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HUNTING
WITH A
RECURVE
BOW

I think I shot
Bigfoot!

TESTED



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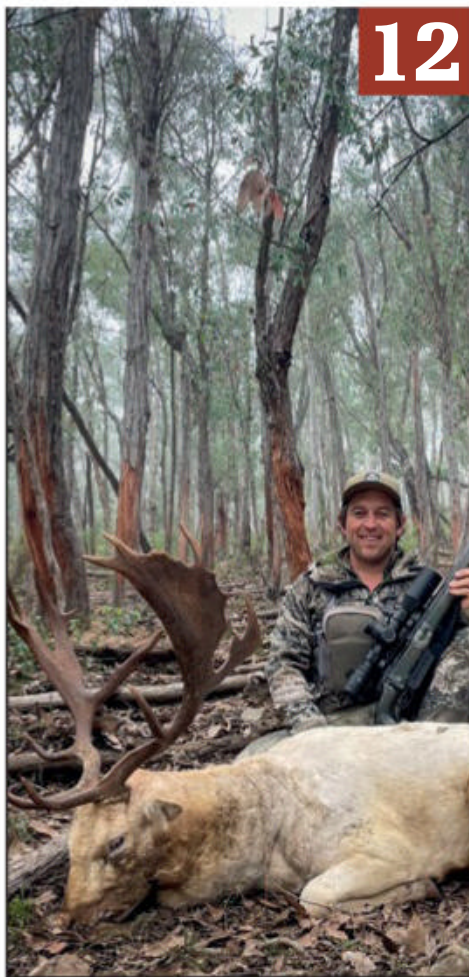
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HUNTING

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TESTED

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TESTED

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ON THE COVER

That's what we all want to see in the rut! Photo by DGWildlife/iStock



Good outcomes for shooting come from a broad mix of approaches

United against thuggery

IT is hard to fathom how undemocratically the Western Australian Government, under Premier Cook and Police Minister Papalia, has acted, and equally hard to understand why. From cooking up outrageous new gun laws in secret with the henchmen of the upper echelons of the WA police, to refusing to legitimately consult about them, and then ramming the laws through parliament without debate because it was suddenly an emergency, the WA Government trampled on everything good and meaningful in our democracy.

WA's example stands in stark contrast to the way common sense prevailed in the NT in June, where laws banning the sale of ammo to interstate licence-holders were temporarily set aside by a Commissioner's exemption until a promised revision of the Act to fix the problem.

That little victory for shooters came about because

our level-headed representatives (Shooting Industry Foundation of Australia's James Walsh, NT Field & Game's Bart Irwin, Coolalinga firearms dealer Darryl Yesberg and politician Nigel Scullion) took a well-prepared argument to the NT Police Minister who had the courtesy to hear them out.

That's the way it should work. It can't work with authoritarianism like we see in WA.

Table-banging and confrontation from our side can be effective but can also be self-defeating, too. Some quiet lobbying recently brought us *this* close to overturning one of the sillier aspects of NSW gun regulations until someone else on our side of things started banging on loudly and publicly about the issue. The people on the other side who could have changed the regulations walked away, mainly because they didn't want the banger-on to be able



The bulldozing through of new gun laws in WA was a classic case of an absolute majority being used in an authoritarian way

to claim any credit. Now we're back to square one.

Shooters Union president Graham Park was on ABC television recently speaking sense about gun laws and police powers in Queensland, coming across as someone with legitimate concerns and valid points. That kind of PR approach is excellent for the public face of our cause.

A lot can be done when you've got the right people working in their expert fields trying to achieve realistic and fair outcomes. We need to

support them all, whether they're grass-roots players, representatives within our shooting organisations, industry lobbyists or politicians.

But none of them will get anywhere when they're faced by anti-democratic thugs like the Cook Government in WA. That's where our votes come into play. Use them well.

MICK MATHESON
Editor

SPORTING SHOOTER

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In memory of Technical Editor
Nick Harvey, 1931-2024

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FIND OUT
MORE
ONLINE





Nick Harvey passed away in February after almost 50 years as our Technical Editor. He left us with scores of unpublished answers to readers' queries. To honour his memory, we will continue his column until we have run them all.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Loading down .338 Win Mag

Q I am interested in purchasing a .338 Win Mag rifle. Can you tell me if this cartridge can be loaded down for use on smaller species of deer and up to, say, red stag. Of course, I'd use full-power loads for sambar.

I think the .338 is a great gun that can be used on everything from buffaloes down. Later, I intend using the .338 on a hunt in Alaska.

I don't want to buy a different rifle for each size game I hunt and am content to be a one-gun man.

Sam Harrison

A Certainly you may load the .338 Win Mag down for use on small deer. This is a better course of action than buying a light-calibre rifle and attempting to use it on heavy game.

You'll find the Hornady 200gn SST bullet an excellent choice for small to medium deer. A modest charge of 68gn of AR2209 will produce about 2800fps with this bullet in most .338 rifles of standard 600mm barrel length. This is sufficient velocity to give a reasonably flat trajectory and the bullet is still travelling at



ABOVE: Nick always liked his 8mm Rem Mag (pictured) but in the end said the .338 Win Mag was one of the best options around

about 2300fps at 200 yards (almost 700m/s at 200m). To drop the velocity any lower than this will result in poor bullet expansion.

For an all-round load to be used on all Alaskan game I like the 225gn Barnes TSX FB ahead of 67gn of AR2209 for about 2750fps (838m/s).

.30 Rem Mag wildcat? It's a Jarret

Q Having worn out the barrel of my Remington Model 700 in 8mm Rem Mag and being left with several hundred new, unprimed cases on hand, I've decided to design a new wildcat based on the 8mm Rem Mag case with a 35 degree shoulder necked down to .30 calibre.

What kind of velocities do you think I would get with such a wildcat? Surely its performance should be right up there with the .30 Nosler?

Alan Carson

A Alas, dear boy, it's already been done! It came along in the early 1990s and is called the .300 Jarret after its originator, Kenny Jarret, famous for his beanfield rifles and the holder of a number of benchrest records.

The velocities he gained had a 150gn bullet going 3600fps (1097m/s), a 165gn at 3450 (1052), 180gn at 3250 (991) and



Alas, dear boy, it's already been done! It is called the .300 Jarret"

200gn at 3050 (930). So it actually shades the .30 Nosler. Jarret reported that his rifle was capable of ½ MOA and sighted-in 3" high at 100yd (83mm at 100m), the 165gn bullet dropped five inches low at 400yd (13cm at 366m)!

Despite that wildcat already being foaled, why not throw a saddle on that hoss and take it for a gallop anyway?

Sight height for an ex-military rifle

Q I own an ex-military Mauser 98 that I want to

use for military rifle shooting competition, but there's a problem with the height of the front sight. It shoots six inches high at 100 yards (about 17cm at 100m) with the rear sight as low as it will go. The range officer told me that the rifle needs a higher front sight, but knows of no formula to determine sight correction. He told me to ask if you can help.

Jason Perry

A A simple formula for sight height correction is as follows: Multiply the sight radius in inches by the number of inches to be corrected, divided by the distance to the target in inches.

For example: say your rifle has an 18" sight radius and shoots 6" high at 100 yards with the rear sight in its lowest position. Then $h = (18 \times 6) \div 3600$; $h = 0.0300$.

Measure the height of the front sight with a micrometer. For the above example, we'll

say the front sight is 0.410" high. Add the correction of 0.030 to 0.410, and it tells us the height of the new front sight should be 0.440". A gunsmith should be able to work out the height of foresight your rifle needs using this formula.

Belted case woes

Q My mate and I both have rifles chambered in .300 Win Mag. He got a Browning X-Bolt and I got another brand. He is shooting Federal Premium Vital-Shok and I am using Remington ammunition, but I have started getting case separations just above the web of the case in front of the belt. He doesn't have the same problem.

The guy at my local gun shop couldn't tell me that was wrong. He told me to ask you and enclose sample cases from both rifles. Can you figure out what's likely to be causing the problem with my gun?

Bob Blewett

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SEE THE UNSEEN

Like several other cartridges that headspace on the belt, new .300 Win Mag cases and loaded cartridges are sometimes short at the shoulder. The belt may keep the case head in close contact with the bolt face, but it does not prevent the case from stretching ahead of the web as a cartridge fires and expands to fill the chamber.

Miking Remington cases from your rifle showed that they measured .018" (.457mm) short from the case head face to the datum line on the shoulder compared to the Federal cases fired in your mate's X-Bolt rifle.

Beltless cases headspace on the shoulder and are a much tighter fit in the chamber. Winchester Supreme .30-06 cartridges measured only .003" (.076mm) shorter from the case head to the datum line on the shoulder compared to your fired .300 Win Mag cartridges.

Evidently, that amount of stretch on the Remington .300 Win Mag cases on the first firing excessively lengthened the cases in front of the web and wrecked them.

I'd recommend you forget about the belt and set the headspace on the shoulder. This is done after you expand the necks by running them over a larger expander button, like an 8mm calibre. Then size the necks down a bit at a time until the cases will just fit snugly in the chamber. Load the cases with the minimum load listed in your reloading manual and fire them. The remaining section of the expanded neck keeps the case tightly in the chamber at the shoulder and against the bolt face. Shooting them fireforms the brass to be a close fit in the chamber with no stretching at the web.

Scope corrections

Recently, I bought a high-range variable power scope for my .300 Win Mag and noticed that the clicks are in

Good long-range scopes, such as this Delta, have 1/8 MOA (or inch) adjustments for finer accuracy at greater distances



Swedish Model 94 carbines are well known for their quality of build and accuracy"

increments of 1/8" rather than the usual 1/4". I would have preferred 1/4" clicks or even 1cm clicks as my rifle only gets used for hunting.

Why do some scopes have 1/8" clicks? What advantage is there?

Dick Curnow

A Long-range target scopes have 1/8" clicks instead of the standard 1/4" clicks at 100 yards because this allows more precise adjustment at long ranges. It takes a 10-shot group inside five or six inches to win a 1000-yard benchrest competition, or around 15cm at 1000m, so precise adjustments are critical.

A 1/4" click will move the bullet 2.5" at 1000 yards (69mm at 1000m); a 1/8" click will only move the bullet's

point of impact by half that.

You must have that ability for precise adjustment to get in the winner's circle.

Italian Carcano

I was given an ex-military bolt-action rifle that was apparently made by Beretta. It is marked "Beretta", "Gardone" and "1940" and the calibre is marked as "6.5". The rifle is in good condition throughout and I'd like to shoot it if there is any ammunition to be had.

What can you tell me about it?

Pete Spencer

A Your gun was made by Beretta in 1940 for the Italian Army, and is the Fucile Modello 91/38, or Carcano. Thousands of these guns were sold cheaply here and they are still fairly common. They have little collector value.

The cartridge is the 6.5x52mm Italian military round. The Carcano is usually safe to shoot as long as loads are kept to original pressures, but have a gunsmith check it first. Ammunition may be hard to find, but Northern Vic Ammo Supplies (0400 016 691) may stock it. You could ask your dealer if any is available from Norma (including unprimed brass) or PPU.

If it is to function as a

repeater, you'll have to obtain some of the special clips which hold six rounds. The receiver and magazine box are machined to accept the loaded clip, but when emptied it drops out and is easily lost. Without the clip the rifle can only be used as a single shot.

Swedish Mauser Model 94

I am familiar with the Mauser Model 1896 rifles that were sold here quite cheaply a few years ago, but I have lucked onto a very accurate 6.5x55mm carbine. The markings on the receiver are a crown over a "G" in script above "Carl Gustav Stads" and then "Gervarsfaktry 1916". Is my carbine a shorter version of the Model 1896 rifle? If not, who made it?

Keith Richardson

A In 1894, Sweden adopted a shorter version of the Mauser Model 1893 rifle. It was designated as the Model 94 Swedish Mauser carbine. Your carbine was made in 1916 by the Carl Gustav City Rifle Factory in Eskiltuna, Sweden.

You are lucky to have one of these for most Model 94 carbines were sold as military surplus in 1950 in the US. They are very scarce today and only a few few reached Australia. The Swedish carbines are well known for their quality of build and accuracy. While the Model 94 and Model 96 are not usually considered as strong as the later Model 98 Mauser, they are still safe with modern factory loads.

The 6.5x55mm is an excellent cartridge and very popular in Scandinavian countries for moose hunting. On a Norma hunt back in 1986 I shot five running moose with the 139gn 6.5x55mm load. A surprising number of modern hunting rifles are being chambered for it, most ammo

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makers include it in their line-ups and most handloading manuals contain loading data.

If I owned that Model 94 carbine, I'd fit a 2-7x scope and take it hunting.

High pressure with a WSM

QI just purchased a rifle in .270 WSM together with three boxes of factory ammo loaded with 130gn PHP bullets at a nominal 3275fps. This load seems a bit hot and case heads seem to expand enough that I have struck trouble trying to full-length size them enough to chamber easily in my rifle. As I want to start reloading, can you advise me what is the best way to get around this problem?

Harry Black

AThe .270 WSM factory load works at high pressure — over 63,000psi — and, once in a blue moon, case heads expand when factory loads prove a bit hot in a particular gun. It happened to me more than once with the WSMs. All you can do is load the press until the cases will enter the chamber easily and then don't use a maximum load.

I like a margin of safety in any reload. A top load that works flawlessly in one rifle may blow primers in another. Also, be sure to use a magnum primer. This will cause an increase in peak breech pressure because of burning more of the powder charge. For that reason you should reduce top loads by about two grains, and work back up.

Back off if you have any indications of high pressure with any load, such as hard bolt lift or hard extraction. Don't work up to the point where this happens. That's getting too hot for safety.

In my Model 70, 67gn of Re-19 with the Hornady 130gn bullet got 3230fps (985m/s), but I'd advise you work up from 2gn less.

Safe chamber pressures

QI use a .257 Roberts in a Mark X Mauser rifle with 24-inch barrel. Ballistics tables list the .257 as having a muzzle velocity of 2900fps with a 100gn bullet. The *Nosler Reloading Guide No 7* lists loads for the .257 Roberts with a 100gn bullet up to 3100fps (950m/s). These were in a 600mm barrel (nominally 24 inches) and are listed as maximum, but surely I should be able to get 3000fps (914m/s) without going over 50,000psi? If I can safely load to over 50,000psi chamber pressure, what velocity would I get?

Dean Clark

AYour Mark X Mauser rifle will safely handle 50,000psi loads if it is in good condition. The .257 Roberts is factory loaded to pressure and velocity standards developed over 80 years ago when pressures were held lower than they are today. Since it is not a tremendously popular cartridge, the specs have hardly been changed; even the so-called +P loads that came out a few years ago don't give the .257 much of a boost — only handloads do this.

The 100gn bullet in this calibre may give velocities close to 3000fps with 44-45gn of AR2209, but work up from 42gn, one grain at a time.

This fine cartridge was crippled at birth by being chambered in short-action rifles but why ammo was underloaded is a mystery because the Roberts was put out only in strong, modern actions.

To get the most out of two .257 rifles I've owned I had them long-throated so that I could load to an overall cartridge length from 72.5mm to 75mm depending upon the shape of the bullet (see page 48 of this issue).

My working load uses 50gn



Leupold's Dual-Dovetail mounts feature a turn-in union of base and ring which resists all recoil and is therefore especially suited to heavy-kicking rifles

of AR2209 to drive the 100gn Speer BT at 3250fps (991m/s) with moderate pressures and long case life. The .257 is one of my favourite cartridges. It treads closely on the heels of the .25-06 and has a kick like a kitten's caress.

A no-fuss bear gun: .338 or .375?

QI've booked a hunt in Alaska for moose, caribou and brown bear. Although there are plenty of factory rifles that will do the job, I'm considering either a .338 Win Mag or possibly a .375 Ruger or .375 H&H. Which calibre would you choose? Any particular make and model of rifle?

Daniel McPherson

AIf it were me, I'd get a Winchester Model 70 Super Grade in .338 Win Mag and top it off with a good quality 2-7x or 2.5-8x scope with a plex reticle. The Model 70 in .338 is not currently imported to Australia and if you were to order it specially it may not be here before your hunt, but any quality .338 Win Mag will do the job.

I'd forget the .375s as the .338 Win Mag is a perfectly adequate Alaskan bear round, with ammunition readily available.

As far as Alaskan game is concerned, it's a more versatile cartridge than a .375 would be.

What are the advantages of the Leupold Dual-Dovetail mount?

QWhile reading some of your rifle reviews I noticed that the scope on several of them had the scope attached using the Leupold Dual-Dovetail mount.

I like its looks very much. What advantages and disadvantages does it offer?

Pete Brown

AOn the positive side, both Rings of the Leupold Dual-Dovetail mount resist recoil whereas only the front ring of the standard mount, which has windage adjustment screws at the rear, does so. When it comes to attaching a relatively heavy scope to a hard-kicking rifle, I rate this characteristic of the Dual-Dovetail mount as being a real advantage.

This mount is also light in weight and its lack of windage adjustment screws makes it quite unobtrusive.

I cannot recall any disadvantages. ☒



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FALLOW DEER



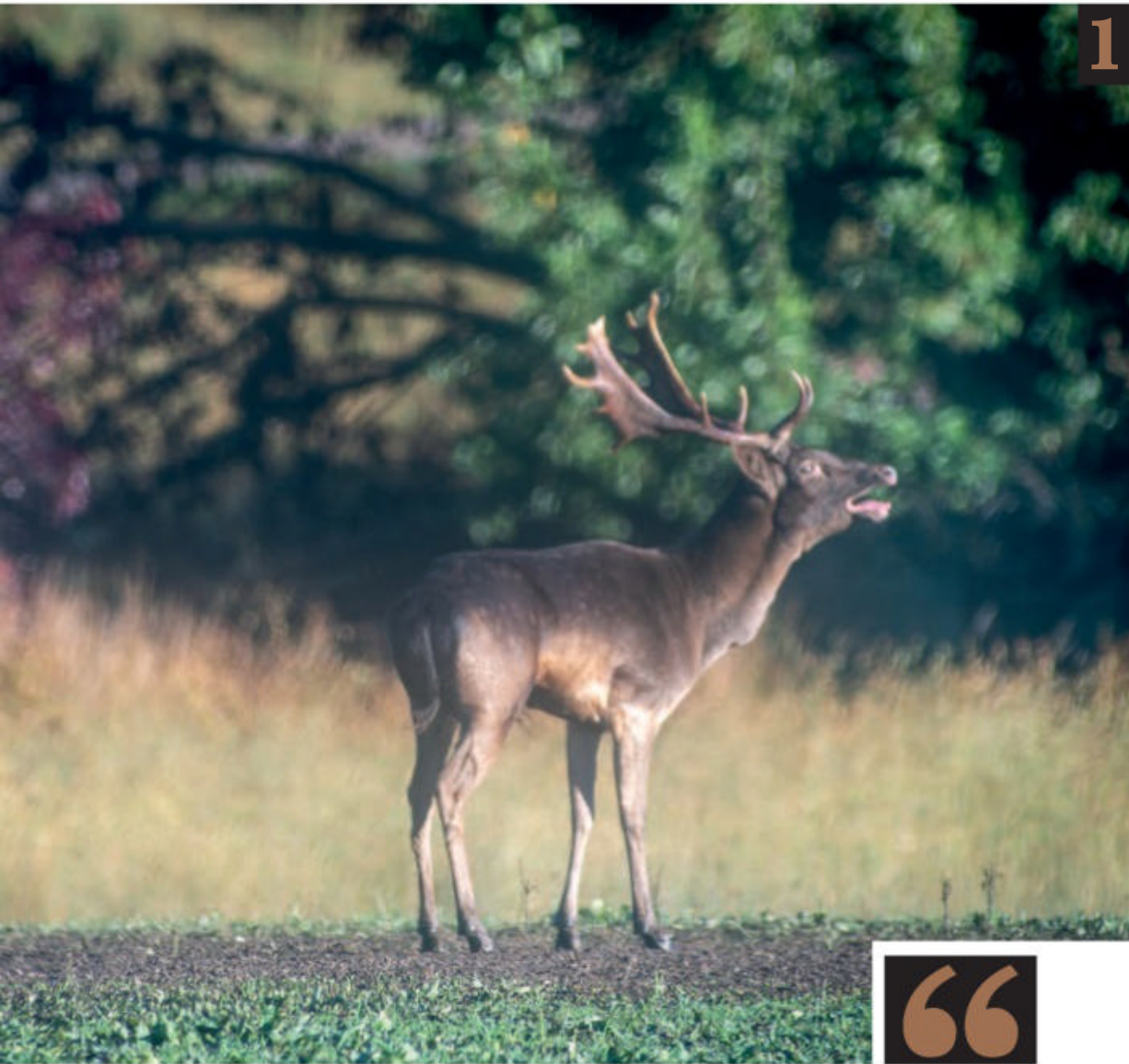


The best fallow rut yet!

Surrounded by a chorus of croaking bucks, Jared Matthews shoots his biggest fallow trophy

COMING off a very rewarding red deer hunt I was feeling quite content with my success for the year and it was safe to say anything more was a bonus. I was back at work for only a few days before I headed up to the fallow deer property.

MAIN: Jared's best buck ever scored over 236 Douglas points. Check out the rubbing on the trees all around



“

The property owner's wife's number one rule: Don't shoot the white ones”

A COUPLE of friends of mine had been to the same property for a few days before me so I gave them a call to see how they went. They managed to take a nice buck, but they confirmed that after a few solid days hunting they hadn't seen anything overly mature.

This lowered my hopes a little, but I was happy to walk around for a few days listening to croaking bucks and seeing what was about.

I arrived with about two hours of light left but the property owner was out having an afternoon hunt and I didn't want to interrupt his opportunity to enjoy this beautiful place he calls home. So I went about setting myself up in the hunter's cabin, a beautiful little stone home that's fully refurbished with a kitchen and hot shower. A real spoil after a few weeks roughing it in red-deer camp!

It was hard to get any sleep that night as I could hear fallow croaking all around the cabin,

which had me amped up. The next morning, I couldn't resist leaving well before daybreak and heading to a little valley we call Deer Central for obvious reasons. I have taken all my personal best fallow there. It's a tight little valley with small-acreage paddocks for grazing between heavily timbered forest but at this time of year it can consist of about 30 little rutting pads.

I got down in the creek that runs at the bottom and used it for cover as I made my way along at daybreak. I observed hundreds of deer! The sound was something I will never forget; the place was

alive with bucks croaking. As I continued along the creek, I noticed a deep buck croaking well back in the timber, but I kept going, checking them all out.

I kept looking until around 8am and I was content with leaving what I had seen to live a little longer. I decided I would make my way up into the timber and get some footage of the deer as they made their way up and possibly try locating that buck that had been croaking deep in the bush before daybreak.

I made my way in towards the rutting pad where the noise was coming from. I only had about 100



metres to go but I caught some young deer fighting so I spent some time filming and calling them in for about half an hour or so.

The buck was still carrying on behind me in his rutting pad, which was one I was familiar with. He was there every year, so I thought I'd better have a look at him in case he was a shooter. I started making my way in and was about 80 metres away when I saw a group of around 50 does through the timber. It was an incredible scene. I then saw an antler move down lower and the palm I could see was definitely worth closer inspection.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 With a little more growing to do, this buck got to defend his scrape for another season

2 The cull buck fell to a single shot from the Hardy rifle in 7mm PRC

3 A young buck signals his intention in the morning mist

4 Mist rises from the creek as the morning sun comes over the hills

5 What a beauty! Thick bases, heavy beams, large palms ... but wearing a dangerously white coat



“

The deer went about their thing, completely unaware that I was there”



6

7

I took a step to my right, but I was fully exposed and some does were on to me. From here I could see both antlers and his head. I was shaking like a leaf — I couldn't move anywhere and deer were starting to shift. I shouldered the Hardy 7mm PRC. My aim was steady on his neck and I sent a round into him.

Deer scattered everywhere. I lost the buck in the recoil and instantly regretted taking the shot, but it was a now-or-never moment. I was convinced I had missed him and dragged my feet up the hill through the dogwood.

To my surprise, there he was lying motionless on the ground. Initially, I was absolutely pumped as I walked up to him, seeing those massive antlers, but then I realised what colour he was and my throat filled with angst. The property owner's wife's number one rule: "Don't shoot the white ones."

What a crazy feeling! There I was sitting next to my personal best fallow buck, absolutely stoked but nervous of what was to unfold.

I spent plenty of time taking photos, caping and butchering before packing him out to the LandCruiser. Heading back to the hunter's cabin, I drove slowly, looking around at the property views thinking this could be my last time seeing this wonderful place.

After I got back, the property owner came over and was stoked I had success and congratulated me on the buck. I told him the story and he said not to worry about it. This made me feel very relieved. His wife came over a little while later and gave me a stern talking to and promised me if it was anyone else I would have been walked straight off the property.

She was not impressed and to be honest I can't blame her. The rules are the rules and if I had known I wouldn't have shot him. I was relieved to see a number of white bucks during the following days on the property, which is promising.

The next day I went out into a different valley where I had seen a number of nice bucks and one I considered a cull. He was holding a large portion of does, as he was the year before. I let him be and told the property owner about him. He insisted I go take him out, so the next day

I set out early and got into position, but there was no sign of the buck.

I sat there glassing for a couple of hours and the deer went about their thing, completely unaware that I was there. I decided to walk up the valley some more, spooking a lot of deer as I went but I wanted to see if he was anywhere nearby.

The paddocks were about empty when I looked to my right and saw him standing right in the middle of the paddock. I had no idea where he came from, but I dialled the ballistic turret on the Hardy's scope and sent one in, dropping him on the spot. After some photos and butchering I headed back to the cabin and packed up before heading home.

I checked my photos from the year before and confirmed it was the same buck. He hadn't grown any better and was nearly identical to the year before, so he was a good one to take out of the gene pool.

I cleaned up the skulls after getting home and measured the white buck to the Douglas scoring criteria. He came in at 236 $\frac{3}{8}$, a personal best for me by a long shot.

ON THIS PAGE

6 Fighting bucks provide some entertainment during the hunt

7 Jared's cull buck lies a short distance from the rutting ground

THE AUSTRALIAN DEER ASSOCIATION
OFFICIAL RECORDING SYSTEM FOR
FALLOW DEER HEADS
DOUGLAS SCORING

OWNER: Jared Matthews
OWNED BY: OWNER
LOCALITY & DATE: NSW APRIL 2024
MEASURED BY: OWNER
NUMBER OF POINTS: 14 + 9 = 23

STEEL TAPE MEASUREMENT OF	SHORTER MEASUREMENT DOUBLED BY			
	LEFT	RIGHT	SCORE	FACTORS
LENGTH	27 $\frac{3}{8}$	26 $\frac{3}{8}$	53	53
SPREAD			27 $\frac{3}{8}$	48 $\frac{3}{8}$
BELLY	3 $\frac{1}{8}$	3 $\frac{1}{8}$	7 $\frac{1}{8}$	23 $\frac{1}{8}$
COMBES	7 $\frac{1}{8}$	7 $\frac{1}{8}$	15 $\frac{1}{8}$	63
POINTS - SPREAD-TIPS	7 $\frac{1}{8}$	6 $\frac{1}{8}$	13 $\frac{1}{8}$	
THREE-TIPS	11 $\frac{3}{8}$	12 $\frac{3}{8}$	22 $\frac{3}{8}$	
REMARKS (PLEASE PRINT BY NUMBER)	11	6	12	
INLAND - Length Without Points	14 $\frac{3}{8}$	12 $\frac{3}{8}$	24 $\frac{3}{8}$	
WIND - Without Points	5	5 $\frac{3}{8}$	10	48 $\frac{3}{8}$
WIND - With Points	7	9 $\frac{1}{8}$	14	
TOTAL SCORE				236 $\frac{3}{8}$

MEASURER'S SIGNATURE:

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Sauer 505 Synchro XT

Sauer takes the best work it has done before and adds more engineering prowess to create an uncompromised hunting rifle



THE heart of Sauer's new 505 is the action, a striking construction milled from a 6.5kg block of steel to become a skeletonised sculpture weighing 732g with uniquely sweeping curves, massive strength and the smoothest bolt travel you'll probably ever feel. It is the central focus of what Sauer claims is the best looking bolt-action rifle in the world, and while I refuse to be drawn into that discussion, I thoroughly agree with the company's statement that this rifle is silky smooth, super quiet and extremely fast.

It's all in the design and execution of the receiver and the bolt.

The switch-barrel 505 is not completely new, but is an effort to take key features from

the 202 and 404 models, add a few new concepts, and create Sauer's best yet. There's a lot of crossover and compatibility between the 505 and 404, including their stocks and barrels, but there are important differences, too.

The bolt head is a prime example: the 404 has a removable head to facilitate changing calibres whereas the 505's bolt head is integral with the bolt body. As such, if you change between calibre groups (eg, standard calibres to magnums) on the 505, you'll need a different bolt instead of just a bolt head.

The 505's one-diameter (21.5mm) bolt requires complex milling to create the six-lug head, which is a work of art. The lugs have cammed



“

This cocking system allows you to safely carry the rifle with a chambered round”

edges to pull the bolt forward that last 3mm into battery. The front 13cm of the body is polished stainless steel while the rear is coated matte black.

The bolt face is recessed 3mm deep and has room between two of the lugs for a firmly sprung claw extractor. A single plunger ejector is set into the face.

If a cartridge fails on firing,



two gas vents in the receiver's front ring let pressure escape safely, while another in the bolt body takes gas entering through the firing pin hole and directs it down into the magazine well.

A vertical pin protrudes into the receiver just in front of the sear and acts as the bolt guide and stop. You press upwards on a small tab on the left side

of the trigger guard to lower the pin and release the bolt from the receiver. The pin is only a fraction of a millimetre narrower than the channel it engages in the bolt's body, so the bolt is virtually wiggle-free through its travel.

The bolt slides incredibly smoothly. My old Schultz & Larsen is the only thing I've used that is comparable. The

polished one-diameter bolt body is a close fit inside the cylindrical receiver and its glass-smooth surfaces. There's no resistance as you push forward, then barely a notch as the sear catches the cocked firing pin and you turn the handle down.

If you close the bolt with it de-cocked, the whole movement is uncannily

FAR LEFT: The receiver is machined from a single block of steel. The three bolts at the front secure the barrel

BELOW: The Synchro XT model is distinctive for its thumbhole stock and adjustable comb height

BOTTOM: The 505 has a number of characteristics that make it a top choice for deer stalking, not least being the silent cocking system

OPPOSITE TOP: The 505 has a single-column magazine. The release button in front of the magazine can be notched forward to lock the mag in place

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: The Synchro XT's grip has a wide, ambidextrous palm swell

smooth and light. You can literally hold the rifle butt-up, let go of the bolt handle and watch it fall closed and lock, assuming the magazine is empty and the action oiled. You get the impression the lugs mustn't even be contacting the receiver but you'll find they're locked in tight without a hint of freeplay.

Sauer's excellent manual cocking and safety system is used in the 505 with slight

changes from the 404, such as the use of a polymer cocking button instead of steel. Push the button forward to cock the rifle; slide it back to de-cock. When de-cocked, there is no tension on the firing pin spring and the pin is well clear of the sear, so the rifle cannot fire. When de-cocked, the bolt cannot be opened accidentally, but push the cocking button forward a couple of millimetres and the handle will lift.

This cocking system, which isn't unique to Sauer, allows you to safely carry the rifle with a chambered round. If you choose, you can cycle the bolt without ever cocking it. When a shot presents, you can quickly and quietly cock the rifle. After firing, the cocking piece stays in the cocked position so the rifle cycles the next round and is instantly ready to fire again. In my view,

there's no better system in a bolt-action rifle.

The 505 has one of the best triggers there is, full stop. It uses Sauer's Quattro trigger group, just like the 404 but without the adjustability in the shoe. It has four pre-set pull weights: 350g, 700g, 1000g and 1250g. The test rifle's releases averaged 360g, 770g, 1070g and 1330g — no great difference. The release weights were incredibly consistent from pull to pull, within a few dozen grams of each other at worst, and sometimes identical to the gram. It's a superbly crisp, creep-free, single-stage trigger, so good that it's almost worth the entry price on its own.

The removable barrel is clamped into the front of the receiver by three bolts after the barrel is inserted and given a short twist to set it in place, same as the Sauer 202



and 404, and it's guaranteed to return to its previous zero. The trigger is pinned into the receiver, and the magazine well is part of the structure, with a release button attached. The butt stock and fore-end are fastened to it as well.

You have all sorts of options for stocks. This XT model has the black synthetic thumbhole version, but you can go for a traditional sporter profile for the butt, as well as carbon-fibre or any grade of walnut your wallet permits. There's a compact Artemis stock in walnut for smaller shooters, and all butts can be optioned with an adjustable cheek riser, like on the test rifle.

Show me a 505 with Grade 10 walnut and I'll probably agree it's the most beautiful rifle in the world! The XT looks more functional than beautiful and I fell for that functionality as the test progressed. The XT is a comfortable rifle with a shape that enhances your accuracy.

The fairly upright pistol grip has a wide palm swell tapering to a narrow neck which at first feels odd because it's so different but soon becomes welcome because it concentrates your grasp in your lower three fingers and tends to reduce the chance of your trigger finger causing a pulled shot.



The 505 has one of the best triggers there is, full stop”



Partnered with the outrageously good trigger (which, incidentally, I ended up preferring on its light 700g setting), it is hard to go wrong unless your shooting technique is really bad.

The seductively slim fore-end is nice to hold, too, and all gripping surfaces on the XT use a slightly rubberised finish to enhance

traction. The XT shoulders very well and sets your eye directly behind the scope if you get the cheekpiece height set right. And it swings like a Bennie Goodman solo.

It's a combination that works so well that I was able to shoot four piglets on the run with only one missed shot. On test, the 505 also accounted for several deer, all plumb shots

from the prone position at up to 200m, and none of which were ever in doubt because of my confidence in the rifle.

I found it especially easy to hold steady and shoot well offhand and in other field positions, too, plinking at targets with better accuracy than I usually manage. In any position, felt recoil is mild and very well controlled.

ACCURACY TABLE						
Ammunition (.308)	Bullet weight (gn)	Average velocity (m/s & fps)	Muzzle energy (joules & ft-lb)	Group sizes (MOA)		
				Best	Worst	Average
Hornady Precision Hunter ELD-X	178	762.3 / 2501	3351 / 2472	0.3	1.0	0.71
Hornady Superformance SST	150	847.5 / 2781	3491 / 2575	0.3	1.1	0.75
Fiocchi SP	150	791.1 / 2595	3042 / 2244	0.5	1.1	0.75
Buffalo River Sierra HP	135	852.4 / 2797	3178 / 2344	0.9	1.2	1.00
Federal American Eagle HP	130	876.0 / 2874	3232 / 2384	0.8	1.8	1.10
Winchester Deer Season XP	150	835.7 / 2742	3395 / 2504	0.7	1.5	1.19
PMC SP	150	815.3 / 2675	3231 / 2383	1.1	2.2	1.41
Fiocchi SP	180	750.3 / 2462	3284 / 2422	0.9	1.8	1.49

Accuracy is measured from five 3-shot groups at 100m fired from a bench using a Ridgeline Steady Rest. Velocity is the average of 10 shots measured with a Garmin Xero C1 chronograph. Temperature ranged from 14 to 20°C



ABOVE: The Synchro XT is one of several distinctly different stocks available for the 505 and they are all easily interchanged

RIGHT: The Sauer's slick handling made easy work of this boar, shot on the run from about 50m

BELOW: This shows the 505's bolt cocked after the thumb-operated knob is pushed forward and up

BELOW RIGHT: Trigger pull weight is adjusted in four steps using an Allen key inserted into the hole. The Sauer's trigger is absolutely superb



“

It's a magnificent piece of engineering with a large degree of artistic merit”

✓ SPECS

Manufacturer: Sauer & Sohn, Germany

Type: Turn-bolt action

Barrel: Cold hammer-forged steel, 51cm/20" (as tested) with options; switchable for other calibres

Twist rate: 1:11" (.308)

Calibres: From .222 to .375 H&H; .308 tested

Sights: None; receiver set up for Sauer/Blaser saddle mount

Finish: Blued (plasma nitrided)

Stock: Thumbhole; synthetic with rubberised grip surfaces; see text for options

Length of pull: 360mm

Comb height: Adjustable

Weight: 3.6kg bare

Price: RRP from \$4998 (Ergolux polymer); Synchro XT from \$5598

Distributor: OSA Australia, osaaustralia.com.au

The one thing I'd have preferred the sporter stock for was cocking the rifle; with the XT you have to take your thumb out and around the stock to reach the cocking button, which is not quite as quick or natural as when there's no structure above your thumb. I guess it's the same for most safety catches on other rifles, though.

The Sauer's sling swivels are the quick-detached press-in type, another high-class touch, except that Sauer takes it further by including a special tool in the underside of the front stud, designed to

detach and refit the stock components, adjust the cheek riser, adjust the trigger pull weight and even remove the barrel. It's really just a 4mm Allen key, but it's still cool.

The 505's receiver is not set up to accept the Sauer Universal Mount like the 404 and others; it's now set up to accept only Sauer's 'new' saddle-mount scope bases — which is Blaser's renowned system, an excellent quick-release setup that guarantees repeatable accuracy after refitting your scope. The mounts are not cheap but, well, if you can afford a 505...

I tried it twice during accuracy testing and it went back to the intended point of impact. With the barrel also returning to zero on reassembly, this is a rifle you should be able to dismantle (perhaps to fit another calibre's barrel and pre-zeroed scope) then put back together and shoot just as you had before.

The test rifle was very accurate with a range of factory ammunition, showing excellent hunting accuracy. Four of eight loads averaged MOA or better and the worst was still really good at 1.5 MOA. Results are in the table



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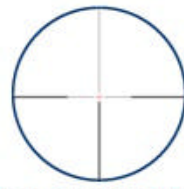
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5 - 30 X 56



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The XT shoulders very well and swings like a Bennie Goodman solo”

but it’s safe to say you’ve got no issues with accuracy in a 505, particularly when you factor in its in-the-field handling.

The 51cm (20”) barrel resulted in slower bullet speeds compared to the ammo-box claims, as you’d expect. That’s the 505’s standard length for standard calibres but Sauer offers options of 42, 47 and 56cm (16.5, 18.5 and 22”). Magnums have 62cm (26”) barrels unless you opt for 56cm (22”). The main profile tapers to a 17mm muzzle at the threads, but there’s a heavier 19mm option.

Rounds fed as slickly as the rifle itself. By varying the speed at which you work the bolt, you can eject cases well clear or right beside you. The feed ramp encourages single-feeding through the

ejection port, aided by the fact you can lock the magazine in place by sliding the release catch forward.

The polymer magazine is just a single stacker holding three rounds but the test rifle had the optional five-rounder which projects below the stock. I do prefer my Sauer 100’s flush-fitting, double-stack five-shot magazine, but going that way would have meant a fatter receiver and stock which would compromise the slender elegance of the 505. I’m also guessing it would have meant milling away material from a much wider block of steel to create the receiver, a big compromise in production terms.

The 505 is not, however, a rifle I’d consider to be compromised. It’s a

magnificent piece of engineering with a large degree of artistic merit built in — a stunning rifle you could rightfully boast about and show off to friends, while knowing it’s capable of bringing out your best. Where do we start and finish with its list of superior pleasures: the exquisite Quattro trigger, the gorgeous and strong receiver, the supremely smooth bolt, the outstanding cocking/safety system, the exceptional accuracy or...?

What stands out most when the whole rifle is a standout? Let’s simply say that if you can afford the Sauer 505, you will love it. ☒

ABOVE: The 505’s major parts. Barrel removal is also very easy

BELOW: Bolt shown in the de-cocked (left) and cocked positions. It is a convenient, silent and extremely safe system

BOTTOM: The one-piece bolt body has six locking lugs, sprung claw extractor and plunger ejector





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Winchester SXR2 pump-action

Big W's first centrefire pump-action is modern, slick and quick with a fistful of versatility

THE SXR2 is Winchester's dive into the realm of the pump-action hunting rifle. We haven't seen anything quite like this from Winchester before, and it's designed to put serious firepower down range as quickly and accurately as possible. Similar to the semi-automatic SXR2 available in the USA, the pump-action is a modified



version for European and Australian markets where self-loaders are heavily restricted.

Winchester hasn't produced a pump-action rifle since the Model 62 rimfire in the 1950s. By today's standards, it was a very traditional looking rifle, a far cry from the futuristic-looking SXR2's modern design and large-calibre capability.

The fact that factory chamberings start at .308 gives you an idea that the SXR2 means business.

The action is based on a black steel receiver which is drilled and tapped for a picatinny rail. Lockup is achieved by a rotating bolt head with seven locking lugs. A red indicator on the bolt helps you see quickly when

“

The barrel was very consistent with different types of ammunition”

the action is closed and you're ready to roll.

The barrel is an impressive piece of gear. At 53cm (21") long it provides a great middle ground between maintaining decent velocities and being able to be swung around quickly at moving targets. The sporter profile has a slight taper to it, going from 19mm at the front of the battue sight down to 17mm at the muzzle. This rifle, chambered in .308, was very easy to handle but I imagine the .300 Win Mag version might be a tad lively and fairly loud!

Being cold hammer forged by FN Herstal in Europe, the barrel is of a very high quality and I found it was very consistent with different types of ammunition, even when it started to get a little warm.

It's threaded and capped at the muzzle in case you might have the need to screw a brake or suppressor on the front, and has a fully adjustable fibre-optic front sight. The rear of the barrel features a battue-style rear sight that provides a very fast sight picture and

2



3



would work well for those of us who wish to run the rifle without a scope.

The trigger is advertised as releasing at 1.4kg (or 3lb) and the rifle I had for testing let off at an average of 1.5kg over a dozen pulls. Very close to advertised specs. There is no adjustability offered but the weight is about where you'd want it to be. Too light a trigger could be problematic when things speed up. A bit of creep is unavoidable in a trigger of this style, which uses a hammer to hit the firing

ON THIS SPREAD

1 Weighing 4.5kg scoped and with a full nine-round magazine, this pump-action rifle is good in a stalking role

2 The SXR2 has the accuracy and reach to be a good deer rifle, too

3 In .308, you can have a flush-fitting four-round magazine or longer nine-round magazine, both of which are a double-stack design



4

“

5



pin, rather than just releasing a spring-loaded firing pin. Having said that, despite this, I found the trigger decent to use and it helped me shoot groups that were better than I was expecting out of this rifle.

There is a cross-bolt safety located at the front of the trigger guard which feels positive. It can be easily reversed by a gunsmith for left-handed shooters.

The stock on this model is a durable composite material with chequering in all the right places. The sling-swivel stud at the front is far enough forward that the rifle carries nice and low, keeping the muzzle out of brush as you

The cross-bolt safety can be reversed for left-handed shooters”

walk. The rifle comes with six shims that allow you to adjust the pitch and cast of the stock at the receiver, ensuring it fits perfectly, a detail that is essential to making fast follow-up shots. The recoil pad feels good and offers similar adjustability, although the spacers for this part are available separately.

I found the standard stock



6



7



8

setup from the factory just right for me, but I should point out that I'm 172cm tall and don't often have the need to add spacers and shims to stocks for this reason. It's also worth noting that cheek pieces are available separately for the synthetic stocks, and Winchester is bringing other models into the country with walnut and camo stocks, so there are options that should suit most shooters.

The pump-action slide is where this rifle starts to peel away from similar offerings from other manufacturers. The fore-end of the stock is fixed to the receiver, but the slide is mounted separately. It makes cycling the action feel very

smooth, as you effectively have fewer big parts of the rifle moving backwards and forwards.

Further to this, a recoil spring helps move the slide and bolt forward once you've cycled the action backwards. Limiting the effort required to reload makes a dramatic difference in target acquisition when shooting quickly, and it makes it hard to go back to pump-action rifles that lack this feature.

A couple of Allen screws on the pump slide and a bolt on the front of the stock are easily removed to take off the fore-end and clean those hard-to-get places. Maintaining this rifle isn't too much to ask.

A slide catch holds the action open when you eject the last cartridge in your magazine. It's a great feature that will prevent you from closing the bolt on an empty chamber, only to hear a click when you squeeze the trigger. This feature seemed unnecessary at first, but after shooting the rifle plenty I came to appreciate it. It saves you having to count your rounds off, or wasting time dry-firing once before inserting a full magazine. Overall, it makes for more successful operation of the rifle.

Speaking of magazines, they don't scrimp from the factory here. The .308 and .30-06 models are available stock with nine- and ten- round

ON THIS SPREAD

4 The pump action provides quick follow-up shots, with a spring-assisted return to easily close the action again

5 Five goats taken one afternoon. The nine-round magazine makes for effective culling

6 The SXR2 is a modern-looking rifle with its angular styling. Battue sights are standard, Picatinny rail is an option if you prefer a scope

7 As well using the 1-6x scope for most of the test, we shot the SXR2 with a Meopta 3-15x44, a scope more suited to the multi-role rifle's longer-distance capability

8 With groups typically measuring less than 1.5 MOA, the SXR2 is plenty accurate, especially for a pump-action rifle

ON THIS PAGE

9 The rifle balances well for different field shooting positions

10 The sling stud on the fore-end ensures the rifle carries nice and low

✓ SPECS

Manufacturer: Winchester Firearms, winchesterguns.com

Action: Pump

Calibre: .308 (tested), .30-06 and .300WM

Barrel: 53cm (21in), sporter profile, 1:12" twist (in .308), threaded muzzle

Stock: Composite

Finish: Barrelled action, blued, chassis, black

Magazine: 4-round detachable and 9-round detachable in .308. Steel box

Safety: 2 position on trigger guard

Trigger: Single-stage

Sights: Battue type adjustable fibre-optic sight

Length of pull: Adjustable from 360mm with spacers

Weight: 3.5kg with no magazine

RRP: Composite, \$2710; Strata, \$2790; Field, \$2860

Distributor: Winchester Australia, winchesteraustralia.com.au



9

magazines respectively, and extra four-round magazines can be purchased if need be. With the .300 Win Mag being a larger, belted case, the only offering is a three-rounder. I think the rifle looks the best with the smaller three- or four-round magazines, which sit nice and flush with the bottom of the stock, but there is no denying that nine rounds of .308 can be very tempting and useful in some situations.

The bigger magazine hangs down and kicks backwards, which looks a little awkward, but in my testing and carrying I didn't find it got in the way at all. The magazine release is located in front of the trigger guard and the index finger on my shooting hand found it easily. Pull the release lever and the magazine pops out into your other hand. Putting in new magazines was a little tricky until I got used to inserting the front first, when it became second nature.

Hitting the slide catch once a new magazine is in will



10

“

Limiting the effort makes a dramatic difference in target acquisition”

chamber a new round with the spring-assisted cycling, and you're in business again.

The Winchester balances and points well with the Meopta 1-6x24mm scope on it, keeping the majority of the weight where it needs to be. With the scope and nine-round magazine filled with 150gn factory loads, the SXR2 weighs 4.5kg. Perhaps a little hefty for some, but most people using the high-capacity



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11

“

I can see
this rifle
being useful
in the thick
river flats
of sambar
country”

ON THIS PAGE

11 The Winchester is supplied with shims to adjust the cast and pitch of the butt, letting you tailor the fit to get your eye more naturally in line with the sights

12 The main part of the fore-end is fixed to the receiver while the pump handle, at bottom, moves along with the action bar and bolt



12

magazines are either going to be shooting from vehicles, or walking in places where they’ve tossed up their options and are willing to carry some extra grams to have a bit more firepower.

In that configuration the rifle was very pleasant to shoot as far as a .308 is concerned. If I were still living out west and chasing pigs across stubble paddocks from quad bikes, this rifle and scope would perhaps be the perfect choice for that task.

Given many hunters might be shooting rounds through this rifle in high quantities, I tested it with affordable varieties of 150gn factory ammunition from Remington, PPU and Winchester, and some 130gn HP from Sako. Calibre Country in Tamworth looked after me with the ammunition, as well as some other

equipment to help carry out the tests. I shot over several days with temperatures around the 17°C mark, with solid rests, minimal wind and the 1-6x24mm scope.

While I had a couple of three shot groups around the 1.8 MOA mark at 100m, the majority of the groups were around 1.4 MOA. I did jag a .8 group with the Sako 130gn HP. Nothing to complain about in the accuracy department.

I can see this rifle being useful in the thick river flats of sambar country, where most shots might be close but the chance of a cross-gully poke is on the cards. The rifle is accurate enough to make shots on deer sized game out to 300 metres without much hassle, and a slightly bigger scope such as the Meopta 3-15x44mm I used in some other tests might be a good

choice for that task.

A hunter chasing versatility might have two scopes in quick release rings such as the ones I used in testing, and press the rifle into service both on culling operations and modest cross-gully shots on the honkers. The .308 and .30-06 would both be suitable, but the .300 Win Mag would be a standout for the latter, keeping in mind a hunter would need to prioritise down-range energy over magazine capacity.

Winchester has shown us that pump-action rifles can have a bit more finesse about them than we’ve come to expect from other comparable rifles. It points and balances well enough to do the quick shooting thing well, but is accurate enough to be your main stalking rifle if that’s what you need it to be. 🎯

ACCURACY TABLE

Ammunition	Bullet weight	Group size (MOA)		
		Smallest group	Largest group	Average
Sako Gamehead Varmint RX HPBT	130gn	.8	1.4	1.1
Winchester Deer Season XP	150gn	1.4	1.9	1.7
Remington Core-Lokt	150gn	1.2	1.4	1.3
PPU SP	150gn	1.7	1.9	1.8



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FLUTED BARREL

CALIBRES: 204Rgr 223Rem 243Win 6.5cm 308Win

WEIGHT	3.3 - 3.4kg
LENGTH	1067mm (barrel 20")
CAPACITY	3 - 5 Calibre varied

TRIGGER	Single stage adjustable 2-4lbs
BARREL	Fluted hammer forged chromemoly
MAGAZINE	Removable polymer single stack



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Zamberlan Storm GTX boots

These are tough, all-round boots for most Australian conditions

THESE Zamberlan Storm GTX CF hunting boots have clocked up over 200km of hiking now, all of it in rough country away from flat footpaths, and they are maintaining their condition and comfort. The Storms are fairly high-end boots, hand-made in Italy and retailing for just over \$500 a pair, and they show every sign of living up to Zamberlan's claims over the long term.

I've walked trails and virgin bush in these boots in all but the most extreme conditions, and a lot of the hunting has been in steep, gravelly, rocky or muddy terrain with a few creek crossings thrown in. The Storms have come up trumps — certainly one of the best pairs of boots I've ever had.

Their comfortable flexibility stands out, particularly in the Vibram Star Lite soles, which strike an excellent balance between hardness and malleability. They cushion your feet nicely, making them more comfortable over long distances, and they grip more dependably than harder soles.

You get better feel for the ground underneath you as you walk because of these soles, too, which improves your confidence when it's uneven or traction is low.

The uppers are a suede called Perwanger combined with Cordura and lined with Gore-Tex. This creates a water resistant structure that's made waterproof with the addition of Hydrobloc. If you keep up that treatment they'll keep your feet dry.

Reaching just above ankle height, the Storms give you ample support when you mis-step — I've not once hurt my ankles when rolling them — and they don't trap as much heat as taller boots.



Their comfortable flexibility stands out, particularly in the soles"

Maybe it's got something to do with my feet suiting the mould, but the Zamberlans have been supremely comfortable and wrap well around my feet to reduce movement in all directions. They prevent my toes sliding to the front on steep descents and hold onto my ankles when lifting off.

At just over 500 grams per

boot, they're respectably light. This was partly achieved by deleting the rand that protects the junction of sole and upper, but I see no sign of that being detrimental to longevity at this stage. The protective rubber cup extending up on the base of the toe has been retained and serves an essential role in the boots' integrity. It's backed up by the tough Cordura applied over the rest of the toe and on the heel.

They've been a good investment, dealing with hard use and some abuse. Their comfort and performance are just what you expect of high-end boots and no comparison with what you get from cheapies.

The Zamberlans are not expensive, not when you consider their quality and strong construction.

ABOVE: The Zamberlans are still looking great after 200km of bush use



Manufacturer: Zamberlan, Italy

Sizes: US 8-13 in half-size increments

Upper: Leather, Cordura with Gore-Tex lining

Sole: Vibram Star Light with 3mm nylon inner

Mid-sole: EVA

Weight: Approx 550g per boot (size 8)

Price: \$515

Distributor: Spika, spika.com.au



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1



“

The damage to vital organs indicated any hit in the chest would be fatal”

testing I used a 23-grain hollow-point slug to kill a feral cat all too easily, the slug’s pin-point accuracy and high impact dropping it on the spot at a range of 43m.

The best test came when I loaded up with 30gn HP slugs and tried to find a fox but instead saw a mob of five piglets feeding on a carcass. I snuck in to about 45m and shot two of them dead before the rest got spooked by their wildly thrashing siblings and bolted. The kill shots were both into the base of the ears, with instant effect. From the same distance I put five slugs into the body of one and then went to 25m to repeat the exercise with the other.

Some shots passed through at both ranges, indicating how much momentum these little lead meanies are carrying. The slugs I recovered showed exactly the same deformation you would expect of big-game hunting bullets in their context under equivalent circumstances, as you can see in the accompanying photo of three of the slugs.

They had smashed bones including in the front legs, and the pigs’ skulls were cracked. The damage to vital organs indicated that any hit in the chest would inevitably be fatal.

I didn’t get a good measure of whether the HP II slugs (which I had in 25gn) worked better, though.

H&N hollow-point air rifle slugs

These aggressive hunting projectiles will take bigger animals at longer ranges

H&N’S hollow-point slugs take air-rifle hunting to a whole new level of lethality, not just for their design but for the accuracy you can achieve with them and the harm they do over longer ranges.

Experienced air gunners will know what I’m talking about but if this concept is new to you, start by forgetting everything you remember about your cheap old break-action.

There is a huge range of slugs in the H&N line-up, taking up where the lighter pellets leave off. From as light as 10 grains in .177, they step up to a whopping 54gn in .30 calibre. I tested .22-cal slugs in 21gn, 23gn, 25gn and 30gn.

Each batch of slugs weighed within .1gn of each other, based on a sample of 10 of each. H&N manufacturing consistency appears to be good. This was borne out by the excellent consistency in muzzle velocities and accuracy. Standard deviations were between 0.4 and 1.3m/s (1.1-4.6fps) across the board while the Weihrauch HW100 held its charge.

The hollow-point slugs are, naturally, designed for hunting and longer ranges of up to 200m, though the .22-cal ones I’ve tried are rated up to 100m. There are two types: the Slug HP and Slug HP II, the latter having a more advanced design with a hollow point that provides quicker expansion and energy transfer.

The effect of both types on pests is outstanding. During

2



H&N makes its .22-cal slugs in both .217" and .218" diameters for each projectile weight so you can select whichever works best in your rifle's barrel. Working out which is best is a matter of trial and error in any particular rifle.

Accuracy from each weight and diameter was very good, all forming ragged one-hole groups of 10 rounds at 25m. The best group was 5mm, the largest 7.5mm.

More than that is the fact that H&N's slugs are good for longer ranges, with ballistic coefficients of .091 to .106 in the ones I tested. I consistently hit minute-of-rabbit on a target 100m away. The vast majority of shots were equivalents of a kill, with very few landing outside the kill zone.

You do need a nearly windless day for it, of course.

The Weihrauch achieved muzzle velocities of 255m/s



(888fps) with the 21gn slug, 248m/s (862fps) with 23gn, 236m/s (822fps) with the 25gn and 215m/s (748fps) with the 30gn. Those speeds gave a point blank range on a fox sized animal of about 50m.

You need at least 25J in your air rifle for these heavy slugs, and 40-60J is even better.

H&N's hollow-point slugs are good quality projectiles that have the killing effect they're designed for, and their accuracy gives you every chance to use it. 

H&N projectiles are distributed by Alcock & Pierce, alcockandpierce.com.au.

ON THIS SPREAD

1 The hollow-point slugs are not just great on impact, they have relatively high ballistic coefficients to extend their range compared with pellets

2 Three results: The slug on the left went through both shoulders of a piglet at about 25m and almost reached the far-side skin. The other two hit another piglet at about 45m, both ending up under the far-side skin, the centre one hitting ribs, the other hitting no bone but destroying the heart

3 The slugs were highly effective against these half-grown piglets

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HUNTING with bows and rifles constantly has me making comparisons between the two. The more I bow-hunt, the more I realise just how good we have it with our high-powered rifles. For the most part, as long as we can shoot accurately enough inside the distances we wish to pursue game, everything else should come easily. Of course, it would also go without saying that we are shooting a cartridge and projectile that is suitable for the game we are chasing.

With archery, the fundamentals are similar, but the room for error is much smaller, so finding a good middle ground usually requires a bit more thought.

The main reason I own a .300 Win Mag is because I like the idea of a bit more power over milder .30-calibre cartridges when hunting sambar. A flatter trajectory is another advantage that others may get excited by, but I don't shoot far enough to take advantage of this aspect. Unless an animal is close to 300 metres away, I can put the crosshairs on the shoulder and be confident of a lethal hit inside that distance. Carrying a rangefinder adds to the certainty and I know that anything inside about 270 metres is going to be gravy.

Some people have suggested that faster arrows in archery don't matter as much any more because most people carry rangefinders. This assumption is sound and it definitely adds to the confidence when out bush, but forgiveness in trajectory with archery, compared with rifle hunting,



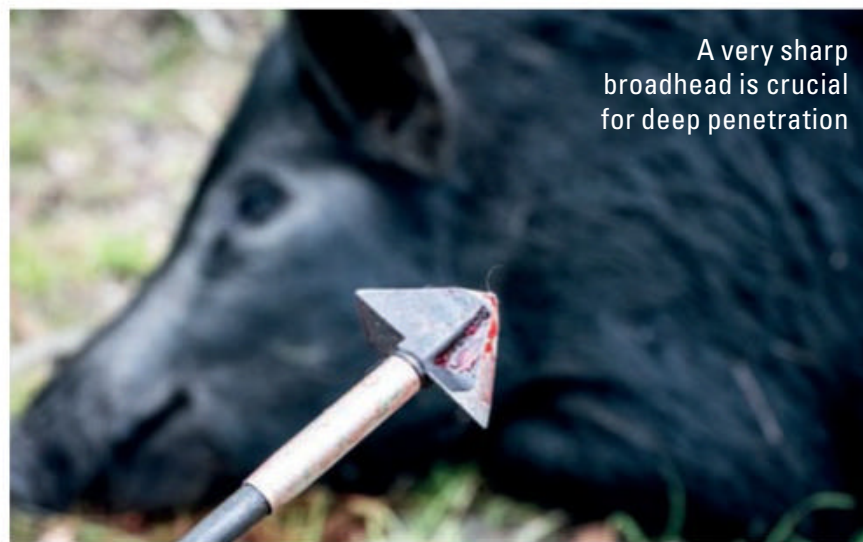
Pigs are a little tougher on arrows than other similarly sized animals



Too much speed makes arrows much harder to tune”

isn't even in the same universe. It's common for an animal to move between ranging and coming to full draw, and with a slower bow, it only takes a few paces to turn your perfect range into a complete miss or worse.

You might then assume that the fastest arrow possible is the most desirable for hunting, but this isn't the case. Too much speed makes arrows much harder to tune with broadheads, and if your arrow is too light, it's less likely to penetrate effectively, even with the extra speed gained. In other words, hitting the



A very sharp broadhead is crucial for deep penetration

animal is one part of the equation, but how the arrow will behave on impact is another.

For this reason, finding a happy middle ground is always going to be the best thing. In the same way that the best load to use in a rifle is the most accurate one, the best arrow to use for hunting is the one that is tuned perfectly. Perfect tune equals higher potential for accuracy.

An arrow with a sharp

broadhead, flying perfectly straight, will always out-penetrate one that is flying a bit squiggly, and will allow you to get away with less draw weight. The best tune will mean the arrow is more efficient through the air and therefore more efficient as it travels through an animal.

Until next time, enjoy living your wilderlife. 🏹

Follow Dylan on Instagram at *'_wilderlife_'*

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Communication or violation?

You know
you're onto
something
when Facebook
tries to censor
you

THERE are many serious challenges facing shooters in Australia at the moment, from WA essentially deciding democracy is optional to Queensland wanting to give the police the ability to demand your holiday photos of a trip to Battlefield Vegas be taken offline.

We've also — for the first time ever — experienced Facebook flagging our posts on issues as “containing misinformation”, based on an AAP Fact Check about our concerns over the Queensland Community Safety Bill.

AAP Fact Check not only missed the point we were making, it failed to take into account our concerns had been confirmed as possibilities by Queensland Police themselves. Fact Check never bothered to contact us to ask us about how we'd interpreted the legislation. There was never an opportunity for us to respond and set the record the straight.

The problem is it put us in Facebook's crosshairs, meaning our posts were getting even more shadow-banned than usual. Our followers were being treated to vaguely threatening pop-ups from Facebook telling them not to share our content because of the alleged misinformation.

Then our entire Facebook page got shut down for “repeated community content violations” — despite nothing



LEFT: Internet censorship is a shadowy thing. You never know who is behind it

showing up as such on our Meta dashboard. Some quick action by our media director helped get the page reinstated, but it seems pretty clear that someone doesn't like us trying to keep you informed of serious threats to your civil liberties. It's only going to be a matter of time before we'll be dealing with social media censorship issues again.

What exacerbates the situation is that so much of modern communication relies on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. We can put stories, media releases and member alerts on our website all the time or email them out to members (and we do!) but we need social media to let people know they are there. Browsing habits have changed and people no longer regularly check non-major media

websites for updates.

We need to post updates where our members will see them, and most of our members are on Facebook and/or Instagram, platforms that are not at all welcoming to shooting-related content.

We are actively looking into ways to deal with the increasing social media censorship and shadow-banning, but it doesn't change the situation where someone — and it could be the authorities or the antis — is actively looking for ways to silence us and prevent us from effectively communicating with the broader shooting community.

They'd only be doing that if they were genuinely worried about our work interfering with their agenda.

The irony is that creating an environment where

everything that goes against the 'approved' narrative is labelled misinformation makes it harder to deal with actual misinformation — the kind that harms the democratic functioning of society — because it ends up stifling communication regarding one of the few Constitutional rights Australians actually have. It also means that on the rare occasions when the government or the authorities are trying to help, no-one is going to trust them any more.

Of course, that just means those same authorities are getting a taste of their own medicine but we're not going to hold our breath that it will make them better. ☹

Graham Park is the president of Shooters Union Australia.

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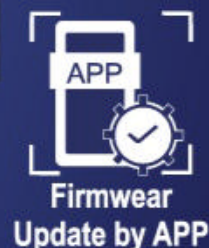
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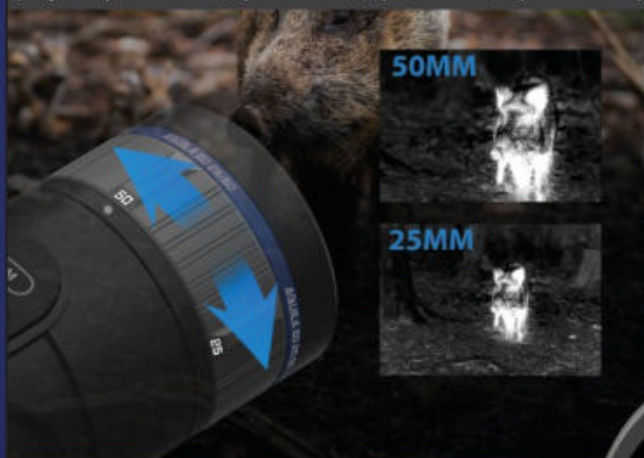
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WEATHERBY / ZEROTECH PHOTO COMPETITION

WINNER



These are Jack Hillier's first pigs and he is stoked! He was building a house on a property and after hours had been working on the owners' rabbit problems, but one day they mentioned there were pigs nearby. "I returned the nail guns to their rightful home and shouldered the real nail driver, my trusty .223," Jack says. After working around to get the wind in his favour, he found them rooting up good stock feed. "My heart rate spiked as I realised I was very close to taking my first pig," he says. "I placed the crosshairs just below the ear of the first pig (white and black in the photo) and squeezed the trigger." He scored two more before they reached cover, and the fourth arrived moments later from behind him! Top shooting, Jack.

The .243 must be one of the best cartridges for fallow deer. John Starr used his with Fiocchi rounds to bag this nice doe for the freezer.



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"No more slopping around in the mud for this fella," reckons Lee Kerrigan. Definitely not!



Scott Papworth has been doing a good job of keeping his place safe from predators. Last issue he won the Hunter's Gallery comp with a pic of a fox he shot when he saw it harassing his lambs. This one he shot one morning as it came up his driveway towards his chook pen!

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



Mat Irwin and his son try their luck in new hunting grounds

An awesome hunt

MY 12-year-old son and I set out on a beautiful autumn morning for an adventure in the Australian bush. We were both avid hunters and this was our first hunt at a new location that was full of creeks, rock outcrops and steep terrain, making it the perfect hunting ground.

As we made our way through the dense vegetation, we heard a large red stag calling out. Excitement filled our hearts as we scanned the hills, knowing that we were getting closer to our quarry. The stag's call echoed through the valleys and each time I called, he responded.

Using the high terrain to our advantage, we caught sight of the stag and his eight hinds in the distance. We quickly moved into a position that would give us a clear shot, following a game trail that led around a steep washout, full of thorns and blackberry. I had a feeling that they would choose this path and it paid off.

As we waited patiently, the first hind emerged, followed by seven more. We held our breath as we waited for the stag to make his appearance. And then there he was, walking confidently down the trail.

I lay in wait on a lichen-covered rock, surrounded by



Mat's stag gave himself away from a distance with his calls

his hinds as the stag came into view. I didn't move a muscle, using my eyes to track his movement. Finally, with one clean shot to the heart, the stag stumbled, walked a few steps and then collapsed.

This moment shall forever be etched in my memory. As I write I can still see the awe and astonishment in my son's eyes.

We took a moment to admire the magnificent creature before us. The stag was a sight to behold with his majestic antlers and powerful body. A testament to the beauty and power of nature.

Hunting with my son in native Australian bushland was always an adventure, but this hunt was truly unforgettable. Hats off to the young fella. He had kept up with me through the steep terrain, never once complaining or giving up. I couldn't have asked for a better hunting companion.

This was not all about catching our prey, but about creating unforgettable memories and bonding as father and son. It was a day that we will both cherish for the rest of our lives. 🎯



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Although far from popular, the .257 Roberts and the .25-06 are a century old, making a performance comparison a worthwhile effort

Pity the poor .25s



YOU used to be able to start a campfire argument about whether the .257 Roberts or the .25-06 Remington was best, but today too few hunters know enough about the two rounds to make it an interesting debate. Things would have been totally different back in the days before World War II, when these .25s saw widespread use here and in North America. It is a wonder they are still around when you see how many competing cartridges have been introduced in recent years.

They have a lot in common. They were developed in about 1920, specifically for use on varmints, and both were handicapped by being underloaded due to the lack of suitable propellants. Today's

powders and bullets, though, give them an entirely new level of performance.

.257 Roberts

The brainchild of Ned Roberts and a coterie of US woodchuck hunters, the .257 was the 7x57 case necked to .25, just as the 6mm Remington case is the .257 necked down to 6mm.

Right from the day of its inception the .257 laboured under a handicap. When it was hatched the newest Du Pont powder was IMR 3031, which was too fast burning and totally unsuited for the .257, thus velocities were rather modest and have remained that way ever since.

Remington engineers further throttled the .257 when they found it gave the best accuracy with round-nose bullets and

which they loaded deep in the case, and rifles were short-throated for it. Later the factory brought out the .257 in the short-action Model 722 and really crippled it. Sharp-pointed spitzer bullets loaded by the factory or handloaders had to be seated deep so the cartridges would work through the short magazines.

Original factory ballistics for the .257 gave an 87gn bullet 3200fps (975m/s), a 100gn bullet 2900 (884m/s), and a 117gn bullet 2650 (808m/s). With modern powders these are all under-loads. With slower burning powders, I estimate those speeds can be achieved with pressures of not more than 40,000psi.

In the 1980s I acquired a Model 700 Classic in .257. After the 100gn factory load

clocked only 2664fps (812m/s), I set out to do some serious load development.

Before long I had the Sierra 75gn HP skipping along at 3500fps (1067m/s) and the 90gn doing 3273fps (998m/s) using AR2208. Setting about boosting the .257's performance with 100gn and heavier projectiles, I worked up loads with Winchester's 785 Ball powder. The results were pretty surprising — 52gn gave the 100gn Sierra 3200fps (975m/s), and 59gn goosed the 117gn Sierra along at 2950fps (899m/s). The venerable oldtimer simply loved 785.

I wrote to US gunwriter Les Bowman about those loads and he had some doubts until he tried them for himself. He contacted Remington and tried to get them to bring out a true +P load for the .257, but found they just weren't interested.

The .257 was always pretty much a gun nut's cartridge, and when they got new things to play with the .257 was given the last rites. Things really went bad when the .243 Winchester and .244 (now 6mm) Remington were introduced in 1955. Demand for the .257 reached zero.

One reason was that the 6mm cartridges were so outrageously overpraised as to make anyone with an old-fashioned .257 in his hand ashamed to tote one in public. I have had a good deal of experience with the .257 and also with the 6mm cartridges. Don't believe all the hype.

The .257 is for practical purposes just as good a varmint cartridge as a 6mm. Bullets of the same weight and shape have somewhat better sectional density and ballistic coefficient in 6mm than in .25 calibre and given the same velocity at the muzzle will range a little better. On the other hand, a .25 calibre bullet has more area for the powder gases to push against and in

the same weight and shape less surface to bear against the rifling. Bullets of the same weight, up to about 100gn, can be driven faster in the .257. In this kind of use, any difference between the two is largely wishful thinking.

But for big game there is no comparison because the .257 will deliver a heavier bullet faster. Nothing that can be loaded into either the .243 or 6mm Rem can compare. For any deer up to the size of a red stag, a stoutly structured 117 or 120gn .25-calibre bullet can be pushed along at 3000fps (914m/s) by slow-burning powders in the Roberts.

My own big game experience with the .257 encompasses 30 deer — hog, fallow and red stags — as well as a truckload of wild goats and pigs. For that size game I find it hard to imagine a more effective cartridge. The late Bob Milek used the .257 on elk, usually with 120gn bullets, but I would choose a larger, more powerful calibre for game that size.

I've read a number of

articles which said .257 rifles are better off on a short action. Utter rubbish! If I have learned anything from my long association with the .257, it is that a rifle for it should have a long action and a 24" barrel with the chamber long-throated. This allows long bullets to be seated level with the base of the neck to make full use of its modest powder capacity. A long throat is good for an extra 100fps (30m/s) and gives performance that equals figures credited to the .257 Ackley Improved.

Years ago I decided that I couldn't do much better for a varmint load than the good Sierra 75gn bullet and 44.5gn of AR2208 for 3485fps (1062m/s). Pressures are moderate and after a number of reloads primer pockets were still tight.

The Barnes manual lists with the 100gn TSX a muzzle velocity of 3016fps (919m/s) with 42gn of AR2209. My load uses 49gn and gets 3236fps (986m/s) from my Ruger 77's 22" barrel!

Don't bother comparing my handloads with manual loads.



They can only be used in a long-throated chamber, and you should work up from 2gn below.

.25-06 Remington

Another .25 calibre cartridge that dates back to 1920 was introduced by AO Niedner. It is the .30-06 case necked down to .25 calibre, but retaining the same gentle 17-degree 17-minute shoulder angle. Its original ballistics were an 87gn bullet at 3150fps (960m/s) and a 100gn bullet at 2950fps (899m/s). This was nothing to celebrate in song and story as a .250-3000 case gave bullets of that weight

nearly as much velocity.

The .25-06 remained in the doldrums in its early years because the case held more powder than could be burned behind a .25-calibre bullet using what was available. To use that old chestnut: it was over bore capacity.

Its performance was boosted when IMR4350 appeared in the late 1930s, but didn't get a real boost until after the end of World War II when a slower burning military-surplus powder called H4831 was released. Its improved ballistics influenced so many hunters to buy a .25-06 that in 1969 Remington adopted it as a factory cartridge.

My first encounter with the .25-06 was in the late 1950s. I've owned several, including



ON THIS SPREAD

1 The standard .257 Roberts (left) and .25-06 showing how much cartridge overall length increases after their chambers have been long-throated

2 With the versatile .25-06 there's a bullet for everything from varmints and predators to pigs, goats and deer. From left: Sierra 75gn HP, 87gn spitzer and 90gn HP, Barnes 100gn TSX, Hornady 110gn ELD-X, Nosler 110gn AccuBond, Hornady 117gn SST and Speer 120gn SBT

3 The .25-06 shoots flat to reach out across open country in New Zealand. It packs enough punch for 90 percent of that country's game

a Mark X Mauser, a Ruger M77 Mk I, a custom Zastava M70, and more recently a Kimber Classic Select Grade.

Data for the .25-06 listed in the loading manuals varies quite a bit. Barnes lists maximum velocity for the 100gn TSX BT at 3300fps (1006m/s) and a 115gn TSX FB at 3148fps (960m/s); Nosler more or less duplicates that speed with a 100gn, and has a 110gn bullet averaging about 3200 (975m/s), a 115gn at 3100 (945m/s) and a 120gn at 3050fps (930m/s). With the 100gn bullet, Hornady lists about the same speed, but in addition has 117gn and 120gn bullets doing 3000fps (914m/s). The majority of velocities were, I believe, taken in a 24" barrel.

Judging by the number of rifles being chambered for the .25-06 today it still has a considerable and enthusiastic following in the US and is still

hanging in there, while the .257 Roberts is barely going anywhere.

Anyone looking for a fine all-around cartridge that gives good accuracy and mild recoil, and who doesn't plan on hunting wapiti, moose or brown bears, can hardly go wrong with a .25-06. And it's as good on varmints as it is on big game. All things being equal, the .25-06 should have an edge of 200fps over the .257 Roberts with the same weight bullets, but only when both of their chambers have been long-throated.

The .25-06's gentle shoulder angle makes cases stretch more quickly than cases with steeper shoulders. Cases should be trimmed back once their length increases to 2.494" (64mm); they should be trimmed back to 2.484" (63mm). I'm open on the question of whether to full

length resize cases or merely neck size. Not having a three-die set for the .25-06, I used a .257 Ackley Improved die to neck-size my brass.

It is a fact that all .25-calibre rifles have short throats which means bullets of 100 grains and heavier have to be seated deep in the case. But don't think you can't get into trouble with heavily compressed charges of the slowest burning powder. Standard .25-06 chambers normally won't handle the top listed loads of powders like RE-22 without primer pockets becoming loose on the first firing.

I had gunsmith Rob Spittles lengthen the throat of my Kimber .25-06, as he'd done for my .257 Roberts. With the standard factory chamber, cartridge overall length is limited to 79mm, but after being long-throated, that measurement increased to 82.50mm. The magazine of the Kimber 84L action could handle the extra length and I started working up from my previous loads, keeping a close watch for pressure signs.

We won't detail all the revelations regarding the increase in case capacity, but the indications were that the long throat allowed burning two to three grains more powder while sticking to an average of 55,000psi with four big-game bullet weights.

In theory for a .25 calibre, a properly structured 100-117gn spitzer with a long ogive presents a practical optimum as far as speed-weight-range is concerned. It balances all factors neatly, much like the 130-150gn from the .270 Winchester.

I have killed a slew of game with assorted 100gn



.25-calibre bullets. The Barnes 100gn TSX is the standout. To date I can see little difference in killing power between 100 and 117gn bullets that is not accountable for in terms of bullet structure. Since most game animals are shot inside about 200m, I have never felt handicapped using a .25.

In point of ballistic fact, spitzers do pay off at extreme ranges and the flat trajectory of the .25-06 sets it up for long-range shooting. On large deer, tough construction is more important than a few feet per second of speed or a few grains of weight, but there's no gainsaying the ballistic efficiency of a full-weight spitzer projectile.

Summing up: the .25-06 presents an almost ideal choice for a hunter who wants a single rifle capable of taking plains and mountain game up to about 225kg at long range, and it's especially suitable for goats, pigs and deer at all practicable ranges. I rate the .25-06 as being the best all-round cartridge for Australian conditions.

Don't bother asking about the .250 Savage, which is obsolete; the .25 WSSM, which died in its birthing; and the .257 Weatherby, which is only limping along. ☒

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CONTINGENCY PLANNING

We have all been guilty of flying by the seat of our pants on a hunt but, as Leon Wright explains, it pays to plan ahead

Stacking the odds

I HAVE BEEN in this hunting game for a long time now and there is one thing I am absolutely certain of: it pays to plan ahead. No matter how long the trip, if you don't, you are courting disaster. Murphy's Law is lurking in the background, just waiting for the chance to strike. We are all guilty of pushing our luck and relying on it to hold.

RIGHT: Hunting mate Peter liked Leon's Brno Model 2 and took his fair share of these rabbits with it





CREDIT XXXXX



“

By the time we have done a couple of laps the rabbits have realised it's not safe”

WHEN I head off on a rabbit hunting trip, I like to conduct the hunt over a number of days so I get to do all the hunting I want to do. I have three properties in one district that I constantly hunt on, and as luck would have it, they are all within a couple of kilometres of each other. If possible, I plan the hunt to coincide with the dark side of the moon, as I like to do most of my hunting at night.

We set up camp on one property, way down the back among the pine trees in the sandy country. This provides a ready supply of firewood and the bonus of numerous rabbit burrows close by. There is always the chance of picking up the odd careless rabbit that makes the mistake of sunning itself in its burrow entrance.

If we are hunting in late winter or early spring, we look for rabbits sitting in their burrow entrances mid-afternoon, soaking up the setting sun's rays after a cold day. Rabbits at this time are nervous and most shots are taken between 100 and 150 metres. For this, with the wind barely noticeable, I like using my Savage .17 HMR as it has more reach than the .22 rimfire.

If, however, we are hunting in the late afternoon during summer I



ON THIS PAGE

1 For rabbit hunting, Blake likes using his CZ .22 with heavy barrel and thumb-hole stock

2 When the rabbits are nervous, Leon favours using his heavy-barrelled Savage .17 HMR, which allows him to take rabbits out of range of the .22

3 All the comforts of home. A well set out camp makes all the difference

use the .22 as the rabbits are mostly young, far less nervous, more numerous and often well away from their warrens. By the time we have done a couple of laps of the paddock the rabbits have realised it's not safe above ground before dark and, with their obvious lack of co-operation and the onset of nightfall, we spend a few minutes field dressing the rabbits we have already taken.

Then we head over to one of the other properties and park just inside the gateway so as not to alert any rabbits nearby. We always plan our arrival at this property just on dark for two reasons. The first is out of respect for the owner, so we don't disturb his young family later in the night. Secondly, the area is usually packed with rabbits out



and about from late afternoon on.

The rabbits are there because there is plenty of cover in the form of bluebush, salvation Jane and large clumps of what we call roo grass. The warrens are numerous and quite deep, requiring careful navigation after dark. The shotgun is the obvious choice to hunt with here and I use either a 20 gauge under-and-over or a 12 gauge. Thirty metres is a long shot, so 32g loads of No 3, No 4 or No 6 shot work best in the 12 gauge. For the 20 gauge, 28g of No 3 shot is preferred. I like to use No 3 shot in case we run into foxes, too.

Armed with a shotgun and Nitecore MT40 torch, we start our hunt along the fence bordering both properties. It is an extremely successful way of operating



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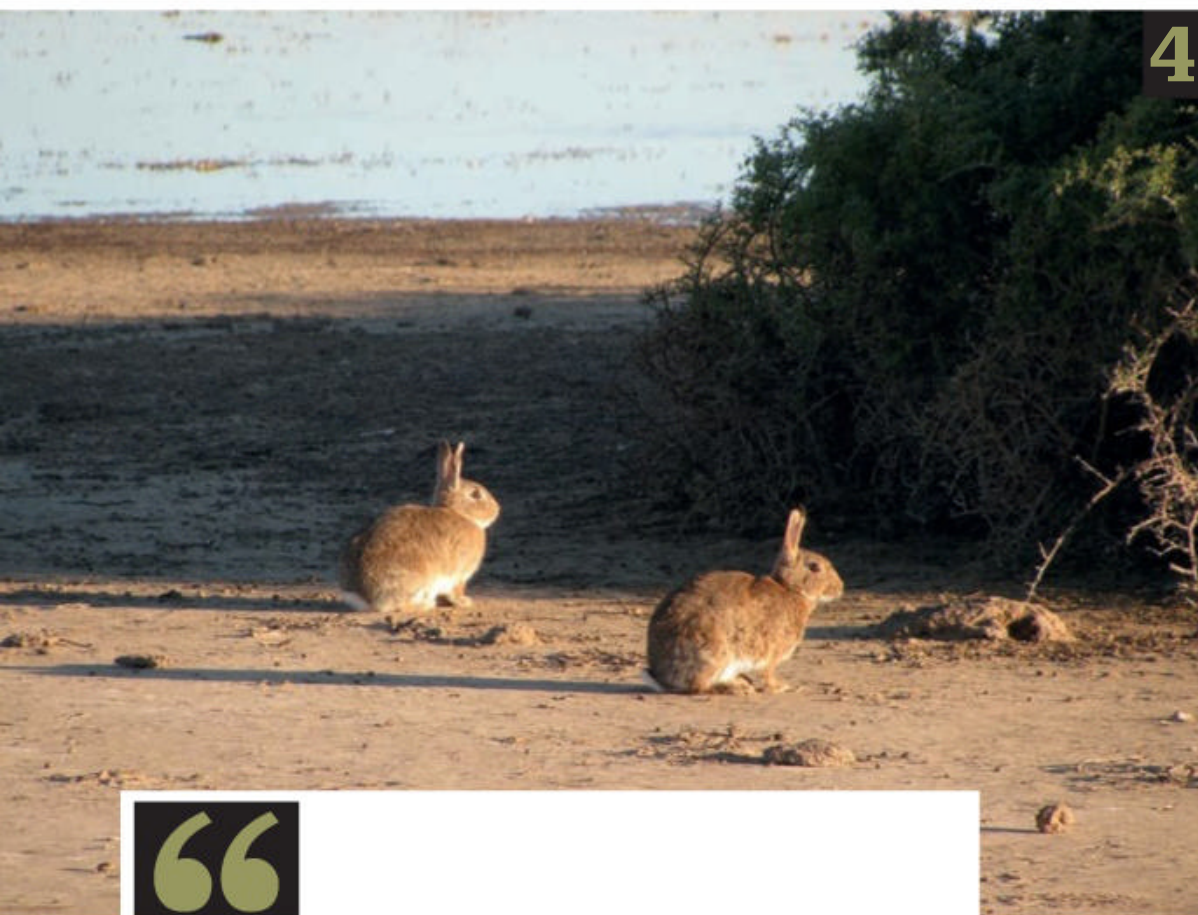


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SIFA





4



5

“

Armed with a shotgun and torch, we start our hunt along the fence”

because the rabbits live on one side but feed on the other, so they have to get past us to get to home to cover. Any rabbit we spot out in the paddock is taken care of as well, and by the time we reach the corner of the paddock we are pleased to unload the rabbits and hang them on the fence to be retrieved later.

The next paddock is a bit treacherous to hunt in as there are numerous deep warrens (and I do mean deep) partially hidden in the heavy cover. However, it's worth putting up with as we encounter a staggering number of rabbits. On one hunt we shot more rabbits than we could carry and five or six foxes as well.

It has never failed to amaze me just how many rabbits are encountered so close to habitation. The third paddock we hunt on foot is in front of the main house and is also full of rabbits. But my goodness! It is treacherous underfoot.

Hunting these three paddocks on foot usually takes us an hour or so

ON THIS PAGE

4 With the arrival of early summer there is usually a spurt in rabbit numbers, which makes for good hunting

5 A 12-gauge Beretta Silver Pigeon Classic firing 36g of No 3 shot accounted for this bag of rabbits during a night foray

6 Leon's brother Greg took this nice bag of rabbits with his Savage .17 HMR

and when we are finished, I put the shotgun away and get the rifle out, usually the heavy-barrelled CZ .22.

I am not that keen on using a spotlight these days, as I feel the white light makes the rabbits a bit edgy, keeping them on the move. I much prefer to use a Z-Vision JP-313 torch which has the three coloured beams — white, green and red. The red beam is the one I prefer to use as it doesn't disturb the rabbits as much and I can often take more than one rabbit before the rest become aware of what's going on.

The last paddock we hunt on this property is quite large and mostly featureless. Having been bushed a couple of times and having to rely on the stars to guide us back to the main gate, I got into the habit of carrying a GPS just to be on the safe side. When the grass is high, the warrens are hard to spot. It sure causes a jolt when a front wheel goes down the hole of a deep warren and at times it can be difficult to extract the car from it. We drive around this last paddock a couple of times, moving from warren to warren, as well as



6



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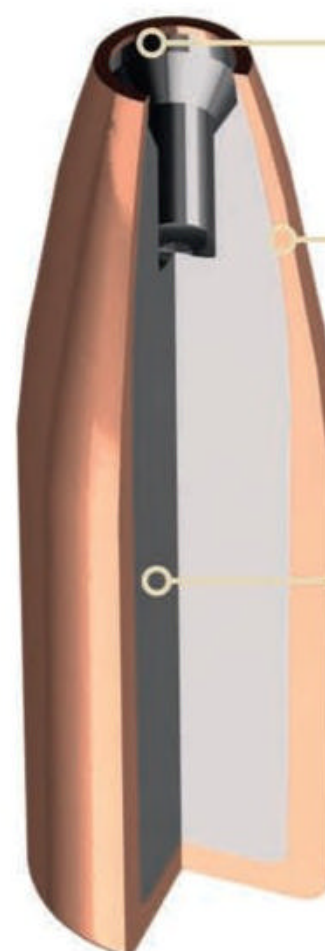
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223 Rem 55gr Vermin Xtreme HP 20 Pack	20157842	3215 fps	1263 ft-lb	\$41
223 Rem 55gr Vermin Xtreme HP 900pc Ammo Can	20157790	3215 fps	1263 ft-lb	\$1,570
243 Win 76gr Vermin Xtreme HP 20 Pack	20160542	3445 fps	2003 ft-lb	\$54
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7



“

My mate drove an unseen star picket straight through the radiator”

picking up the odd rabbit away from its warren.

We have never found it necessary to use any other firearm than the .22 but some nights when the moon is full, we use the shotgun and shoot from the back of the 4x4. The rabbits are somewhat more skittish under the full moon and are always on the move, thus making the shotgun a better choice for the moving targets.

With our options exhausted and the rabbits keeping well out of our way, we head back over to the first property, which has its own set of obstacles. No matter how well we plan our hunts and how careful we are, we have come to grief from time to time, mostly after dark when driving.

While these properties are mainly pine-covered sandy country, there are patches we avoid like the plague. The soil is grey coloured, and we are usually warned by the change of the landscape; the pine trees disappear

and are replaced by stands of box thorn, Boree trees and another tree I don't know. We immediately stop hunting and find our way back to the sand hills.

If there has been any rainfall before our trip, the grey ground becomes impossible; there is simply no bottom and more than once we have sunk to the chassis. Once we had to walk back to the homestead, borrow a length of cable, tie it to a distant tree, hook it up to the 4x4's winch and drag ourselves free.

Another time we were doing extremely well spotlighting and driving around the paddock extra

slowly as the grass was quite high. All of a sudden we came to a grinding stop as we had driven over something. My mate slowly backed out and, in the process, drove an unseen star picket straight through the radiator, putting us totally out of action.

No matter how well you plan your hunts, they don't all go as planned. You have to learn to roll with the punches and be prepared for any unforeseen incident that may pop up. I know from years of experience that if you do plan your hunt as best as you can, most times there will be no hassles whatsoever. ☒

8



ON THIS PAGE

7 There have probably been more rabbits taken with the .22 rimfire than all other firearms. Leon uses his quite regularly

8 Bulk lots of 36gn .22 rimfire bullets can be bought on the cheap, which makes a lot of sense when the rabbits are really thick

9 While Leon regularly uses No 6 and No 4 shot when hunting rabbits, he has a penchant for using No 3 shot in both his 12 and 20 gauge Berettas — two good all-rounders

9





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I think I shot Bigfoot!



Gary Hall confronts Grumpy and finds he ain't no dwarf!



IT ALL happened so fast and quickly turned pear-shaped. It seemed like the four members of the canine cavalry had it all under control and maybe I was a bit over-confident.

MAIN: Bigfoot on the deck with Neil and dogs Mate, Ace, Rusty and Oreo

LEFT: Bigfoot takes a devastating hit from the coach-gun

BELOW: The black-and-tan boar cops a slug to the back of the head





ON THIS PAGE

1 Dave, Neil and Rusty with the black-and-tan boar

2 Ace strikes a pose

“

It must have thought I was a set of wickets and he was Mitchell Starc”

AS I walked to within a car-length of the spirited bail with the coach-gun ready for action, the hostile, fired-up boar didn't look too impressed about being woken from the land of nod. Going by the animated dogs barking close to its

laughing gear (not that he was laughing now), he was making his feelings known.

Tucked in tight under some fallen overhanging timber, it was a bit of a Mexican standoff. It wasn't safe for the dogs to get too close and Grumpy was well bunkered in and not too keen on moving.

Well, that's what I thought, but I've been wrong before!

The instant the boar saw my skinny, pensioner legs and impressive wedding tackle, it must have thought I was a set of wickets and he was Mitchell Starc, and from a short run up, he scattered the dogs and came at me at speed.

His only intention was knocking my bails off (or something similar).

Luckily for me, before it was chewing on my shoelaces it had a slight change of heart. As he U-turned, the solid slug caught him mid-stride, the jolting impact momentarily standing him upright on his back legs.

For a split second he looked like Bigfoot, all broad shoulders and hairy back, before dropping to the ground and lying still.

Thankfully, the next pig of the morning, a stocky black-and-tan boar, was bailed by the dogs in the creek line and packed his suitcase for hog heaven without incident. 🎯

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BOW HUNTING





Recurving dream

Determined to hunt the rut, Joe Brennen targets fallow with a recurve bow

I WASN'T missing the rut this year. Five Aprils had gotten away from me despite annual resolutions and I still couldn't say I'd made a go of stalking fallow deer with the bow. Sure, I'd camped out a couple of nights, had a sit here and a sneak there, but it hadn't felt serious. So, there'd be no mucking around this time.

INVITATIONS to parties were declined, speculative Easter plans abolished. I may have ruffled some feathers. I set aside two weeks to do things right.

It was the first time my dad, Dave, had come back to Oz post-Covid and we were well overdue for an adventure. I reckoned a few nights spent laid back on the swags with eucalyptus smoke and fresh-brewed coffee or beer, depending on time and success rates, would fit the bill nicely.

Our plan was to stalk and try to get ourselves somewhere between where deer were and where they were going. I've never been good at sitting still and waiting anyway, preferring to bungle a stalk than to wait out a game of hide-and-seek when I'm not being sought. Our other option was the pair of antlers carried in the backpack, for where rattling might help opportunities unfold.

My mate's property had everything we needed. The open

ground was mixed with various stages of successional regrowth, where patchy sifton bush and green wattle gave reliable cover, and the whole was criss-crossed by ridges and gullies covered in older stringybark and scribbly gum. The deer filter out of these refuges late in the day, and drift back in by the time the sun's burned off any lingering patches of fog. Sound gets swallowed up in the forest. Only the sonorous *whooo-hoo!* of the powerful owl infiltrates the grey pre-dawn trunks, and the primeval grunts of rutting fallow bucks.

Before first light, we were skirting the neighbour's guard-geese and edging closer to a series of regular grunts echoing down a grassy drainage. We didn't come up on him that morning. The next gave us glimpses of two bucks trotting around the same spot, but all at a safe distance for them.

The stalking plan kept the action high. With different grunting bucks

Worked up, scruffed up and boof-necked, the buck didn't hesitate to close in on rattling antlers



to sneak in on, and several ‘almost’ ambushes, there was plenty to be excited about. What we thought was the drop on a big chocolate bloke was cut short by an unexpected fence, and he proceeded to strut past and out of our morning. Unlucky, but then the old white buck appeared in the sifton bush another paddock over, so we jogged out of sight and down the boundary line to try to intercept.

He’d gone by the time we arrived but a group of does were coming our way. The gap was nearly closed when a mob of roos barged between us and stuck me to the spot.

Making our way back to camp after dark one evening, we were flanked by an unseen brute who grunted challenge after challenge from his isolated patch of timber, only pulling up when he ran out of cover to shadow us from. We decided to revisit the scene on the following evening, get into the quarter-hectare stand of eucalypt and sifton and see who turned up.

We were right in our assumption that this was a lek. The chosen stage was a big Argyle apple, its low-hanging branches knocked about and the ground under them pawed up and decorated with the snapped-off twigs and powder-blue leaves of the tree.

We were, however, wrong in thinking nothing would be home at four o’clock on a sunny afternoon.

Wandering across the open grassland towards the cover, I luckily looked up and saw a doe lying in a slight hollow. Down on



ON THIS PAGE

1 Joe and Dave managed recurve rut success with teamwork and persistence

2 With Dave still feeling the effects of jetlag, the boys filled in their time between morning and afternoon stalks with a late breakfast followed by a camp

3 There was no shortage of deer visiting the well-used scrapes around the lek, so Joe and Dave just had to work out the right move

my stomach, I slithered in to have a go. Apparently in range, I incrementally rose to kneeling, then crouching, then standing — but she was nowhere to be seen. Several hand gestures later, we restarted towards our initial destination, but were again laid to ground when I picked out the little white knobber, an active young bloke we’d seen daily, lying up in the shadows.

He noticed something and stood for a better look, but after a long stare-off as I cowered in the grass, he lost interest and wandered off. Trying to move, again I had to put a hand out behind and signal Dad to stop. The doe we’d originally seen, accompanied by a yearling, wandered into the open for a nibble. When they bolted upright and stared away behind them, we knew something else was incoming.

A beautiful spotted buck trotted in, shunted the doe and wrestled a sapling. His heavy, broad-palmed antler (he only had one) had unique

“An unseen brute grunted challenge after challenge from his isolated patch of timber”

appeal, but I put that out of mind as I focussed on where he’d need to be for a shot. It was like clockwork — he trotted across my front and I slowly rose on my knees. I saw only the spot on his chest as he slowed and looked my way, stopping broadside at about 26 metres.

It was a longer shot but things felt good. Those moments watching the ball of fletching sail to target are mesmerising. Unfortunately, that fletching only tickled his armpit — the buck sprang high and kicked out — but bolted off unscathed. So close!

Having loosed an arrow on a deer, I was happy but growing less expectant of further opportunities — surely that had been my chance. Another morning encounter by the lek didn’t quite turn out, and I told myself that we’d had a good time of it.

That afternoon we made our way to the back block of the property in hope of crossing paths with the old white buck, as we’d seen him there.



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Finally he stopped, broadside, at less than 10 metres”

Standing in the sifton and overlooking the forest edge, we were treated to a slow and stunning descent of the sun as it blazed off the silvery white trunks of the gums.

The forest appeared especially dark in its recesses beyond the sun's warmth and gave little away, with flitting shapes of kangaroos now and then illuminated between the trees. Soon enough they had filed into the grassland and stillness returned.

Forty minutes in and the rabbits we'd put to ground at our intrusion had recovered their dignity and stared suspiciously between jumpy movements. Dad thought he saw something light-coloured move in the forest shadows, but we couldn't make out anything else. Fifty minutes. In an instant I looked downhill and comprehended a buck trotting along the gully.

He had open ground between us and was heading into the wind. We

exchanged hurried whispers and shrank to our knees, hiding behind hat brims. Dad clashed the antlers, which brought him to a stop, and he turned his head without finding answers to his querying gaze. Then he came in at a trot.

I shuffled to get a better position and could feel that Dad was also moving to hide behind me. Another rattle kept the buck on a good course; Dad held them against the ground to keep out of sight.

I thought and promptly forgot about the fence I'd have to shoot through. He was behind a tree — my chance to draw. Out he came and I swung on him as he trotted seemingly forever to my left with just enough scrub to provide a screen between us. Finally he stopped, broadside, at less than 10 metres. He was still vaguely covered behind twigs but an arrow would find its way through. I picked the tip of a leaf conveniently shrouding his vitals and the arrow was away.

He erupted sideways and lurched into the open, the arrow jutting from his shoulder. The lack of penetration was concerning and I focussed on nocking another arrow. As he disappeared behind a tree Dad rattled again and I readied for a follow-up, but as he emerged his pace was gone. He reared and collapsed sideways to rest against the bole of a gum tree.

I don't think we could decide on whispering or shouting as I wiggled the old leather finger tab off so we could shake hands. Then we definitely found our voices.

The drag out in the gathering dark was completed light-heartedly, with a dram or two of whisky to help the story soak in once the deer was hanging to cool. The recurve bow hung on its designated branch, with quiver almost — but not entirely — full of arrows. A broken Port Orford cedar shaft made up the remainder.

Thankfully, I hadn't missed everything in the rut this year. 🏹

ON THIS PAGE

4 Swags and fires and hunting dogs make the best camps

5 Not even a funnel-web could dampen spirits with a deer hanging in camp, although the fellas crawled more carefully into their swags

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SIG Sauer Buckmasters rifle scopes

The new Buckmasters range of hunting optics features rifle scopes, rangefinders and binoculars that aim to provide the performance SIG Sauer Electro-Optics at a value that is within reach for every hunter.

The Buckmasters rangefinder and rifle scopes were inspired by Jackie Bushman. They feature a custom Buckmasters Bullet Drop Compensation (BDC) reticle that has holdover dots out to 500 yards (about 450m). The rangefinder will provide lightning-fast ranging performance in a vivid red-

illuminated display optimised for low-light hunting. As an extra value, the rangefinder can be used in Buckmasters Mode which includes eight onboard ballistic groups, so the rangefinder can indicate which of the reticle's BDC holdover dots to use, based on the ammunition you've chosen.

Buckmasters rifle scopes are available in 3-9x40mm, 3-9x50mm, 3-12x44mm and 4-16x44mm.

To find out more about this new range of optics by SIG Sauer ask at your local gun shop or visit osaaustralia.com.au.

Ridgeline Kahu accessories

The Ridgeline Kahu binocular harness is designed to carry your binos in its adjustable tethers and airmesh harness system. It also offers a large zippered phone pocket and mesh side pockets for other necessities such as powder puffer or lens cloth. To help keep everything at your fingertips, Ridgeline also offers rangefinder and ammo pouches as optional extras that attach via the Molle straps on the harness. Alternatively, they can be attached to a pack or belt.

The Kahu ammunition pouch is designed to house 10 bullets and is foam padded, yet streamlined in shape. Closure is via a YKK zip. The rangefinder pouch has a silent closure system on the front and a snap-closure strap at



the back to attach to your bino harness or Molle system. Both are made of 100 percent recycled 300D ripstop polyester with TPU coatings for water resistance. Colour choices are beech or Escape camo to match your Ridgeline pack or bino harness.

Kahu gear is now available from your nearest Ridgeline stockist. For more information or to order online visit ridgelineclothing.com.au.



CZ 600 Trail

The CZ 600 series offers a unique, highly modular design. It comes with several patented features that improve all the key characteristics you need to assist your shooting, from reliability and durability to ergonomics and shooting comfort, as well as safety and accuracy. These include a patent-protected bolt design that ensures 100 percent user-controlled feed in all shooting positions and conditions. CZ has also patented the ergonomically designed vertical safety catch with completely silent operation. The Trail has a

magazine that can act as both detachable and locked. It also has an extremely durable finish, and its easy disassembly requires no manipulation of the trigger.

The Trail is the more tactical model of CZ's new 600 series, which includes other firearms suitable for hunters and target shooters. The Trail is a compact, bolt-action model with controls typical of modern sporting rifles. It delivers high levels of accuracy in a compact package. Long rails are integrated on the top of its aluminium receiver and fore-end, with additional mounting points, including

M-LOK slots, on the fore-end. The AR-compatible pistol grip has interchangeable backstraps that are compatible with the CZ P-09 pistol. The four-position telescopic stock features a cheekpiece on the left side.

Its 51cm (20") semi-heavy cold hammer forged barrel has an M15x1 thread on the end. The rifle's double-stage trigger has four levels of pull weight. Bolt operation is based on a short 60-degree lift, and the bolt face design allows for semi-

controlled round feed. Its 10-round magazines are AR/P-Mag compatible. The Trail is guaranteed to shoot groups within 2 MOA.

The CZ 600 Trail has a recommended retail price of \$2070 and is available only in .223. Note that its telescopic stock means it is prohibited in NSW and cannot be sold or possessed there.

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



Savage Impulse Big Game rifle

Built in the USA and engineered for the demands of shooters worldwide, the Savage Impulse straight-pull rifles combine the confidence and accuracy of a traditional bolt-action with the advantage of an enhanced rate

of fire. The simple-to-actuate straight-pull action facilitates faster follow-up shots and target acquisition while maintaining legendary Savage accuracy.

Features include an

AccuTrigger; an AccuStock with AccuFit adjustments in KUIU Verde 2.0 camo; Hazel Green Cerakote receiver and barrel; flush-fit detachable box magazine; fluted barrel and a 20 MOA rail machined into the

receiver. It is available in 7mm PRC, 6.5 Creedmoor, .243, .308, .30-06, .300 Win Mag and .300 WSM.

For more information ask at your local gun shop or visit sporting.nioa.com.au.

BOG DeathGrip Sherpa

BOG offers a large range of packs, tripods and accessories to suit. Its tripods are light, yet steady and sturdy. One model that's ideal for a steady shot is the DeathGrip Sherpa. A close cousin to the DeathGrip Infinite Series, the DeathGrip Sherpa is the ultimate high-country tripod. Designed as a multi-functional tripod platform, it weighs just over 1.8kg and utilises a quick-change system on top of a glassy smooth ball-head mount. Couple this with proprietary hybrid foot, easy-to-use twist-lock legs, the proprietary DeathGrip clamping

system and a removable centre post, and the Sherpa provides the most versatile tripod at a very reasonable price.

Features include the premium carbon-fibre lightweight legs; removable centre post and fine-tuning height adjustments; DeathGrip clamping head with non-marring jaws; quick release ARCA-Swiss mounting system; and height adjustments to suit everything from prone shooting to standing.

Ask to see them at your local gun shop or visit sporting.nioa.com.au.



Otis smart gun care

In addition to cleaners and lubricants, Otis offer a large selection of pistol, rifle and shotgun cleaning kits and maintenance tools. For example, its Patriot Series is available in 13 different configurations to suit your pistol, shotgun and rifle calibre. One little kit that I find very useful when in the field is the Patriot .22 rifle kit. What's special about this kit is its T-handle that attaches to a 76cm memory flex cable that can also be used as a handle for four separate driver bits.

Also included are some cotton patches, a .22 calibre slotted tip that screws into the cable head, a .22 calibre mop, bronze bore brush and separate all-purpose brushes. The driver bits included are a 5/32" flat-head, T20 hex and two Phillips heads. They all fit neatly into a supplied little hard case. Made in the USA, these kits are well priced and ideal for use when at the range or out hunting.

To find out more visit tsaoutdoors.com.au.



Burris FastFire C red-dot sight

Burris Optics has recently introduced the new FastFire C red-dot sight designed specifically to be low profile and compact. Weighing less than 30 grams, the FastFire C offers durability and reliability. Its 'always on' technology features 25,000-hour run time from a small CR2032 battery. When mounted to a pistol its low profile allows for absolute or 1/3 co-witness with standard open sights, eliminating the need for elevated sights.

Equipped with an intelligent



Auto-Bright system and offering manual illumination settings, this red-dot sight ensures optimal visibility in any light condition. Other features include 1x magnification, bright-red 6 MOA aiming dot, 80 MOA of windage and elevation adjustment and a removable rear fixed sight designed to be used in conjunction with the firearm's original front iron sight. The Burris FastFire C has an RRP of \$399.

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

Osprey knives

Osprey offers a range of fixed and folding knives made of quality 3CR14 stainless steel. Its fixed-blade knives include a drop point with gut-hook, with an 83mm (3.25") blade and an overall length of 190mm (7.5"). Of full tang construction and hollow ground, the fixed-blade knives have G10 composite grips. The spines of the knives also feature jimping on top for better grip.

The Osprey range includes two folders. The first is the Osprey 3" folder offering a 159mm (6.25") overall length and 76mm (3") blade. This knife features an easy-open liner lock for one-handed opening, a G10 composite handle and drop point blade that's hollow ground. The



second has an 89mm (3.5") blade with the classic nail nick, designed to be opened with a fingernail.

All Osprey knives come with a well-made Cordura sheath and are very well priced.

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



Barnes Tipped TSX bullets

With a reputation forged from solid copper and epic knockdowns, Barnes' Tipped TSX bullets have proven to be among the most accurate and lethal hunting bullets available.

Derived from the original X-Bullet, Barnes' Tipped TSX bullets inherit a legacy of excellence. The X-Bullet, introduced by Barnes in 1986, marked a ground-breaking advancement in bullet technology, being the world's first all-copper projectile. It fundamentally changed the way hunters viewed bullet construction and terminal performance. After generations of innovation, the X-Bullet has evolved into what is now the TSX and Tipped TSX bullets.

The all-copper construction of

the Tipped TSX bullet provides consistent performance, improved weight retention, reduced fouling and expansion control. It features a sleek profile and precision heel radius in FB and BT designs. The Accu-Groove technology provides decreased fouling and top accuracy. The Tipped TSX bullet also features a polymer tip that boosts the ballistic coefficient and helps initiate rapid expansion. A re-engineered nose cavity provides faster expansion and devastating terminal performance.

Tipped TSX bullets are also available in Barnes' renowned VOR-TX® ammunition in popular calibre and weight offerings.

Ask for them at your local gun shop or visit osaaustralia.com.au for more information.

NIOA Hot Products catalogue

The latest 2024-25 NIOA Hot Products catalogue is now available for free online or from your local gun shop. Bigger and better than ever, this 548-page catalogue is jam packed with many familiar brands such as Federal, Leupold, RCBS, Savage, Remington, Ruger and lots more. Whether it's firearms, optics, ammunition, reloading, gun maintenance, knives or accessories, this catalogue has it all, including the latest offerings from many manufacturers around the world.

It includes updated information on the many brand names NIOA continues to carry plus some new ones that

have been added to the company's extensive portfolio of products.

Get your copy from your nearest gun shop or to view online visit sporting.nioa.com.au.



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The sting of the .17 Hornet

Referred to as the hypersonic gramophone needle, the little .17 Hornet might seem like a sweetie but be prepared for a wild ride



LEFT: A cat is always a bonus when whistling foxes. At this stand, the quinnella came in to be dispatched at under 30 metres with Marcus' Savage Model 25. The big tom, on being hit, bounced all over Hell's Half Acre before coming to rest. Foxes in contrast tend to just go bang-flop

I'VE owned two rifles chambered in the little .17 Hornet: a fairly beefy Savage Model 25 Laminated Walking Varminter and a more petite CZ 527 American. I can offer a limited personal perspective on the cartridge, as I have only dragged them out of the gun safe every few years on average to see if my perceptions of the cartridge have changed. Then they've been returned to the back of the safe until boredom, or a project like this column, renews my interest.

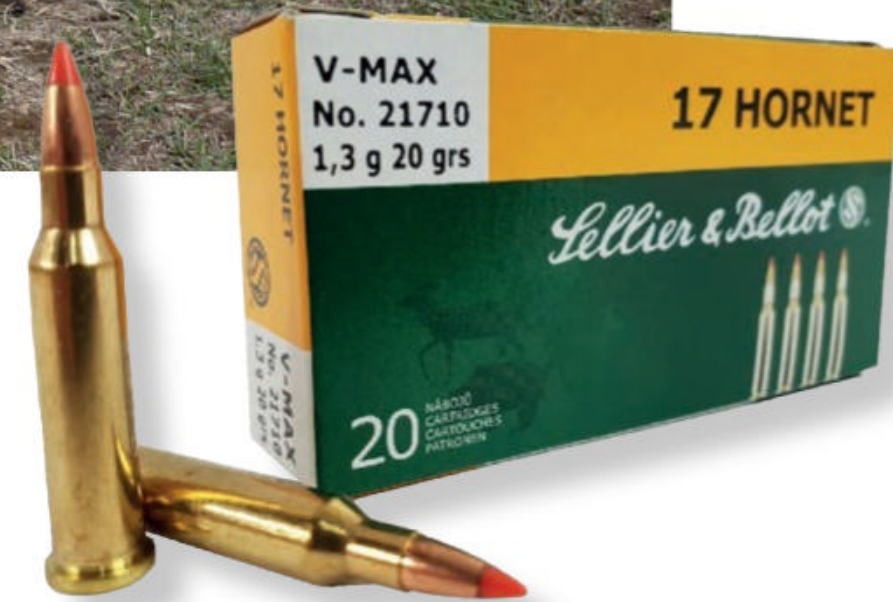
I must shamelessly lean on the work of others to give some background, first from Nick Harvey, who borrowed my .17 Hornet Savage Model 25 to

review, getting a quantum jump on the opposition in Australian gun journalism.

"The .17 Hornet is arguably the best balanced of all the .17 cartridges, wildcat or factory," he said. "PO Ackley is credited with introducing the first .17 based on the Hornet case. The .17 Ackley Hornet was basically the K-Hornet necked down to fire a .172-inch bullet.

"Over the years a few problems became apparent. Hornet case capacities varied quite a bit, because of varying brass thicknesses. This made handloaders extremely wary about mixing brass brands. But that was not the only problem."

Nick went on to mention different rifles having



problems with different ammunition, some in varying headspace, and poor brass life as a result. Nick resumed:

"Hornady's new .17 Hornet ammunition does away with all the dimensional problems that plagued other .17 wildcats. Thank you, Hornady."

In the two rifles I have owned, I found the Savage much more forgiving of

various handloads I fed them. It was peerlessly accurate. I used both 20 and 25gn bullets in my rifles, but settled on the 20gn V-Max and Nosler Varmageddon.

The Savage Varminter was just a bit of a lumpy thing to carry afield. The massive action length added to the bulk, and I believe it soaked up pressure variances with more



MEOPRO OPTIKA 6

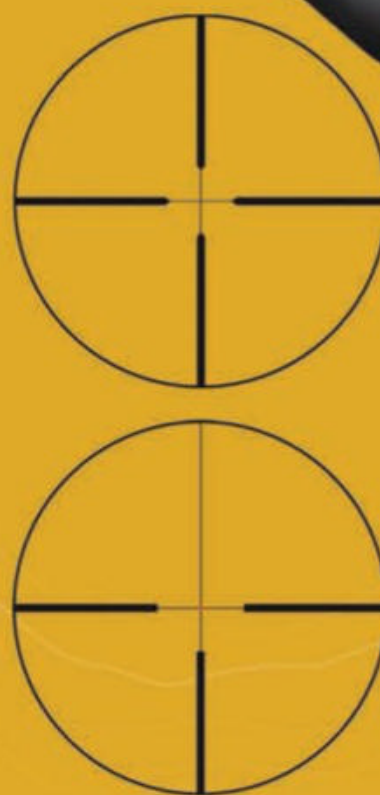
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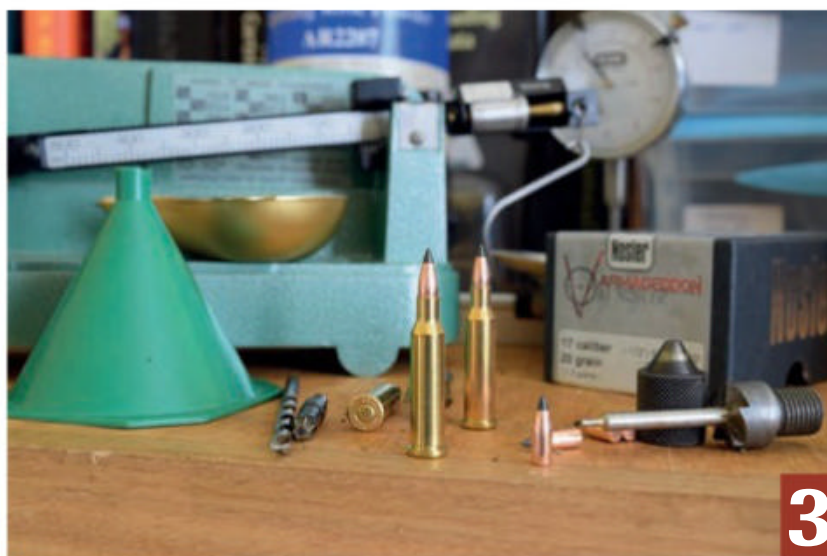
Visit www.winchesteraustralia.com.au to see the range.



FEATURES:

- MAGNIFICATION: 3-18 x
- OBJECTIVE LENS: 50mm
- MAIN TUBE SIZE: 30mm
- FOCAL PLANE POSITION: 2

**DESIGNED WITH
PERFORMANCE IN MIND**



ON THIS PAGE

1 A nice .17-calibre haul. Just prior to breeding season, these redcoats make fine trophy skins, especially when the tiny 20gn bullets rarely exit

2 Where the .17 Hornet stands capacity-wise (left to right): .22 Long Rifle 40gn, .17 Hornet, .22 Hornet, .223 Remington and grand pappy .30-06 Springfield

3 Assiduous care in reloading such a tiny case is necessary for accuracy and safety. Individually, carefully weighed charges and painstaking case preparation make for fewer surprises and better accuracy



Both .17s Hornet rifles delivered remarkable, pinpoint accuracy”

consistent end results on target than the CZ, which while being strong, was more finicky. I think my early adoption of L'il Gun propellant and the pursuit of screaming velocity left me wanting sometimes.

In the field, however, both rifles delivered remarkable, pinpoint accuracy and dispatched foxes, rabbits, cats and the odd middling goat within 200 metres. Bullets never exited, but post mortems revealed a 15cm diameter internal wound cavity that produced instant bang-flops. Graziers loved it during lambing due to its adequate reach and limited ricochet potential.

If one was shooting for skins, it was unequalled.

As for thicker-skinned game under the light, I have this to offer. Some friends who were pest shooting fallow deer and kangaroos in some numbers up north were using the .17

Hornady Magnum Rimfire (.17 HMR) and found it quite adequate. They were superb shots, so placement was commensurate.

I had experience of emphatically killing goats out to 120 metres with the .17 Hornet when I placed the bullet halfway and level between the eye and the ear, side on. On one occasion, a middle-sized billy with a beard presented about 80 metres away uphill. Wanting not to shoot between the eyes into a hard forehead area, I

aimed below his chin to hit in the front of the neck. Down he went like a bomb hit him and his cowardly partner skedaddled.

Walking up to check out the kill, I saw him lying eyes wide open and motionless on his back. When I grabbed his horns, he shook his head, obviously a little dazed from 813 Joules (600ft-lb) hitting him in the Adam's apple, and he took off into the ether. On reflection, I realised I saw no wound on the goat's throat, so I believe the bullet just blew up on his tough, straggly beard, not penetrating flesh.

This led me to the Davis gelatine experiment.

One day, I hied me down (an old Nick Harvey phrase meaning to go quickly) to the ANZAC Rifle Range horseshoe with two blocks of Davis gelatine moulded from bread tins. I had my CZ 527

American in .17 Hornet with two handloads:

- A full house 20gn V-Max 'plus' load using L'il Gun, at variable velocities between 3700 to — on one occasion — 3900fps (1128-1189m/s) despite my best efforts at handloading consistency
- A 'quieter' load of 3.5gn of Trail Boss behind the same bullet doing 2550fps (777m/s). It perfectly mimicked a factory .17 HMR load and was the most consistently accurate load I ever shot from a .17 or just about anything else.

Firing a full-house L'il Gun load into the first block, it blew a large fist-sized blob of gelatine out of the first half of the block, sending it 'blobbily' whirring over into the next bay of the range, some 20m away. The bullet shattered into multiple shards of shrapnel not continuing more than halfway

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“

It blew a large fist-sized blob of gelatine out of the first half of the block”

along the length of the block. I have the video recorded somewhere and may one day find it again and post it on the inter web, but don't die waiting.

When I fired the quieter load into the second gel block, the same 20gn polymer-tipped projectile drilled a dead-straight hole all the way through the block with a small area of cavitation just forward of its entry hole.

This validated the experience of the boys up north. They were right in asserting the .17 HMR was a better pest-control round (if pressed) than the more powerful Hornet cousin.

ON THIS SPREAD

4 Mid-sized goats taken with side-on temple shots are a realistic maximum for the diminutive .17 Hornet

5 The Hornady 15gn NTX projectile is, in Marcus' opinion, a highly specialised bullet, which severely limits the .17 Hornet's potential in the field and whenever a breeze blows

Here are my findings from my Trail Boss experiment: 3.5gn of TB behind a 20gn V-Max yields exactly the same ballistics as a factory .17 HMR cartridge — 2550fps (777m/s) and stellar four-shot groups of less than ½ MOA at 100 metres. Please work up from 10 percent below the charges I used and back off when pressure signs become apparent.

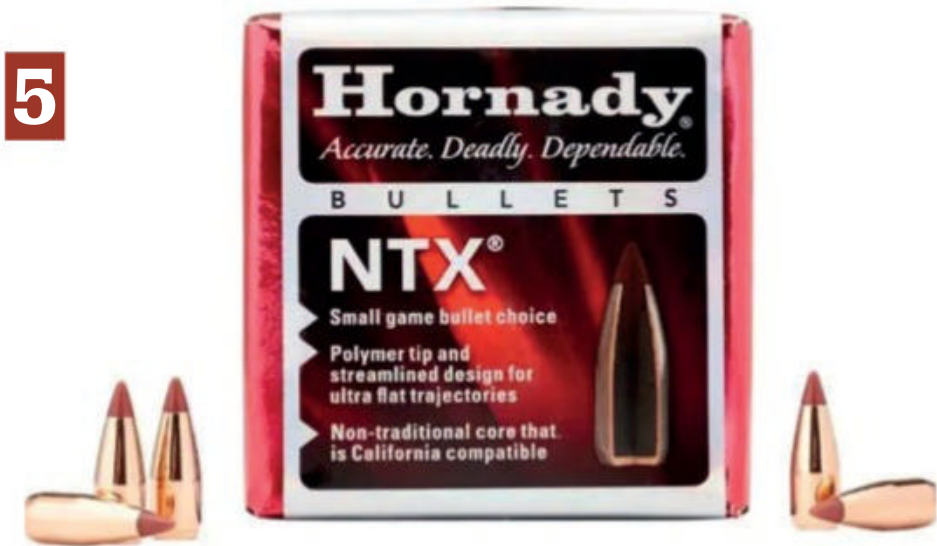
There were huge, inexplicable upward velocity shifts in very carefully loaded cases with higher-end L'il Gun loads. I find it just too touchy.

AR2207 produced nice, usable accuracy and predictable results with 25gn bullets at the 3200-3300fps (about 975-1000m/s) velocity window.

More AR2207 notes: 11.5gn works better than 10.1gn of L'il Gun behind 20gn Nosler Varmageddons, with four shots going sub-MOA.

Hodgdon CFE BLK worked well with predictable velocities climbing through its range with 20 grainers; my

5



best load in the CZ 527 was 12.6gn CFE BLK for 3633fps (1107m/s) average with good sub-MOA results; 12.8gn yielded 3684fps (1123m/s), but the groups widened a little. There was room for exploring 12.7 grains, and one four-shot group at that charge yielded 3650fps (1113m/s) average and shots clustered under .70" (1.5cm). I believe it to be the pick of powders for balancing performance and predictability.

In my Savage using Hornady brass and Remington 7½ primers:

- 10.5gn AR2205 averaged 3555fps (1084m/s) with 170fps (52m/s) extreme spread (ES)
- 10gn L'il Gun averaged 3704fps (1129m/s) with 103fps (31m/s) ES and no outward pressure signs
- 10.2gn L'il Gun averaged 3883fps (1184m/s) with 66fps (20m/s) ES. Accuracy was so-so, and although extraction was easy I felt uneasy.

Overall, the CZ yielded more unpredictable results than the Savage. The Savage's longer, heavier barrel may have had some moderating affect on L'il Gun's excursions experienced with the CZ.

Further work in my CZ with a Hornady 25gn V-Max resulted in: 10.9gn AR2207 for 3164fps (964m/s); and 11.2gn AR2207 put four into one hole at 3327fps (1014m/s).

I laboured for a while to arrive at a suitable scope to

attach to both my .17 Hornets, with adequate magnification to reach out a way on small targets. The now superseded Weaver Classic V 4-16x40 incorporated a bullet drop compensating (BDC) reticle tailored for the .223 Remington using a 55gn spitzer bullet. Out to 300m, the .17 Hornet mimics this load's trajectory exactly at factory-spec velocity. Any midrange variable optic suited to that .223 55gn load would be an excellent choice.

In finishing, would I go down the .17 Hornet path again, knowing what I do now?

Abso-bloody-lutely! It's been a wild ride. ☺

PO Ackley's notes

In his *.17 Hornet Notes* (13th printing, 1980), PO Ackley reckoned "the .17 Hornet is one of the best balanced .17 cartridges, a simple sort of an 'improved' .22 Hornet necked down [which] can be loaded by using a compressed charge of 4198 without weighing."

Ackley was a handloading hot rodder and, as well as the comment above, he provided loading data based on Hodgdon 4227 which were extreme. H4198 is equivalent to AR2207 and H4227 to AR2205, but his weights were far above ADI's current recommendations. If you find them, do not consider approaching Ackley's loads now.

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Todd Bailey was heading back to camp when he caught this monster in an open paddock and knocked him over with the 12-gauge. "I'm unsure how heavy he was but I'm guessing 150kg," he says. He's certainly a beauty!

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"Work has been flat out for ages, and a few helicopter shoots around the area I hunt have made it tough going to find a decent pig," **John Starr** says. "But just lately I've had a chance or two to look for the big boys and have came up with a couple to share with the mag. One was taken with the little 6.5 Grendel (the white stock) and the other with the always reliable Lithgow 308."

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ENTRIES: Please email your high resolution .jpg or .png pig hunting image as an attachment to the email addressed to mickmatheson@yaffa.com.au – all images must be at least 1MB in size. For entry to be valid the following contact details must be included: First name, surname, full mail address, contact phone number and email address. A short explanatory sentence with the email is also needed.

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The travel game

There is more to international trophy hunting than meets the eye



1

INTERNATIONAL trophy hunting inspired me and became an obsession. I now pencil in every second year to make a trip somewhere around the globe.

I imagine every deer hunter would have immense respect for moose, with their sheer size. The antler growth they can build on their heads is out of this world, especially for an Australian hunter. In my late teens I watched a lot of Billy Molls' DVDs. Billy is a very famous guide in the USA, and this made the drive to get there even more aggressive for me. The money was my only issue.

A long story short, after losing a best mate to MND I needed something to focus on and get me moving so I went out on a limb and booked that hunt with Billy Molls, an

adventure I am still pinching myself over.

From there I have had trips to New Zealand with good mates and seen various parts of the world. However, it wasn't until I visited Kyrgyzstan with my good friend Alfred that I really started wondering what was driving me to go on these adventures. Trust me, there



3



2

“

It's definitely not all about the animal”

were some serious ups and downs on that trip.

But as time has gone on, I think my focus has changed somewhat from what I want out of these trips and it's definitely not all about the animal.

The decision on where I go next has come down to culture and the places I will see and experience while hunting in different parts of the world. It teaches you a lot about who you are and what is important in life.

We take a lot of things for granted, and on reflection I feel sometimes our country has lost touch with what's important. I have found myself thinking about these places and their respective values a lot more now with two young boys of my own. I think the

places I've visited have helped me become better at appreciating what we have — most of all time.

We have so many options available across the globe and some are very affordable. The biggest hurdle we face is our own border security, with bringing trophies home or in some cases our firearms. But all of that can be taken care of with a little bit of homework. I will touch on some of these in upcoming issues and hopefully show you how easy it can be. However, in many cases your local gun shop will help you with the information you need.

For Australians our best opportunity is probably New Zealand. In some cases it's a closer travel destination than other parts of Australia. Additionally, the hunting possibilities for DIY hunting are readily available to Australians. An added bonus is that our exchange rate is very similar.

Stay tuned for more tips on international travel and travelling with firearms. Happy hunting. 📍

ON THIS PAGE

1 Moose hunting: big skies, big palms

2 Hunting ibex in Kyrgyzstan exposes you to very different landscapes and cultures

3 Jared's hunting team in Kyrgyzstan. It was a wild experience



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