Hunting brings no immunity from Murphy’s Law. Because we tend to hunt in remote places and with dangerous kit, the consequences can be severe. These incidents can be hilarious in retrospect, but they’re rarely funny at the time.

We locked the farm gate behind us and continued on our merry





ABOVE: Among the events commonly going awry on a hunting trip – a bogged vehicle. Here the team was engaged in a problem-solving challenge back o’ Bourke.



LEFT: It’s not as bad as it looks! Being at the height of the dry season, the boys decided to back-burn to protect the camp. Without such proactive planning, the likelihood of Murphy’s appearance looms larger. And of course a well-intentioned backburn can easily get out of hand.



1



2

“

I glanced at the HiLux. One of the tyres was flat as a pancake!”

way, eagle-eyed for the fallow deer which were abundant on the expansive grazing property. A kilometre from our destination, we approached the last gate, also padlocked. Out I jumped to open it, keys in hand. After a bit of fumbling about, something seemed amiss. I turned to Zeke.

“Have you blokes changed the locks?” The internal locks were now keyed separately from the front gate. Just when we thought we had escaped Murphy!

Plan B involved a very rough bush track that would bring us via an alternative route to within a hundred metres of the hut. There would be a fence at that point, also with a locked gate, but at least we could cart enough gear over it and

down to the hut to set up camp pretty much as planned. After negotiating a difficult bog hole in which we almost got stuck, we finally pulled up at the gate. Maybe we hadn’t beaten Murphy, but we seemed to have escaped the worst of his clutches.

We enjoyed blissful slumber, then returned to the car in the dim light of the new day. Full of beans and enthusiasm for the hunt, we intended to head north to some good hunting territory. Clambering over the gate I glanced at the HiLux. One of the tyres was flat as a pancake!

The spare was slung underneath the 4WD. Behind the rear seat we found the long rod necessary to unlimber the spare wheel’s housing. The housing’s release mechanism could be accessed via the little orifice designed for that very purpose under the rear bumper. Alas, imagine the sense of Murphy-linked deflation when we beheld the newly installed aftermarket reversing camera, cunningly utilising the very recess we needed to retrieve the spare!

How many more things could possibly go wrong on this trip?

The hunting proceeded well once we’d successfully sorted our issues with keys, locks and punctured tyres. Several deer hit the deck, and the supply of venison was accumulating nicely in the

chilly shade of the lean-to off the hut. We had clearly reversed our unaccountable string of bad luck. Life was good.

Next day we rose well before dawn to drive to a good location where we might catch deer returning to shelter at first light. Primed with confidence, we slowly negotiated the 4WD along a rough track winding through thick tea tree. We pulled up when the noise underneath the vehicle suggested we’d collected a stray tree branch.

The light of my head torch identified the culprit — a sturdy limb was wedged securely in the undercarriage. The light also gleamed on the sprinkle of liquid beads cascading from the ruptured fuel line under the engine!

Most hunters have a yarn or two in the closet about things amiss with vehicles in inconvenient places. One of my best was on a dry-as-a-chip property out back o’ Bourke. Three of us were in a LandCruiser looking for goats and pigs eking out an existence in the inhospitable landscape.



3



4



ON THIS SPREAD

1 With something as big as this, make sure it is really dead before approaching! Zeke posing with a massive Arnhem Land buffalo bull.

2 When everything goes to plan, look what can happen! Despite dangerous terrain and fickle weather, David bagged this fantastic bull tahr.

3 Bogged again! It's worth carrying recovery gear.

4 Beware Murphy's Law when using any mechanical device. My brother Neale recounted, "While popping off a few rounds with a .22LR, a case rim ruptured on firing. It blew the extractor out and straight back in a somewhat freakish trajectory into my cheek which was (as you'd expect) resting on the butt."

5 David was charged by this boar and narrowly avoided injury. The angry critter touched the muzzle of his rifle as it passed by, but David's shot a couple of seconds later brought it to the deck.

The only water was in a few shrinking dams and not a blade of grass graced the red and stony soil. No one lived on the place, and I reckon it would have been a day's walk back out to the road or to the nearest homestead.

Returning to our camp at dusk, we attempted a short cut across a little open flat below an earthen dam wall. The Cruiser came to an untimely and sudden halt. We'd taken a similar line on the outbound leg without mishap, but this time we unerringly found a hidden seepage. In a flash, the vehicle was immobile, with its rear axle embedded in the mud. We

scratched our heads as we circled the stranded beast. What to do?

It was nearly dark, and the limited extraction gear we had was mostly back at camp. Flaming Murphy!

The country was as dry as a dead dingo's donger. What chance was there of getting bogged? After a round of consultation, the unanimous verdict about the best course of action was to have a few beers and a feed in camp, then consider our options. At least it was only a kilometre or so to camp — could have been much worse.

Refreshed for the fray, we returned to the vehicle next morning, having been unsuccessful



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Light gleamed on the sprinkle of liquid beads cascading from the ruptured fuel line under the engine.”



in raising anyone on the radio. Since we couldn't fit the jack under the back end, our cunning plan called for a different form of lever. We chopped down a healthily trunked sapling to give that a try. The notched end fitted under the wheel hub and we found a timber slab to act as the fulcrum. With the two heaviest of us swinging with great gusto on the end of the lever, we detected slight movement.

The other hunter was stationed at the rear of the vehicle armed with a variety of flat bits and pieces intended as chocks. As the crazily swinging duo edged the chassis a few centimetres clear of the mud's devilish suction, in went a chock.

Eventually there was enough clearance to squeeze a timber slab and other debris under the back wheels, and there you go, it was

out! We narrowly avoided an arduous walk and embarrassing request for help.

Vehicle troubles may be a common manifestation of the revenge of Murphy, but his ire can also be raised by excessive heat, freezing cold, unfriendly terrain, pesky insects, dangerous beasts, silly and hapless people, and gear malfunctions, as the photos here show.

If close to home, such circumstances might merely be a nuisance to bedevil the hapless hunter, but if you are miles from anywhere, Murphy's law can cause great discomfort, without warning. Worse, if a few bad circumstances coincide, Murphy may even create life-threatening situations.

The take-home message is to plan thoroughly, lest Murphy has a plan to the contrary! ☒

ON THIS PAGE

6 An unpredictable cold snap can mean the end of a hunting trip. David rues an overnight blizzard in NZ. Walking became practically impossible because the snow had hidden all the lumps and holes below. Tahr win again!

7 Bad luck in the form of venomous reptiles can be a threat to life and limb. Check out this one — about to disappear under the quad bike while the boys were culling pigs in remote north-eastern WA.

8 Tempting Murphy? "This photo was taken on private property, of course," Neale Hughes says, "as we'd never drink on a public road. It was a brief respite on a long, hot pig cull — a trip to town to recharge our batteries and raise morale with a few treats before returning to the fray."



NEW STEYR ZEPHYR II



The new Zephyr follows up the excellent built quality of its 'big sisters' and sets totally new standards in the segment of rimfire rifles.

Calibres: 22LR, 22WMR, 17HMR

RRP \$1695

Greener Pastures

Peter Hughes attends to a task with a superb .32-40 Martini.

I acquired a robust, handsome, single-shot rifle last year from a chap who had it made up years ago for black-powder shooting at range competitions. The action was taken from a Martini-styled Greener 12-gauge shotgun, that would later turn a plum colour in the blueing process. It's chambered in .32-40 calibre, heavily barrellled, straight stocked, with stunning walnut in the fore-end and buttstock.

THE rear sight, a Parker Hale, is wonderfully machined, moving through adjustments as smooth as a silk scarf sliding off Venus de Milo's remaining shoulder. The wide, protected front sight makes target acquisition natural, instinctive. After seeing the rifle's accuracy at the range, I got a hankering to take it for a close-in stalk among the chital of North Queensland.

The opportunity arose when the station manager rang me at the very start of school holidays, just a week before Christmas.

"Hey Pete," he said, "we have to

go down south for a few days.

Would you mind caretaking for us?

"We have 12 dogs at present, so you are going to have to cull a few deer to bolster their biscuits. Then there's the chooks and quail, the meat sheep and lambs, the sow and such — you know the drill. Oh, and keep moving the sprinkler around the house."

So, with Household Command's approval for a leave slip (bless understanding wives everywhere), I packed for the trip.

The station was dry. It was humid. Stinking hot. This was the

build-up to the expected rain that would come down from the top end later in the season. The deer were scarce and skittish in the couple of kilometres around the homestead. At the sound and sight of the vehicle, females barked warnings, their short tails raised in white flags of alarm, and the spotted beauties careered off in Olympic-paced panic.

Clearly this was the domain of regular past successes, where meat was taken with telescoped high-power rifles to fill the bellies of hard-working canines. Some



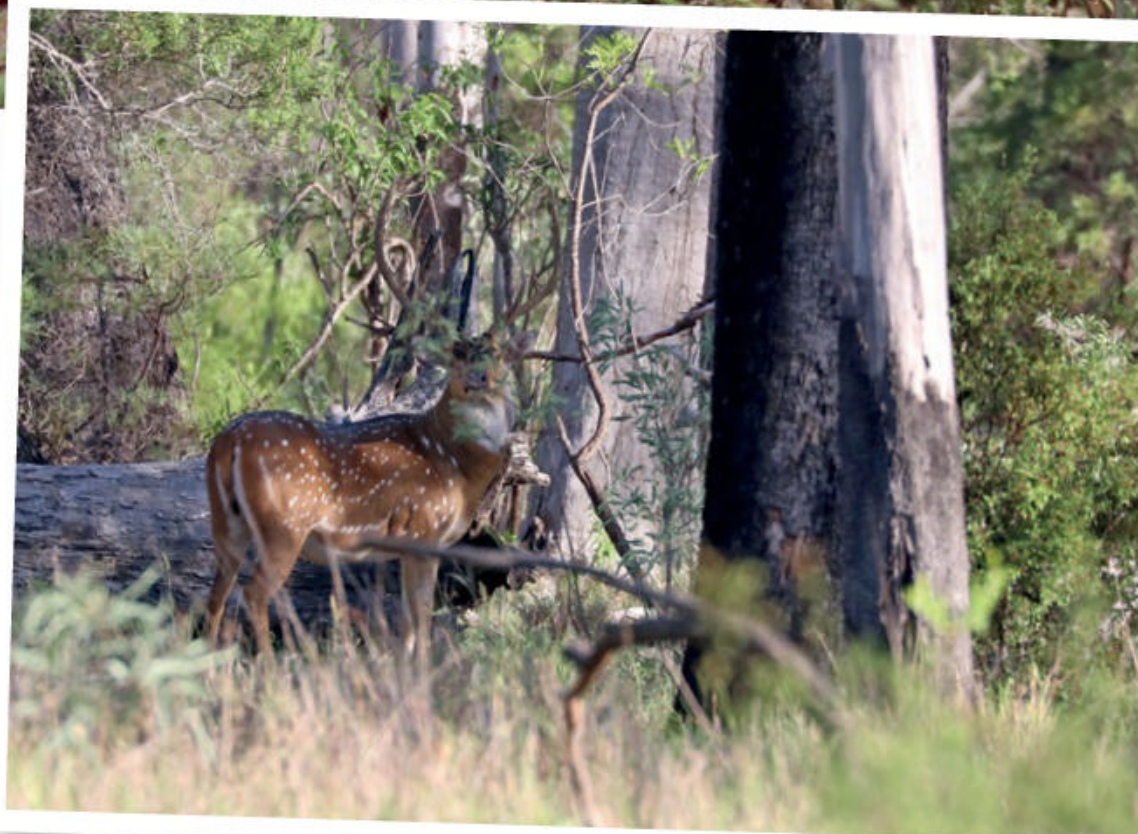


readers may question the use of such highly prized protein in this manner, but such are the practicalities of the real world — a resource used for purpose.

It took me two days to find approachable chital; they were in the more remote sections of the block. There was a good mob that seemed to like hanging around a late-season soak. A wonderful, even stag was the prime animal in the group. He had the habit of hugging low vegetation, not revealing himself fully. His antlers had just been stripped, and I think

ABOVE: The healthy spiker yielded 60 kilos of boned venison.

RIGHT: This fine stag applied every cautionary principle, hugging available cover and concealment.





he knew he had plenty of enjoyable mammalian work ahead of him. I gauged his magnificence, declaring his genes too good to be wolfed down the gullet of Rover. My target would be a doe flanking around the edges of the group. By necessity — steel sights and a mild cartridge — I had to get right into their lounge room, where the 165gn lead projectile would be effective and humane.

In the late afternoon, I again located the remote band resting in the shade above the soak. Some deer were bedded down on the crisp grass, a few were standing, and Mr Stag was there, obscured by the dappled shadows of saplings. With the wind in my face, I chambered a cartridge and readied myself for the stalk. I noted where the extremities of the group were and identified a couple of likely targets.

Smiling to myself, recalling I had seen a hunting buddy do it all the time, I stopped, sat down on the ground and removed my boots as a precaution against noise put up by the dried vegetation and numerous surface rocks. Socks on my feet, I closed to a good rest against an iron bark, about 25 metres from the standing doe, the stable front sight resting on the aiming mark.

The projectile caught her right where it was meant to, square in the heart. She raised up a little on her hind legs, came down to a standing position, then collapsed to the ground, a quick demise. Now the work commenced, boning the meat from the carcass for later storage in the cool room. The doe produced two 20-kilo buckets of boned venison.

The next morning, after completing chores and feeding the



thankful tail-wagging dogs, I headed back toward the soak to press my good fortune. Judging by the footprints around the muddied ground and ooze, the deer visited during the night to quench their thirst. They had moved on. A glassing of the area produced nothing but a few dark, well-muscled wallaroos. I had to check some water tanks and floats on the loop back to the homestead, so I might get lucky yet.

I found a trio well off in the distance, feeding quietly toward the crest of the ridge; a spiker and two does. I switched off the ute's engine, glassing them from the track, waiting for them to disappear over the crest. Half an hour later the horizon was clear, the deer remained undisturbed, the Greener readied.

Mindful of the heat and humidity, I placed my water pack on my back. Within 15 minutes, I crested the ridge. The deer were still feeding, now only about 80 metres away, nibbling greenery as they moved along, manoeuvring between anthills. I used some low scrub as cover, making it to a large anthill that placed me at 60 metres. As excited as the Pope on Sunday, shaking a little, I went into a lying

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The Greener Martini in .32-40: robust, handsome, a joy to carry and shoot.

2 A lovely doe that succumbed to a stalk in stockinged feet.

3 The little band heads out from the soak.

4 Yazzi, one of the contented recipients of the chital protein.



position resting against the packed earth of a termite mound.

I observed the deer for about five minutes, settling myself down and waiting for a chance to close the gap a little more, all the while sucking down gulps of cool water from the reservoir on my back. Doing my old regimental sergeant-major proud ("Keep your backside down, Hughes!") I leopard crawled to the next anthill. The side-on spiker was the closest.

The .32-40 cracked, producing a through-and-through, setting him to the ground straight away, followed by a quick regather and clumsy scramble for about 10



Colonel Townsend Whelen famously said that only accurate rifles are interesting; rightly so.”

metres. Oh, those hounds will be delighted – three buckets of meat boned out this time, and a very contented, sweaty hunter collapsed in the cabin of the ute and turned on the air conditioner — full blast!

This .32-40 may well have been built for target shooting but has proved it can take deer-sized animals with aplomb if used

within the limits of the cartridge and the iron sights. Colonel Townsend Whelen famously said that only accurate rifles are interesting; rightly so, perhaps, as this little beauty is accurate, a joy to carry in the field and pleasing to the eye. It's a testament to the original Greener design and to the metal smith and stockist who produced this final adaptation. 



SAMBAR HUNTING

Garry Walton tells the story of Benn's hunt with the rifle his uncle carried in the Korean war.

Korea and beyond



Yesterday our hunt on the other side of the range had been fruitless. Today we were hunting the extremely tortured course of the next river over to the east.

A likely looking flat complete with small dry creek, dogwood thickets and young gum scrub seemed as good a place as any to have a hunt. I suggested to Benn that he go to the north of the scrub. After we split I put the wind to my back and sauntered along at a casual pace.

I was the dog in this hunt. I wanted Benn to get a shot.

Benn carried the same .303 SMLE No 1 Mk III* rifle that used to be his uncle John's, made by BSA in 1916. Both John and the rifle were veterans of the Korean War.

It was still in full wood configuration and in excellent condition when Benn got it. We stripped it down and clad it in more suitable attire for its new role

as a hunting rifle, mothballing the military timber for future restoration. The long-range Central target sights were removed and replaced with a home-made attempt at a rear ghost-ring setup. Elevation was fixed and only the windage was adjustable. Rough and ready but entirely suitable for the task at hand.

It didn't take long after Benn and I walked our separate ways that our plans came to fruition. A shot rang out from Benn's direction, followed a few seconds later by another.

I was keen to see who was the victor, man or beast, so hurried along in the direction of the shots. I found Benn standing in a small clearing in a somewhat sombre mood. Benn has



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a love and respect of animals, as all good hunters should.

“How’d ya go?” I asked. “What happened? Did ya get one?”

“Yep, I got one.”

“Where is it?” I asked excitedly.

“Over there behind that log,” he answered, pointing to a burnt deadfall about 80 yards away. I still couldn’t see it so he led me over to the downed animal. It was a young hind in prime condition.

He then recounted the chain of events that led to his success.

As he’d gingerly (I had always emphasised extreme stealth) stepped into the clearing she was standing there listening to his approach. Upon seeing the upright form of a human she took off into

We stripped it down and clad it in more suitable attire for its new role as a hunting rifle, mothballing the military timber for future restoration.”

some low gum scrub and was making good her escape by scribing a slow arc out to the right.

At the first chance of a clear shot Benn sent a 174gn Woodleigh on its way. The hind went down to a crippling hip shot and fell behind the cover of a log. As she tried in vain to regain her feet, the only visible part of her body was her

head and neck, into which Benn placed another round. With home made iron sights!

With the cut-up complete it was time to head back to camp. To take advantage of the way the crow flies, we had to cross the river three times. It was a good hunt and a memorable day, topped off with cold beer and hot steak. ☒

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The neck shot.

2 Benn with his uncle’s No 1.

3 Crossing the river on the carry out.

4 The rear sight.

Marcus O'Dean experiences hunter education being done right.

Club meating

The large-scale formalisation of regulated access to public land for licensed hunters is a significant factor in the increase in numbers of licensed shooters. In NSW, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has a sub-department, the Game Licensing Unit (GLU), which is charged with administering public land hunting, education and licence testing through many accredited organisations and clubs around the state.



Andy Kidner with a fallow buck

SO popular has public land hunting become over the past few decades that hunters in adjoining states become licensed at events where the GLU's Education and Training Team set up to facilitate it.

For decades before public land hunting was popularised by GamCon, in association with the then Shooters Party under the leadership of the late Roy Smith, John Tingle and Robert Borsak, Victoria has had a spectacularly successful, less regulated, but still formal system of game licensing with legal hunting permitted in national parks and other public lands, thanks to enlightened government support from the 1870s onwards.

Now Queensland's outdoors community is eager to introduce public land hunting in that state, similar to the NSW model. This push is due to the explosion in numbers of pigs as well as the healthy, expanding populations of deer in many locations.

So, in Australia's unarguably restrictive legislative framework around private gun ownership, models like NSW Public Land Hunting provide undeniable community and environmental benefits obvious to any sane, unbiased observer. It is not sufficient for governments these days to trust the licensing regimes of their police forces to establish any good citizen's community-safety status, and game licensing and regulation is a significant step in proving we are fit and proper people; indeed, the most law-abiding sector of the wider community.

So it was with this in mind that I accepted an invitation from Nepean Hunting Club to cover part of its two-day Hunter LEAP (Learning, Education and Accreditation Program) course for newer members of this highly active club of over 600 members.

Specifically, I was there for the Game Meat Processing Workshop. Several farmed red deer stags were clean shot for the exercise, eviscerated and hung in a refrigerated trailer to transport for overnight storage undercover at the club's headquarters at Hubertus Workers Club in



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The rural-city divide is philosophical and political.”

Luddenham, in Sydney's west.

The participants were welcomed on Saturday morning.

Why This Is Good

Before the over-regulation of gun ownership brought about in 1996, many families based in cities or larger rural towns had a firearm or two stored in a cupboard to take on an annual hunt to rural friends' or relatives' private properties or to bump off lice-bearing starlings with air rifles from their garden aviaries or for kids to learn basic marksmanship safely in their back yards. They knew property owners who were amenable to their annual visit to shoot some rabbits and camp on the creek. It was incredibly rare for guns owned under these circumstances to be used in a criminal fashion.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The second day of the workshop included instruction on breaking down the carcass into choice cuts.

2 Learning how to salt the hide, the first step in the tanning process.

3 Nepean Hunting Club's Ralph Terbutt.





4

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Hunter education legitimises the recreational hunting lifestyle choice as an integral component of a healthy, functioning community.”



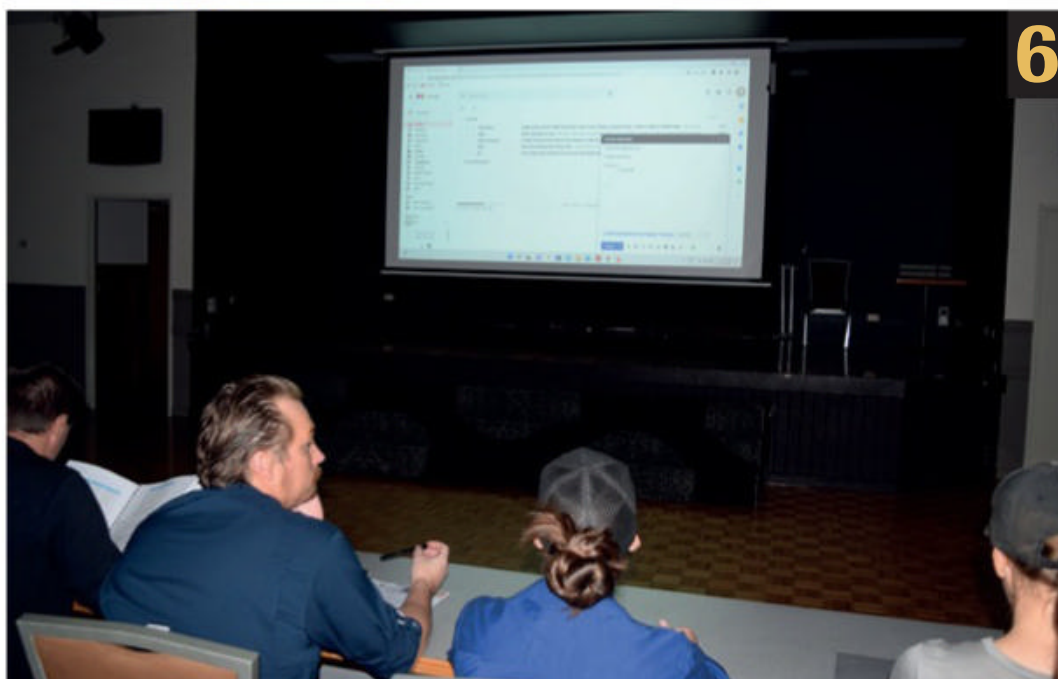
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ON THIS SPREAD

4 The process of skinning and butchering was explained all the way through.

5 Thirty percent of the class was female.

6 Nepean Hunting Club was well set up to present the theoretical parts of the course.



6

Now the rural-city divide is not only physical, but philosophical and political. Now, where many rural people have guns, city people have been largely deprived of that right unless they have a genuine reason to own firearms.

Like it or not, we are living in a time where risk management is king and all conceivable (and some inconceivable) risks must be eliminated in the interests of keeping people ‘safe’. Our World War II diggers would be astonished at the sheer volume of laws and regulations on our statutes now. It is insufficient to rely on the overriding fact that a vast majority of people are good and will routinely try to do the right or moral thing. Governments love building empires on legislation and gun ownership is a standout in this regard.

Unless you reside on larger rural properties, hunting opportunities are now constricting more and more through graziers’ aversion to allowing “city yahoos with guns” onto their properties. Many property owners are averse to allowing unknowns onto their land due to actual experience of ‘hunters’ doing the wrong thing, so door knocking by prospective well-meaning hunters is often a very thankless exercise.

Even the well-meaning urban hunter can become a right pain in the wotsit when they get bogged or get into some other type of inconvenience. Having \$20 million public liability cover through hunting club membership is a comfort to farmers responding to club members door knocking if the unthinkable happens.

This being the environment existing in Australia currently — and not improving any time in the foreseeable future — hunter education via hunting clubs teaching government-developed and approved curricula legitimises the recreational hunting lifestyle choice (it is much more than a mere sport, after all) as an integral component of a healthy, functioning community.

The Victorian Department of Finance conducted a study on the economic benefit of recreational



ALL PICS ABOVE:
Steve Graham
expertly skinned
the deer in front
of the students.

hunting to the overall economy and for 2019 the gross economic benefit to Victoria was \$356 million, but more telling was a statistic highlighting the age of participants taken in five-year bands, from adolescence to old age.

Interestingly, the licence holder statistics/activity profile of the age bands showed an equivalent high level of licensing/participation along all the bands from 29-34 right through to 69-74. Additionally, the self-perceived wellbeing/health of all participants was higher than the wider population's average. When you consider the safety statistics of legal hunting and shooting versus, say, football, mountain biking or other often injurious pursuits, it is easy to see the community good resulting from the active, outdoors lifestyle of hunting. It allows you to participate at a tailored level right into your late seventies.

It keeps people out of premature admittance to nursing homes and increases those people's quality of life, ie, they are less of a drain on health and welfare budgets for longer and they contribute more to their communities, by virtue of their life experience.

My experience of hunting clubs

I have been involved in various ways with three large, highly active hunting clubs — Illawarra HC, Wingecarribee HC and Nepean HC — presenting workshops, participating and organising target shooting events and offering media coverage and I have been very impressed with the energy, commitment, mentoring and instruction which characterise them.

Most recently, the NHC Game Meat Processing Workshop was well organised, the program most beneficial due to the experience and approach of the instructors, Steve and Ralph, who imparted the DPI formal written matter patiently and in a friendly manner.

The course participants were all under 40, some much younger, and 30 percent were women. They were extremely attentive, asked very good questions and got the hang of the practical skills quickly, while eating up the more formal theory workshops.

What this means is that hunting is in good hands for the future in NSW, provided it is allowed to continue by our masters. The high activity level, mature guidance, considerate mentoring, community spirit and good nature I have seen in members both old and young repeatedly impress me mightily and they provide a template others would do well to follow.

The Northern Territory, incidentally, has public land hunting schemes under the leadership of the redoubtable Brian Boyle. See page 16 of this issue.

It is my sincere hope that Queensland comes on board with a public land hunting scheme on the NSW template.

If you have only ever hunted private property in NSW, Victoria or the Territory, you may be surprised at the rich culture developing in your local hunting club. You may find it a beneficial social experience at least, while providing knowledge and resources that improve and expand your hunting experience. 



What the course covered

In a 58-page DPI textbook, lavishly illustrated, the following chapter headings are addressed:

- Hunting in NSW
- Safe game meat handling
- Harvesting wild game meat
- Know the risks
- Disease identification
- Field dressing
- Cover the carcass
- Quartering
- Transporting game in a vehicle
- Butchering
- Preparing select cuts
- Field dressing small game
- Conclusion

To give an insight into the details, the subheadings of one chapter, Know the Risks, will give you an appreciation of the quality of this course:

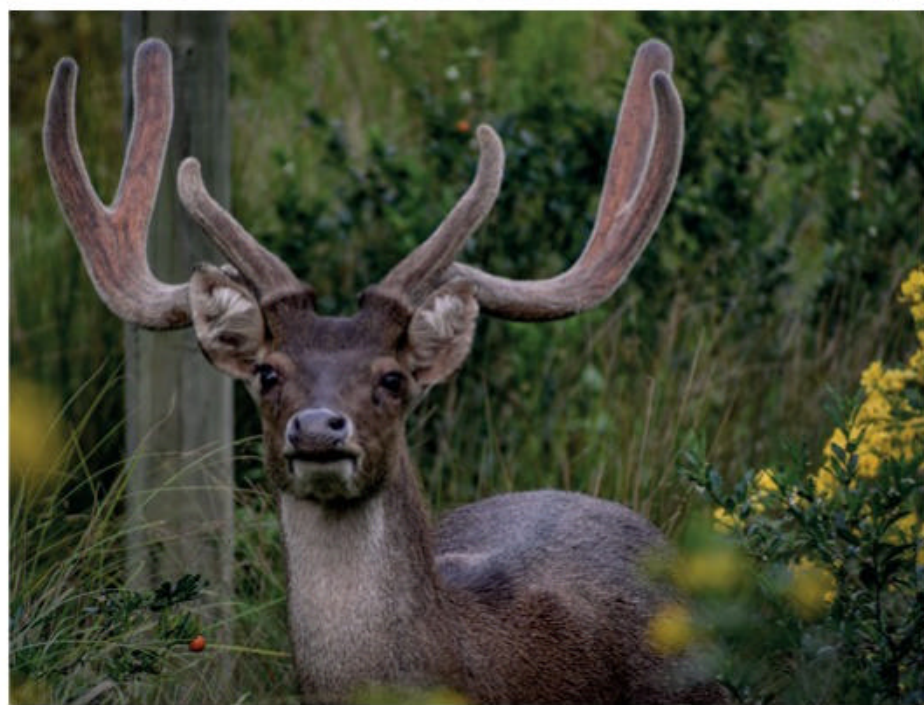
1. Bacterial contamination
2. Physical contamination
3. Cross contamination
4. Before you take the shot
5. Minimise bacterial growth
6. Protect your pets

**SPECIES
GUIDE**

Rusa Rundown

Zac McKenzie gives us the good oil on one of Australia's least known deer, the Javan rusa.





I cut my teeth hunting rusa deer in the Illawarra region of NSW, skipping the small game a lot of people grow up hunting and starting on rusa when I turned 20. These deer have evolved alongside predators such as tigers, dogs and man. As well as mastering the art of hide and seek in the bush, they have adapted perfectly to the urban Wollongong environment.

JAVAN rusa (*Rusa timorensis*) stags stand about 1.0-1.2m at the shoulder and weigh 120-140kg before the rut; the hinds stand 80-90cm high and are significantly lighter at 60-80kg.

The pelage is light brown darkening towards the hindquarters, often with a reddish or blonde hue. Some hinds and fawns in particular will show a much lighter colour in summer. Stags will often be a much darker brown than hinds, but they are still lighter than sambar. All rusa will have a lighter underbelly in a dirty white or cream colour. At no stage will they have the spots we associate with some species.

Rusa are well known for their white bib, a white patch from their chin going down the front of their throat. During the rut, stags grow a mane similar to sambar, but it should retain some of the white colour. The hairs will be brown/white, coarse, crimped and by the end of the rut most stags will be missing large patches along their neck. They are well known for being poor quality skins and capes due to their sparse hair and many hairless patches.

Antlers are cast late in the year, with the larger stags starting mid-November and the young boys usually finished by mid-January.

Velvet will grow until late April, when it will still be soft, and by early- to mid-May the velvet will harden and dry out. Rusa will wait until the velvet has dried before they start rubbing them; they do not strip the velvet the same way fallow do. It is rare to see stags outside this cycle, unlike sambar which can be seen at any stage of antler growth throughout the year. Rusa stags will rub to polish their antlers and scent-mark their territory on small trees, from saplings up to about 40cm diameter — similar sized trees to sambar but not like chital, who prefer very large gum trees.

MAIN: A rutting stag in his finest reedy headdress stands guard over one of his hinds.

INSET: A rusa stag in velvet, with no real development of the distinctive main that comes with hard antlers.



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Distribution and habits

The Illawarra herd of rusa occupy a mostly rainforest-style habitat with vines, thick lantana, cleared paddocks, urban streets, sporting fields, beaches and creek lines along the escarpment. Outside the rut, they mostly follow a pattern similar to that of red deer, coming out to feeding areas late in the afternoon or early evening, feeding overnight and then returning to their bedding areas in the morning.

However, rusa also will have their 11am-2pm feeding session, which may be due to their close proximity to human schedules. Rusa have adapted extremely well to the urban environment and with the middle of the day being fairly quiet in terms of human movement, they will take advantage of this quiet time.

Stags will become more mobile during the rut, as the younger stags will be pushed out and roam, looking for any opportunity with a hind. Many sightings happen at random daylight times in areas

that deer normally only frequent during the dark of night. Every year during the rut there are calls from the public to cull deer as they are ‘spreading’. However, the paddock the deer used to feed on now has 200 houses in it. So they just stroll through, eating the gardens instead, with more eyes on them.

Anyone who lives in the Illawarra and southern Sydney will no doubt know somebody who has deer frequenting their property, whether it’s farmland, urban family house or the beach. They have us figured out just as well, if not better than we know them. Many people are often greeted by deer in the carport or driveway at 2am and will never see them during daylight.

It’s not uncommon to have deer eat the lawn or garden flowers of any house within about five streets of bushland, or to see prints on a beach or park that seems as though it’s nowhere near the bush. A small creek with scrub will provide

During the rut, stags grow a mane similar to sambar.”

access corridors for these deer into areas that seem completely urban. These corridors can provide protection, but can also add pressure to the council to remove the deer.

For the main herd, these patterns extend from the north of the Royal National Park around Sutherland and Bundeena to Macquarie Pass in the south. The steep escarpment on the western edge keeps them mostly contained. There are also pockets of rusa outside these areas to the west and south.

Rusa are also established in other coastal areas of eastern Australia: on the NSW North Coast, southeast Queensland and further up the Queensland coast. They are also present in the southeastern corner of SA and in a few isolated inland spots of NSW and Queensland.



ON THIS SPREAD

1 An excellent trophy like this doesn't come along often for rusa hunters.

2 A rutting stag showing the distinctive rusa bib down his neck.

Hunting advice

When looking for sign, lantana is always a good place to start. Rusa bed in these thick areas close to food sources, whether it is a paddock or a garden. They can be as little as two metres into cover and may exhibit similar behaviour to sambar, watching people walk past unaware of them.

Stag scat will often be large 'grenades' while hinds leave pellets. Like most deer, the greener and slimier it is, the fresher it is. Blacker and drier is older.

Wallows are great places to sit and wait for deer to come. Rusa wallow extensively around their boundaries. Urine-stained mud is transferred to rub trees and surrounding saplings, a very similar behaviour to sambar.

Rusa share many behaviours with sambar due to their close historic relationship, however it seems sambar scrape much more regularly than rusa. Scrapes do exist, but rusa prefer wallowing for scent marking and communication, with most activity occurring before and during the rut.

The rut is longer than for fallow and reds, typically going for six

weeks, beginning late June and ending early August. Like any rut, it can be shorter or longer and could also start early or end late, but July is usually the best time to hunt. The intensity can vary greatly from day to day, location to location, or year to year. But as a rule, the more stags there are, the more intense the rut.

If each stag can hold his harem with little competition, he will be less inclined to expend energy roaring, patrolling, marking and fighting. With more competition, he'll have to work harder to hold his harem, leaving himself open to silly decisions that leave him exposed.

Hunting with a bow will be most successful if you sit and wait over a wallow or in a stand over a game trail to a feeding area. If, like me, you're a bit less patient you'll want to walk around. In the scrub treat them like you would sambar: walk a couple of steps and glass ahead. Move slowly. It's common for rusa to watch you, and they will bark and break away after some time.

Using a rifle, I like to sit on the opposite side of a clearing that they enter and wait for them to expose themselves. If it's morning and they have already moved back into cover, you can follow the game trails into the scrub and catch them before they go to bed. Rusa are just as likely to browse as they are to graze and will spend some time feeding on their way back.

Their sense of smell is quite well developed, a weakness that can be exploited. If they hear you but can't smell you, rusa will often stand with their nose in the air trying to sniff you out. If they do break off without having smelt you, often you can pull them up with a "meep" and see the iconic rusa look of turning their head 180 degrees, but if they get a whiff they're gone.

I've only shot a few rusa with the

bow, but I've had 260-spine arrows pass through with 125gn broadheads without any trouble from my Matthews set at 70lb. The same applies with any bow hunting: razor-sharp broadheads and shot placement are the most important factor in a quick kill.

I prefer to hunt rusa with a rifle, using frangible projectiles. My favourite round is a basic .308 Hornady SST 150gn. I've only lost one rusa with this round and it was my first stag, so I'm certain it was more shot placement from buck fever than the bullet. Almost every other rusa shot with this round has run less than 50m.

In my experience, larger, faster rounds like the .300 Win Mag are too much and will pinhole the deer, allowing it to run further. Smaller rounds with a frangible projectile are effective.

The vast majority of shots I've taken at rusa have been under 100m, so a scope of 4-12x is more than sufficient. Many shots are at close quarters in thick scrub or across a small clearing.

Rusa exhibit many interesting behaviours and just when you think you have started to figure them out they will surprise you. The best way to optimise success is to spend more time in the bush and more time watching them go about their normal business. 📍





NEW



Ridgeline catalogues

Ridgeline has produced two new clothing and accessories catalogues for 2022. The first is its collection of hunting and outdoor apparel and accessories, including men's, women's and kids' favourites, plus many new additions across the range. Ridgeline has even added a new camo pattern for fishermen in the Performance range, referred to as Squall Camo.

The big news is, however, Ridgeline has produced a separate catalogue for the rural sector and

tradies. It includes the Heritage Collection of apparel for men, women and children, plus lots more and is now available through many rural and produce stores Australia-wide. Ask for your free copy of the new Work, Explore, Live catalogue by Ridgeline at your local country store outlet or pick up a copy of Ridgeline's hunting apparel and accessories at your local gun shop.

For more information visit
www.ridgelineclothing.com.au.

Kopfjäger tripods and rests

Kopfjäger produces a rock-steady range of carbon-fibre and aluminium tripods that are ideal for precision shooters and hunters, or for use when out filming or photographing game. Both the carbon-fibre and aluminium tripods offer seated to standing position adjustment via their three-position angle locks and multiple leg extensions. The K700 aluminium tripods and K800 carbon-fibre tripods have been designed to work on their own or together with their range of accessories for precision shooting and ease of use.

Kopfjäger has a full range of replacement parts, like rubber tripod feet, a carry strap and more. You can purchase these tripods with or without a rail, grip or accessories. So if you simply want a rock steady tripod for your spotter or camera, you can purchase it on its own. Both include a carry case and feature a reversible threaded stud with 3/8"-16 and 1/4"-20 threads.

These tripods also feature a reversible centre column that offers an extra 38cm (14.9 inches) of height. At full extension they reach 183cm (72 inches); retracted, they stand just 69cm (27 inches) high.

Alternatively, you can purchase the K700 or K800 as a kit which includes a rail system for attaching other fittings and the Reaper Grip. What's a Reaper Grip, you might ask? I'm told this well-designed piece of equipment was actually designed by SWAT members to provide unshakeable, fatigue-free stability in high-stakes situations and where precision is a must. The Reaper Grip upper assembly mounts directly to a ball-joint head system and simply fits to the tripod via a 3/8"-16 threaded stud. The Reaper Grip will hold and anchor most tapered or straight rifle stocks and chassis via a non-slip grip sleeve, providing a sturdy base for such things as long-range shooting or sighting in a firearm. Add to this a smooth pan and tilt motion via the tripod and you have the complete shooting rest solution.

Extremely well made, the Kopfjäger range of tripods and accessories is now available through gun shops Australia wide.

To see the full range or to find out more ask at your local gun shop. For trade enquiries, contact TSA Outdoors or visit
www.tsaoutdoors.com.au.



SOG Field Knife

SOG is based in the USA and produces a well-made range of knives and specialty tools like multipliers, survival and camp hatchets, and more. Perhaps one of the most sought-after knives for hunters and outdoorsmen is the SOG Field Knife featuring a satin polished stainless-steel blade that's 10.5cm (4.1 inches) long. This fixed blade comes razor sharp out of the box and is constructed of RC.54-58 stainless steel. It also has an anti-slip, textured thermoplastic rubber (TPR) handle with index finger grip and lanyard hole. The SOG Field Knife is 22cm (8.5") in overall length and is ideal for skinning or tackling outdoor duties around camp.

It comes complete with hard-moulded plastic/nylon sheath



that also features a built-in groove for cutting cord or fishing line while the knife is sheathed, and a handy belt clip with secondary attachment point.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or to find out more visit
www.osaaustralia.com.au.



ATN OTS-XLT 160 thermal monocular

While ATN offers a large range of thermal equipment, its OTS-XLT 160 thermal monocular is compact and offers simple control and use. Featuring 2-8x digital magnification, this unit also offers rangefinding capability, will record video and offers the choice of several colour modes including white hot, red hot, black hot and fusion.

This hand-held monocular has a high-sensitivity, built-in thermal detector that provides a clear view in total darkness. There are four control buttons and a diopter adjustment knob for clarity, so it's easy to use. The first button is simply an on/off control, the second captures images or video, the third is for setting the colour palette and the fourth for magnification. This unit also features a tripod screw for connection to a base and cable interface to charge the device or export files.

I gave this unit a brief trial in the field and was most impressed with its simplicity of use. I'm told it will offer up to 10 hours of continuous use via its ultra-low power consumption.

Accessories included are USB-C cable and soft, padded carry case.

Ask to see the full range of ATN thermal imaging gear at your local gun shop or visit www.osaaustralia.com.au.

Ridgeline Performance 1500 rangefinder

Ridgeline has added another excellent product to its extensive range of outdoor accessories. This time it's a ballistic rangefinder, the Performance 1500 model. The 1500, as the name implies, will accurately measure the distance to objects out to 1500 metres. It will not only give an accurate straight-line distance reading, it is capable of ballistic ranging via the free BOSS Applied Ballistics app, available from Google Play for your Android phone or the App Store for Apple devices.

The unit is powered by a CR2 three-volt lithium battery that I'm told should be replaced every 12 months; a battery level indicator on the screen will show current charge. A great feature with this Ridgeline rangefinder is the fact it turns itself off after about 30 seconds of inactivity to save power.

To use the rangefinder simply hold down the 'range' button and the display will activate. If you don't have a clear picture of the screen, rotate the diopter adjustment on the ocular piece. Then, place the aiming point on the object you wish to range and hold down the 'range' button until it displays the distance in your choice of metres or yards.

For the long-range shooter, the Ridgeline Performance 1500 will also allow you to upload your personal ammunition data via the BOSS app. By pairing the rangefinder to your mobile device, the display will give you the correct information to match your ballistic data.

After downloading the free app I found the process easy enough to perform and soon had the app loaded with such things as bullet weight, diameter, muzzle velocity, ballistic coefficient etc to suit my firearm and load data. This app handles data storage for up to five different firearms, so you can pick the data to suit the firearm you wish to use on the day.

Without getting too technical, the Ridgeline 1500 ballistic rangefinder comes with a complete set of instructions for use and is



well explained. The Rangefinder also comes with a well-made carry pouch that can be attached to your backpack or worn on your belt. RRP is \$649.95.

To find out more ask at your local gun shop or visit www.ridgelineclothing.com.au.

Spika Terra Puffer jacket

The Terra Puffer is the pinnacle of insulated jackets and has been specifically engineered to conquer the cold. This jacket packs plenty of features, with premium 750+ fill rating, durable water resistance treatment, and Responsible Down Standard (RDS) certification. The duck down housed in stitched baffles to prevent clumping and down migration, and to maintain core warmth.

Utilising a polyester exterior, windproof membrane and nylon lining, the Terra Puffer will ensure heat is retained while helping maintain and regulate your core temperature.

Spika's puffer also has an adjustable hood, Velcro cuff closures, full-length YKK zipper and hand-warmer pockets. The Spika Terra jacket is a lightweight yet durable and packable jacket — the ultimate jacket for when you expect to encounter the cold while on your hunt, glassing atop a mountain or in camp.

Available in Performance Olive or Biarri camouflage. Sizes range from small to 5XL.

For more information visit spika.com.au.



Spika Xone pants

Spika's Xone pants are technically designed and rigorously tested for practicality, movement and durability. The Xone midweight fabric is suitable for all seasons of the year. The generous side zip vents allow you to dump heat quickly and easily, and the reinforced knees are crucial for durability and longevity.

The multi-directional stretch fabric allows a wide range of mobility and flexibility, along with shoelace clips and bungee adjusters at the base of each leg which provide multiple fixing and fit options. The integrated belt and belt loops ensure the correct fit and comfort and the array of zippered pockets keep essentials at hand.

When the mercury rises, the Xone pants are also available as warm-weather shorts.

Available in brown or Biarri camouflage, with sizes and cuts to suit men and women.

For more information visit spika.com.au.



Bushmeister lever-release shotguns

Bushmeister has two of the new lever-release shotguns out in gun shops now. Both are made exclusively for the Australian market by one of Europe's leading manufacturers.

BA-X12 Walnut is a traditional pairing of walnut stock and blued barrel and it is sure to impress even the fussiest of shooters. This model has a 28" barrel with vented rib.

The BA-X12 Marine has the traditional look and feel of timber combined with a modern stainless Cerakote finish. It is fitted with a handy 20" barrel.

Other features include:

- Quality European walnut on the timber-stocked models

- 3" magnum chamber
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- Operates with all 12-gauge 2¾" and 3" loads (except low-powered clay target loads)
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Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit www.nioa.com.au.





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The highly efficient 6.5 PRC

This short, potent 6.5mm cartridge proves that the one in the middle is the nicest.

DESIGNED specifically for Precision Rifle Series (PRS) competition, the 6.5 PRC (Precision Rifle Cartridge) failed to achieve Hornady's hoped-for level of popularity with target shooters, but gained a following among hunters due to its ballistic advantage. This is not surprising since the 6.5 PRC fills a hole in the 6.5-calibre picket fence between anaemic rounds like the 6.5 Grendel and the 6.5 Creedmoor and the overbore magnums like the 26 Nosler and 6.5-300 Weatherby Magnum.

The 6.5 PRC's credentials for hunting use are impeccable, for PRS competition is designed to simulate field-shooting with long-range rifles. Targets are set up at unknown distances both near and far, and competitors shoot throughout the year to accumulate points. At one particular end-of-year shoot, ranges varied from 200 to 1510 yards. PRS rules limit the calibre to .30 or less and muzzle velocity to 3200fps. It is difficult to get around the limit on bullet speed since spot checks can be carried out at any time during a match. If the velocity limit is exceeded, the shooter faces disqualification.

The 6.5 PRC may have proved a bit too much of a good thing for targeteers since Hornady's mild 6.5 Creedmoor and 6mm Creedmoor are currently dominating the PRS series. Evidently the 6.5 PRC's recoil (16ft-lb to 18.5ft-lb) was



The 120gr Core-Lokt is seated level with base of neck. COL is 2.853". Long Nosler 142gr ABLR extends below the shoulder and COL was 2.925" in the Mauser M18.

too robust and barrel life too short for a sport where long strings of shots are fired.

Hornady based the 6.5 PRC on the necked-down .300 RCM case (which in turn is a necked down .375 Ruger case) shortened to 2.030", given a 30-degree shoulder angle, minimal body taper and a 0.297" neck. Combining these specs with the 2.955" cartridge overall length (COL) leaves 0.925" for bullet protrusion, which is critical for long, slim .264" projectiles with high ballistic coefficients.

The Hornady 143gr ELD-X, for example, is 1.442" long and the Nosler 142gr ABLR measures 1.446". Seating these longsters out allows more space in the case for near capacity charges of slow powders. SAAMI set the maximum average chamber pressure at 65,000psi.

This adds up to a short-action magnum cartridge for which barrels are given the fast 1:8" twist to combine the

exceptional aerodynamics of long, slim 0.264" diameter projectiles with an efficient powder capacity. Performance-wise, the PRC offers a worthwhile edge over the 6.5-06, 6.5-284 and 6.5 Remington Magnum, and even treads close on the heels of the .264 Winchester Magnum while incurring significantly less barrel wear.

Logically, then, one could call the 6.5 PRC a sensible medium.

Rifles for the PRC are made on short actions (ie, .308 length) but with one difference: chambers have a long throat and the magazine is a bit longer than the 2.810" magazine used for the .308. Hornady designed the PRC to be used in a long action, because a short action dictates that long, heavy bullets be limited to a maximum COL of 2.955". This allows the handloader to gain extra space for the powder charge, but long, heavy bullets protrude

below the base of the shoulder.

The Mauser M18 test rifle is based on a long action and has full length bolt travel, but the magazine is blocked off for an overall cartridge length of 3.015". More about this later.

While 6.5 PRC velocity can't equal big boomers like the 26 Nosler and 6.5-300 Weatherby, velocities are close to those attributed to the redundant .264 Winchester Magnum and are achieved with an average five grains less powder due to the shorter, fatter powder column, which burns more efficiently. The short, fat, beltless 6.5 PRC has some other advantages too: milder recoil, longer barrel life and good performance in a 24" barrel, all attributes that make it potentially the best all-around 6.5mm cartridge of them all.

Classed as the 6.5 Creedmoor's big brother, the 6.5 PRC drives heavy-for-calibre bullets with a high ballistic coefficient (BC) ten percent faster than its sibling,

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accompanied by a similar increase in striking energy, which elevates the PRC into a different class on game. Judged by my rule of thumb, the Creedmoor is marginal for game larger than red stag, whereas the PRC should prove to be an excellent cartridge for any North American big game with the exception of brown bears. I'd rate it as being adequate for wapiti and the majority of African antelopes since I know how reliably a properly structured 143gn 6.5mm bullet like the Nosler ABLR at 3000fps sledges game over away out yonder.

The PRC is best served by bullets weighing 140 grains and heavier. The long throat is fine and dandy when shooting long, heavy bullets, but not ideal when shooting lighter, shorter bullets. When loaded to the lengths specified in some reloading manuals, even 120gn bullets have to travel quite a way through that long throat before they make contact with the rifling.

This doesn't help accuracy. Benchrest shooters routinely seat bullets to just kiss the rifling or maybe 0.010" off, which usually yields the best accuracy. This approach is just not possible with the short magazine and long throat of some PRC rifles.

OSA arranged to send me a Mauser M18 rifle with scope and mount for review (see the June issue). Getting a Hornady die set was easy, but unprimed brass was unavailable from any source. After several abortive attempts I remembered the fine results I'd gained using Bertram brass in the 28 and 30 Nosler. After a number of full-power loads the primer pockets still remained tight. Bruce should label it "Bertram's Virgin Brass". I ordered some of that.

I rounded out the necks and trimmed the cases to Hornady's trim-to length of 2.015". On my digital scale,



Hunting bullets in .264 calibre, left to right: 120gn Core-Lokt, 120gn TSX, Berger 120gn BT, RWS 120gn Cone-Point, Speer 140gn spitzer, Sierra 140gn SBT, Hornady 140gn spire point, Nosler 143gn ABLR, Lapua 155gn Mega, RWS 159gn RNSP and Woodleigh 160gn RNSN.

cases weighed within 2gn of each other and neck thickness varied no more than 0.02". My next task was to size down the neck of an unprimed case 2 or 3mm and insert a flat-base bullet (Hornady 140gn Spire Point) in the neck base-up with the fingers. The bullet should be an easy sliding fit and seated out far enough to contact the rifling.

Carefully chamber the dummy round and gently close the bolt. Contact with the lands should push the bullet into the case neck so the resulting throat length can be measured. It also allows you to estimate the amount of clearance between a given bullet and the lands. With a standard-length throat this measurement can be made with the bullet seated point-first, which leaves rifling marks on the ogive, but this just can't happen with the PRC's longer throat. The M18's throat length measured 0.288".

The next step is to measure useable case capacity. This is done by weighing a fired case, then filling it with water. Next, after cutting a groove in the bullet to vent excess water, insert the bullet into the neck until it reaches the PRC's maximum overall cartridge length. The test Mauser M18's detachable magazine allowed a maximum COL of 3.015". After extracting the cartridge

from the die and pulling the bullet out, the water-filled case is weighed, and the weight of the empty case subtracted. This is a valid exercise because water weighs close to the same weight as most smokeless powders.

With the Hornady 143gn ELD-X bullet seated to an overall cartridge length of 2.844" the water capacity was 62gn. The PRC, then, has much the same capacity as the 6.5 Remington Magnum I reloaded and hunted with back in the late 1970s. This belted shorty was capable of driving 140gn bullets at 3050fps using slow burning H4831 and AR2214.

Ten years later I reloaded the 6.5x68 RWS which didn't drive 140gn bullets much faster. The rifles for both cartridges had .30-06 length actions, which allowed bullets to be seated out to effectively increase the powder space and hence velocity. Back in 1987 when I built a rifle for the 6.5 Rem Mag I used a Brno Model 98 Mauser action which allowed a COL of 3.120".

The PRC's ballistic performance edges out all the other short-action 6.5 cartridges without shooters having to worry about barrel life being too short. Hornady factory ammunition is available but limited in bullet choice to a 143gn ELD-X for hunting and 143gn ELD-Match

for target work. Muzzle velocities are 2960fps and 2910fps respectively. Why they didn't include a load with the 120gn GMX for deer is puzzling, but this doesn't matter if you are a handloader.

Most reloading manuals list pressure-tested data for the 6.5 PRC taken in a 26" barrel, but my test Mauser M18 has a 24" barrel. Hodgdon used a 24" barrel to obtain data for eight different bullet makes and weights; Hornady and Nosler both list five. Re-26 was the top performer with all bullet weights, including the 120gn. Alliant powders are not easy to get, but AR2225 runs a close second with heavy projectiles, and AR2217 is no slouch. Luckily, these powders are available.

With the current interest in 6.5mm cartridges, there's a wide selection of different component projectiles from which to choose. In my 26 Nosler I settled on bullets weighing 120 to 143gn to handle all sizes of game and figured they should work just as well in the PRC. In the end, I decided to include the RWS 127gn Cone-Point and 127gn H-Mantel as well as the Lapua 155gn Mega. Some bullets had long bearing surfaces which dictated deeper seating depth and a shorter COL.

Choice of primers: some manuals list the standard

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large rifle type unless powder charges exceed 60 grains, but Hodgdon used the hot Federal 210M magnum primer which offers more consistent ignition, particularly in extremely cold conditions. My choice was the CCI 250, a magnum type I regularly use.

I have a stock of original 120gn Remington Core-Lokt bullets designed for the 6.5 Rem Mag to take game up to the size of wapiti. I've used them on game like red stag with complete success and can confirm their reputation for being the "deadliest mushroom in the woods".

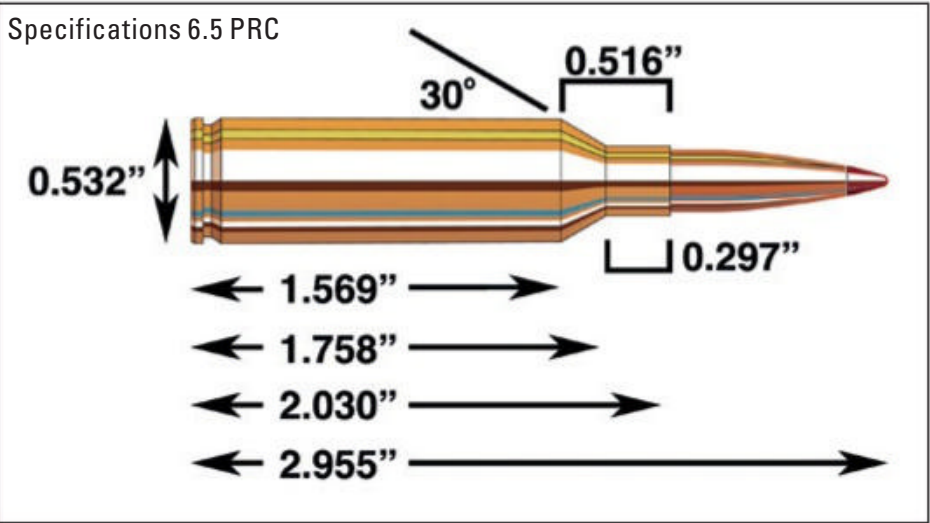
Seating the 120gn Core-Lokt level with the base of the neck, COL was 2.787". A charge of 60gn of AR2225 generated a satisfactory 3052fps with five-shot groups averaging 1.30" at 100yd. I draw the line at hunting with match bullets so I chose more good hunting bullets — Barnes 120gn TSX FB, Berger 120gn Match, Hornady 129gn Interbond and 140gn Spire Point, Nosler 142gn ABLR and Lapua 155gn Mega.

With careful handloading this sextet can all be pushed to decent velocities in the 6.5 PRC. All are capable of

reaching out to drop big game at distances beyond what most hunters normally attempt. But for open country where longer ranges sometimes crop up, the 143gn ELD-X and 142gn ABLR are standouts. Both bullets can be pushed at over 2950fps in the PRC and, having high BCs of .623 and .625, shed velocity in a miserly fashion. Both bullets hold up well over the long haul, exhibiting admirable aerodynamics.

The 120gn TSX starts out 250fps faster, but the heavier 142gn bullet rapidly overhauls the lighter one and by the time it reaches 250yd is traveling faster and has forged ahead. At 500yd the 120gn bullet has barely 1100fps left compared to 1584fps for the 142gn longster. Remaining energy really tops it off — 1103ft-lb compared with 1584, or about 500ft-lb more. Well within the 1500ft-lb recommended for wapiti and more than enough for any of our larger deer species.

Trajectory-wise, if the 120gn TSX is sighted in 2¾" high at 100yd it zeroes at 275yd, whereas the 142gn can be sighted in 3" high at 100yd to zero at 300yd. Both loads can



be used interchangeably since the path of both bullets varies by no more than ¾" all the way out to 500yd.

My data was worked up in Bertram brass but the other components were varied. Nosler and Hornady recommended ultra-slow RE-26, AR2217 and AR2225 powders. Comparing data from three sources showed that the maximum charges with different bullet weights varied slightly, but Re-26 was the star performer. Just as I did with my 26 Nosler, I began by loading 2gn under the published maximum with bullets seated out to COLs dictated by the length of their ogives and amount of bearing surface. It was intended to

discover which combination worked best by shooting five-shot groups.

All the handloads shown in the accompanying chart were close, slightly below the published maximums. In my test rifle, shooting proceeded without any snags, pressure signs were normal and velocities registered on my MagnetoSpeed chronograph about what I expected. Bolt lift and extraction were easy, and primers normal — no craters or ejector marks on the case heads. Accuracy, as can be seen from the chart, averaged less than one MOA for most recipes. Moreover, the rifle shot consistently tight groups after the barrel heated up, which it did after three shots on a day when the temperature topped 29 degrees.

While Hornady's goal of bringing out the 6.5 PRC for long-range targets didn't work out, it has become a more acceptable choice for hunters, many of whom have been less than impressed by super 6.5s like the 26 Nosler and 6.5-300 Weatherby. They are not enamoured of cartridges which burn copious amounts of powder, belt the shoulder hard, have fearsome muzzle blast and short barrel life.

The 6.5 PRC is, I believe, a more practical choice for the hunter. It outperforms the standard 6.5s while giving genuine magnum-level performance with moderate recoil, reduced muzzle blast and longer barrel life. ☎

6.5 PRC ACCURACY AND VELOCITY

Bullet (gn)	Powder (type)	Charge (gn)	COL (inch)	Velocity (fps)	Accuracy (inch @ 100yd)
Rem 120gn Core-Lokt	AR2225	60	2.787	3052	1.30
Barnes 120gn TSX	AR2217	58	2.887	2884	0.98
Barnes 120gn TSX	AR2225	61	2.887	3125	0.85
Hor 140gn Spire Pt	RE-26	55	2.780	2951	0.88
Hor 140gn Spire Pt	AR2225	59	2.780	2911	0.65
Berger 120gn Match	RE-26	60	2.866	3069	0.76
Berger 120gn March	AR2225	61	2.788	2978	0.85
Nos 140gn AccuBond	RE-26	56	2.844	3072	1.10
Nosler 142gn ABLR	RE-26	55	2.926	2976	0.92
Hor 143gn ELD-X	AR2217	57	2.855	2995	0.80
Lapua 156gn Mega	AR2217	57	2.715	2835	1.00
Lapua 156gn Mega	RE-26	54	2.715	2886	0.95
Lapua 156gn Mega	AR2225	56	2.666	2727	1.00

Notes: All loads used the CCI 250 primer. Accuracy is average of four 5-shot groups fired from benchrest. Velocity is average of 10 shots measured with a MagnetoSpeed chronograph.

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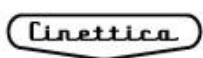
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Bucks to the left, shots to the right, and Chloe's stuck in the middle with Frankie and Old Pop.

FIVE-THIRTY in the morning. Thirty minutes before I was supposed to meet Old Pop at our deer block.

After arriving, my post-coffee bladder sure made itself known, so I quickly jumped out. However, my need to pee quickly disappeared when I was greeted by the sound of two bucks somewhere on the block arguing over who had the bigger voice box.

As my anticipation grew, I silently wished Old Pop would hurry up. Even though it was still pitch black I wanted to get into position faster.

After what felt like forever, Old Pop finally pulled up and jumped out of the car, closely followed by my little brother's German shorthaired pointer (GSP), Frankie.

Quickly, he unlocked the gate and we crept to our usual position in the paddock, with

the bucks still croaking somewhere in the dark.

Using his rattlers, Old Pop tried to call the bucks out of the foggy scrub. Although they continued to croak, they were never visible.

Shots rang out in the near distance, with two more shots following within the next 10 minutes. The visibility was still extremely poor, so I was very unsure about what the neighbour might have been shooting at.

We quietly waited for another half an hour in case the bucks started up again.

It was great waiting with Frankie, who couldn't stop pointing at the birds that flitted up in the trees behind us. I learnt the hard way to stand up-wind of her, though; she sure did give Old Pop a run for his money.

Not giving up, we decided to



1

“

I learnt the hard way to stand up-wind of Frankie; she sure did give Old Pop a run for his money.”

change our game plan and hunt the other side of the property in hope there was something else moving about.

Making our way along a well-worn game trail down to the creek, we caught a glimpse of a white doe grazing in the open paddock across from us.

Wasting no time, I walked through the creek and up the opposite bank, with Old Pop and Frankie hot on my heels. Setting up my speed sticks behind a tree, I glanced through the scope. I had a perfect shot line and a safe backdrop.

Chambering a round, I took another quick glance before squeezing the trigger and dropping the hind where she stood.

A freezer full of meat for me, a leg for Old Pop and scraps of meat for the dogs.

Life's good!



2

ON THIS PAGE

1 Frankie comes in to check out the pale doe.

2 Chloe doesn't waste a bit of the deer.

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